

ReFIVE

a community plan for fifth avenue

MAY 2026 PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT



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Our Deepest Gratitude

To all the community members who shared their time in an interview, by taking a survey, or by stopping to talk with us at an event. We hope this Plan honors your contributions of time and perspective.



LETTER FROM 5TH AVENUE COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP

This work to promote a thriving community in the 5th Avenue area is not new. The ReFive Community Plan is the result of ongoing community-led initiatives, advocacy, and partnerships including the 5th Avenue Initiative, the lifelong work and legacy of Sandy Williams, and more.

The 5th Avenue community is energized and alive with possibility. The 5th Avenue community has endured a painful history of systemic injustices, and while today's residents continue to feel the social, economic, and environmental impacts of the area's past, the area remains home to a vibrant, diverse, and engaged community that tirelessly fights for healing, repair, and conditions that uplift and empower those who call this neighborhood home.

The ReFive Community Plan is about action and accountability. The 5th Avenue community has expressed clear, shared priorities and visions for a thriving neighborhood. This Plan breathes life into these goals and lays the groundwork to effectively transform the words within this report into concrete actions and avenues for real change. The Plan's strategies are meaningfully informed by the wide diversity of communities across the 5th Avenue area, prioritizing equity and lasting impact in economics, health, education, and housing to invest in today's residents and set up future generations for success. We have a clear vision for restoration that honors and uplifts this neighborhood's history, culture, and spirit, and amplifies the strong network of existing community-built resources, services, and energy to maximize support for this community.

We express gratitude to those who have offered their time, effort, and insights to ensure this plan reflects the hopes and priorities of the 5th Avenue community. Together, we can harness the momentum of this moment to bring about lasting change for our community.

Sincerely,

The 5th Avenue Community Working Group

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INTRODUCTION

What is the ReFIVE Community Plan? Why Now?

The 5th Avenue Community in the East Central Neighborhood of Spokane is a rich tapestry of stories and experiences in a more than 90-block area. Coexisting in this compact historically Black space, there exists deeply rooted foundations of resilience and pride, preserving a unique cultural heritage in Spokane while also welcoming growing diversity in residents who call this area home today, reflecting a multicultural community of new arrivals from places in South America, Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, and the Marshall Islands. Each element brings something unique and valuable to the 5th Avenue Community. At the same time, there are painful scars of highway construction from the 1960s and ongoing today, as evidenced by displacement of homes and community, loss of significant portions of Liberty Park, vacant

remnant parcels, and a legacy of disinvestment that community leaders, organizations, businesses and residents have been advocating to change.

The completion of this plan, the ReFIVE Community Plan, is a key component of the 5th Avenue Community Strategy completed in 2021 and advances the work forward with a coordinated framework and action. The Plan is grounded in data and technical analysis, but most importantly, it reflects the voices of the people who live and work in 5th Avenue today. It both honors the history and resilience of those who endured decades of institutional harm in redlining, highway building, and neglect, and aims to re-fresh, re-start, and revive investments in community building with an eye toward the future.

Identity, connectivity, livability, and wealth were all lost or irreparably harmed by highway construction when the East Central Neighborhood was bisected. These same essential elements of the community are goal areas for the Plan going forward. As there is no easy way to hit “undo” on these past impacts, the Plan focuses on what identity, connectivity, livability, and wealth mean today and into the future. More recent trends of gentrification and displacement seen in the area require a complementary focus on homeownership to keep wealth in the community and ensure that current residents can continue to benefit from investments in the area.



Image: Leah Murphy

Introducing 5th Avenue

What Makes 5th Avenue Special?

5th Avenue is more than just a street; it's a physical embodiment of Spokane's industrial growth, immigration and racial history, suburbanization and highway impacts, and current efforts at community-led revitalization. The history of the corridor reflects broader themes: how infrastructure (like highways) and redlining shape neighborhoods; how cultural identity persists in place; and how community activism can steer change. Understanding East 5th Avenue helps one appreciate Spokane's layered urban story as not just downtown or established historic districts, but as grassroots neighborhoods where real change and continuity occur.

The History of 5th Avenue

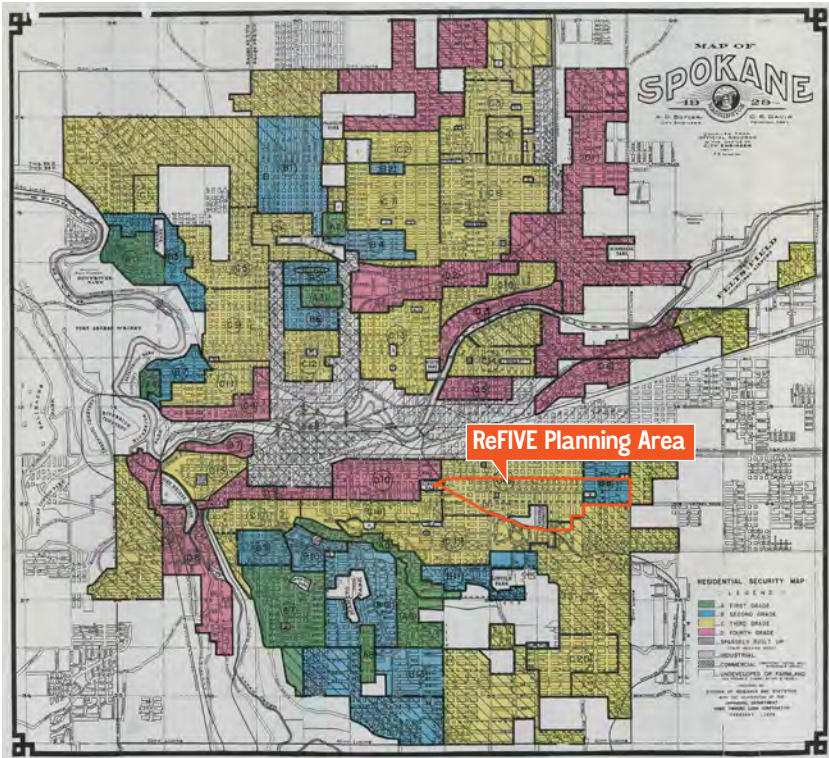
The East Central neighborhood was one of Spokane's first residential areas east of downtown, developed in the late 1800s and early 1900s, in tandem with industrial growth. In that era, East 5th Avenue became part of an immigrant-rich community with homes, small businesses, and industry nearby. The neighborhood has historically been home to a socioeconomically and ethnically diverse population including Black or African American and Italian American communities.

Through the early to mid-1900s, the corridor functioned as a vibrant neighborhood commercial strip in a diverse community: immigrant families, households with modest incomes, and multiple ethnic groups made up the area. The corridor became especially significant for Spokane's Black community; by the 1970s, the area had become the cultural center for the Black community, while also home to other ethnic and immigrant groups.

From the 1920s onward, East Central felt the impact of industrial decline, falling land values, and

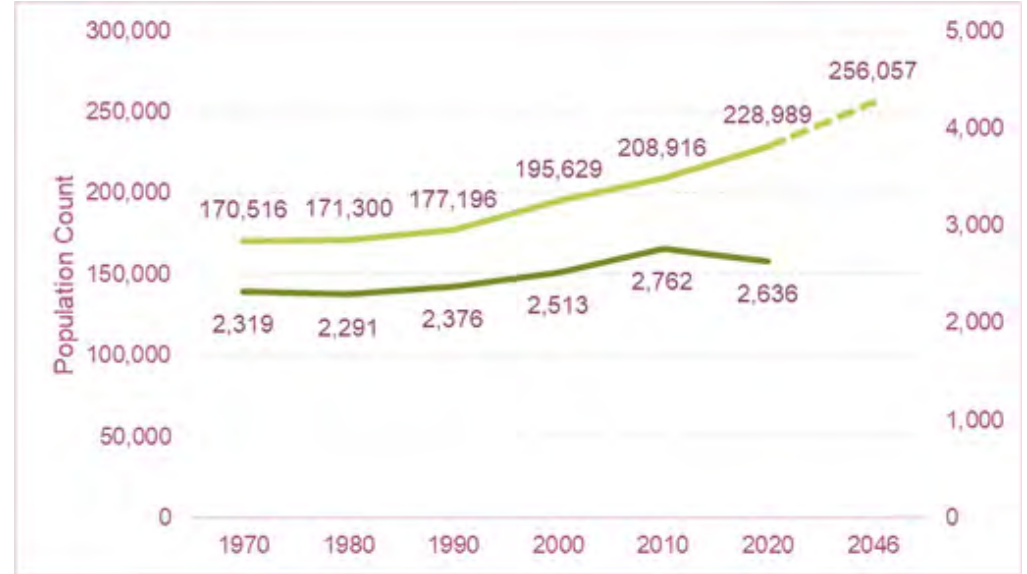


The 5th Avenue area is rich with culture and local assets. The Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center on 5th Avenue (top left) has been a community-based nonprofit organization supporting youth and families while strengthening the community's fabric for over 40 years. The Carl Maxey Center on 5th Avenue (top right) is a Black-led and Black-centered community-based nonprofit (image: Converge Media). Fresh Soul (above left), a social enterprise restaurant run by the Spokane Eastside Reunion Association, serves up soul food classics on 5th Avenue and offers a job training program for teens (image: Converge Media). The new Spokane Public Library branch (above right) anchors the north side of Liberty Park, a well-loved addition to a historic open space with roots reaching back to the beginnings of the neighborhood.



| 1 | 1938 HOLC Redlining Map

Source: Spokane County Library District



| 2 | Change in population, 1970-2020, Spokane vs 5th Avenue Planning Area

Source: US Decennial Census, 1970-2020; City of Spokane, 2025

shifting economic patterns. In the 1930s, “red-lining” by federal mortgage insurance policy limited homeownership and investment in the area. The construction of Interstate 90 in the 1950s made things worse, cutting through the neighborhood, displacing residents (many of them Black or immigrant families), leveling homes, and dividing the community. Businesses along East 5th Avenue suffered and the neighborhood lost its economic momentum.

The City of Spokane grew by 34% from 1970 to 2020. By comparison, the 5th Avenue area grew only 14% over the same period—less than half as rapidly as the city as a whole. Stagnant growth was exacerbated by a loss of population from 2010 to 2020, some of which is associated with the US 395 North Spokane Corridor highway construction impacts and displacement. A shrinking population means fewer people to support local businesses and economic growth, along with the visual and emotional impacts of vacant sites in the

neighborhood. Growth targets anticipate continued population growth in Spokane over the next 20 years, so a focus of this Plan is ensuring that the 5th Avenue area shares in the growth, prosperity, and vibrancy of Spokane’s future.

Today, the corridor remains one of Spokane’s most diverse areas. With new immigrant households and multiple ethnic groups, the community continues its efforts to preserve the cultural legacy of the Black community while fostering equitable development.



2019
Sandy Williams founded
the Carl Maxey Center



ReFIVE

Late 1800s - 1920

Early Development

East Central, including 5th Avenue, emerged as one of Spokane's first suburbs with homes, shops, and light industry, with a strong Italian American immigrant community early on.

1920s - 1950s

Redlining & Disinvestment

Federal housing policies redlined East Central, restricting investment and mortgage access for minority residents.

Late 1950s - 1960s

Interstate 90 Construction

I-90 cut through East Central, displacing over a thousand families and businesses and dividing the neighborhood physically and socially.

1970s - 1990s

Emerging Legacies

Buoyed by the civil rights movement, local institutions like the MLK Center are founded and prominent leaders like Carl Maxey and James and Eleanor Chase do the trailblazing work that will establish their legacy.

1980s - 2010s

Community Organizing

Residents organized to preserve local heritage, strengthen neighborhood identity, and push for equitable development.

2010s

NSC Highway Construction

The US 395 North Spokane Corridor (NSC) construction resulted in close to 500 additional homes and businesses displaced for highway infrastructure expansion. A saving grace was the preservation and relocation of the historic Rose Apartments.

2019-2021

5th Avenue Initiative

A community-driven process co-created with the City to develop a revitalization strategy emphasizing inclusion, mobility, and design.

2020s

Revitalization & Public Art

Murals, small business grants, and public art celebrate the area's diversity.

2024-2026

ReFIVE Community Planning

The result of a year-long planning effort—and decades more of community organizing—this plan lays out goals and actions to realize the full potential of the 5th Ave neighborhood.



| 3 | Eras of Change Along 5th Avenue

Image: Leah Murphy

Past Plans and Initiatives

Since the 2000s and especially the 2010s, the City and community groups have undertaken efforts to revitalize the corridor by improving sidewalks and street trees, repurposing historic buildings, and promoting local business and entrepreneurship. The first East Central Neighborhood Plan was created in 2005, with additional planning efforts on trail connectivity in 2009.

In 2016, the community began engaging with the City under former Mayor David Condon's administration on a vision for 5th Avenue from Liberty Park to Thor/Freya Streets. The 5th Avenue Initiative in 2019 was identified as a priority focus for concerted efforts to counter decades of disinvestment. Discussions initially began with the challenge that the East Central neighborhood has never healed from the impact that the I-90 construction caused to the community. Nor does the community feel that this legacy has been adequately addressed.

The 5th Avenue Initiative facilitated stakeholder meetings in late 2019 and early 2020, working with a trusted community liaison to help convene and lead a series of in-depth community conversations¹. In 2020, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic paused work on the 5th Avenue Initiative before City Council adopted the strategy by resolution in 2021, led by East Central community leader and newly appointed District 2 Council Member Betsy Wilkerson, who was further elected as Council President in 2024. The vision presented in the draft community strategy helped make the 5th Avenue community stronger and more resilient, and supports the health, safety, and wellbeing of the community.

¹ <https://my.spokanecity.org/projects/5th-avenue-initiative/>

5th Avenue Today

Today, 5th Avenue is defined by its strong diversity and mix of assets, reflecting its history as the heart of Spokane's Black community and an increasingly multicultural hub. The area includes community-serving organizations, affordable housing, parks, and both historic and newer residential assets.

Who are We Planning For?

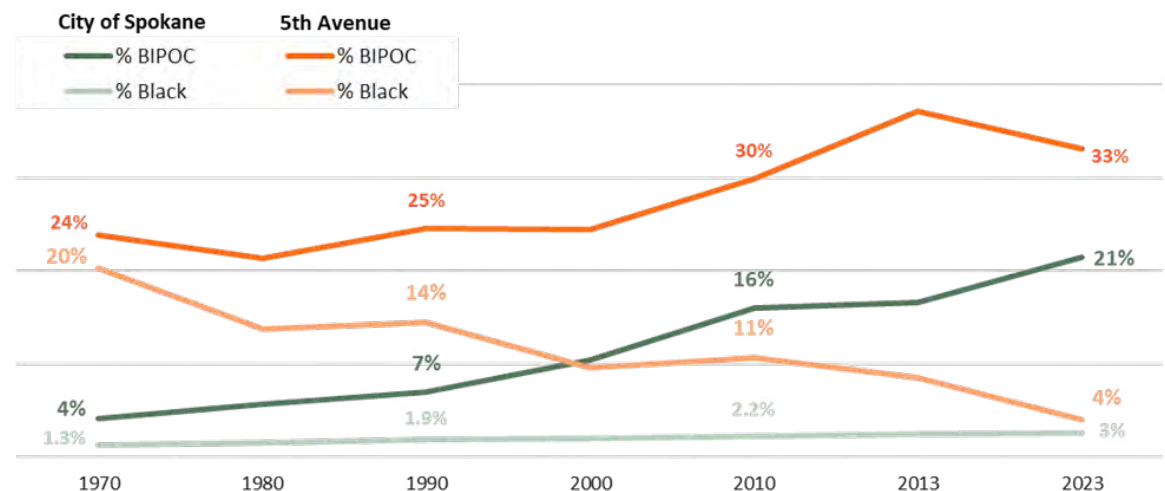
- ▶ 5th Avenue is among Spokane's most diverse neighborhoods, with notable Black, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian, Hispanic/Latino, and multi-racial communities, and immigrant populations from Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, the Marshall Islands, Vietnam, Cuba, and Mexico.
- ▶ Recent data for Census Tract 30 in 2023—the primary Census Tract covering the 5th Avenue area— shows a demographic composition of approximately 67% White, 14% Hispanic or

Latino, 7% Two or more races, 4% Black or African American, 4% Asian, 3% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and 1% American Indian/Alaska Native. Roughly 13% of residents are foreign-born, with a particularly high share from Asia, Latin America, and Oceania.

- ▶ Median age is 33—younger than the Spokane median of 37—with around 27% of residents under 18, supporting a vibrant neighborhood with many families.

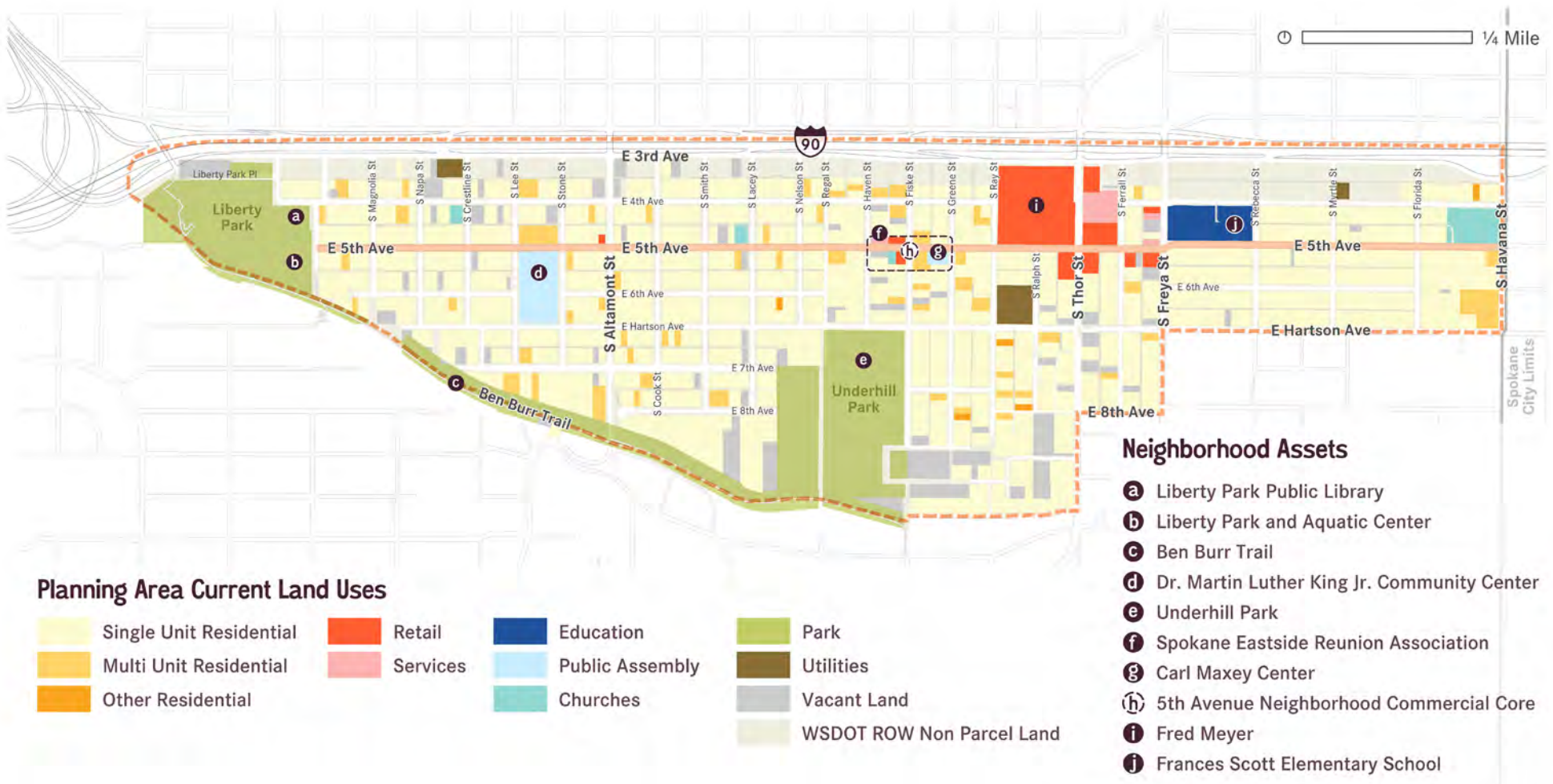
| 4 | Percent BIPOC and Percent Black Populations of 5th Avenue and the City of Spokane, 1970-2023

Source: US Decennial Census, 1970-2010; ACS 5-year estimates, 2013-2023



5 | ReFIVE Planning Area Land Uses and Neighborhood Assets

Source: Spokane County Assessor, 2024; City of Spokane, 2025. Note: the church on 5th near Fiske also has 2nd floor residential. Image: Leah Murphy



Physical, Community, and Economic Assets

- ▶ Key assets include Liberty Park, Underhill Park, Liberty Park Aquatic Center, Liberty Park Public Library, Frances L.N. Scott Elementary, and well-recognized community organizations like the Carl Maxey Center, Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center, Take Up the Cause, and Spokane Eastside Reunion Association.

- ▶ A variety of small, locally-owned businesses line the corridor, some reflecting the area's minority and immigrant communities (such as local coffee shops, ethnic food markets, and mom-and-pop stores).
- ▶ Real estate consists of a mix of historic Craftsman single-family homes (61% of

residences built prior to 1960), and newer or newly renovated residences, with ongoing preservation and affordability efforts.

- ▶ The area has affordable price points by urban standards (e.g., recent home listings at \$162–\$164 per square foot with a range of \$288,000–\$375,000).

Engagement Summary and Process

Community ideas and input defined the baseline conditions and topics that were explored in technical analysis and became the framework for the Vision and Goals of the Plan.

The project team facilitated a breadth of outreach and engagement activities across every stage of the Plan development process. Spanning all engagement efforts, **co-creation**, **accessibility**, and **creativity** were key elements of our approach to best meet community members where they're at and collect a diversity of input.

The team conducted **interviews** and coordinated monthly **community working group workshops** with long-term and new residents, youth, and leaders of local community organizations and institutions. We solicited input from community members through interactive, open-ended, and place-based engagement activities at numerous **community events**. These included:



Community Conversations:

- ▶ Interviews and Listening Sessions
- ▶ Community Working Group

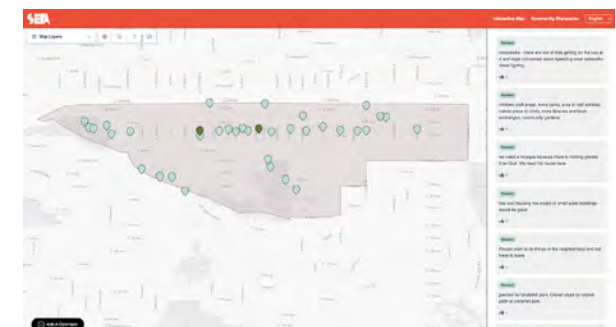
Visioning Events:

- ▶ Frances Scott Elementary School Multicultural Arts Gala, April 2025
- ▶ Grant Park Celebration, Juneteenth Weekend 2025
- ▶ Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center Resource Fair, Juneteenth Weekend 2025

- ▶ Open House at the Carl Maxey Center, October 2025

Online Engagement Platform

- ▶ Community Discussion Wall
- ▶ Interactive Map
- ▶ Email newsletter, blog posts, social media outreach



An online collaborative mapping tool offered a venue for community members to share their thoughts and ideas

Key Takeaways from Engagement

Community engagement in 5th Avenue revealed a mix of nostalgia and hopes for the future. Several voices highlighted rich memories of sledding at Underhill Park, the old larger Liberty Park, and a tight-knit community in the residential streets. Other voices lauded recent improvements to Liberty Park and Ben Burr Trail and hoped to see continued momentum. Across comments from residents, business owners, and visitors, contributors emphasized **common values of inclusivity and sustainability**.

5th Avenue community members mentioned **walkability and pedestrian infrastructure more than any other theme**. In comments, people linked the availability and quality of a pedestrian experience to a sense of community, safety, and small business development. Walkability comments focused on creating foot traffic in commercial areas and creating access to parks, libraries, and other community amenities. Specific suggestions included improving street lighting, seating, sidewalk completion, strategic placement of crosswalks, and possibly a no-car pedestrian zone.

Closely related and common themes related to **traffic calming and planning**. Both the volume and speed of traffic are a major concern to community members, affecting not only pedestrian and bicycle safety but also noise, air quality, and ambience. Fred Meyer is perceived to have contributed to increased traffic in the area. Community engagement activities received many suggestions for modifying traffic patterns, bulb outs, humps, lane narrowing and other strategies to calm traffic.

Several comments lauded recent improvements to the Ben Burr Trail, but would like to see further



improvement to **improve connectivity and accessibility for bicyclists** transitioning to and from the trail to access neighborhood amenities. This may include parking for Ben Burr Trail access, bikeways along 5th Avenue, and transition points on both sides of the trail to Perry Street and to 5th Ave.

Community members love the **small-business atmosphere** of 5th Avenue and would like to further support it. Walkability and bikeability along 5th are seen as key ingredients to foster the small business community. Several commenters also suggested Farmer's Markets or craft fairs as a way to **stimulate local commercial activity and street activity**.

| 6 | "Big Ideas" Activity Results

Community members were asked to imagine their "big ideas" for the 5th Ave area's future, describe them on a speech bubble dry erase board, and pose for the polaroid camera next to their hopes for the neighborhood. The three-way tie for top-ranked topics of the exercise were related to "Stuff To Do" (activities, events, and places to go in the neighborhood), "Housing" (a variety of topics including availability of affordable housing, new mixed use development, and support of homeownership), and "Getting Around" (all related to mobility and connectivity issues). Image: Leah Murphy



7 | “Big Ideas” Activity Highlights

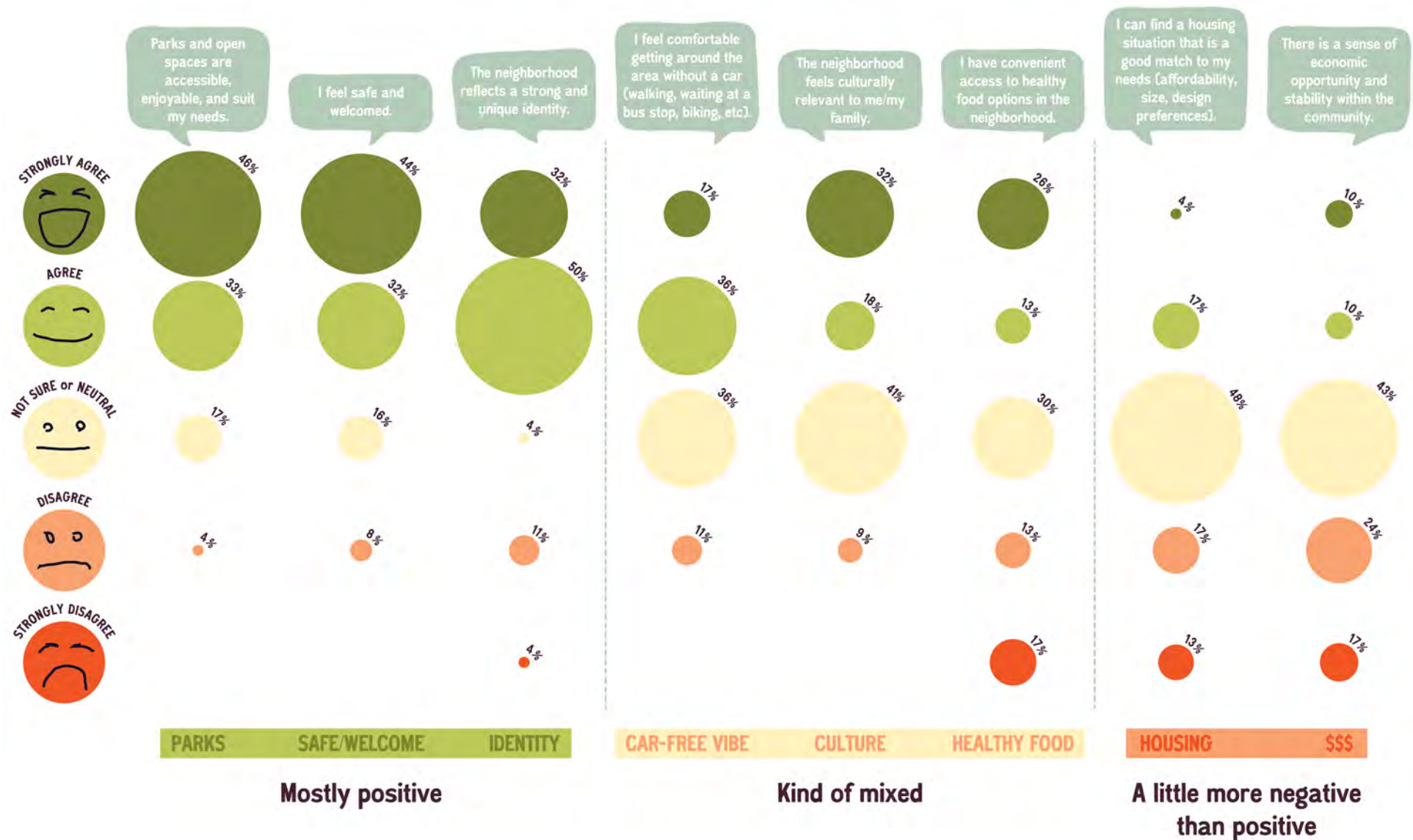
Image: Leah Murphy

Public spaces are major assets and community anchors for the 5th Avenue community. Comments about Liberty Park, Underhill Park, Liberty Aquatic Center, and the Liberty Park Library were unanimously warm and positive. Some commenters shared that they travel from other parts of Spokane to specifically access these amenities. Where the community would like to see expansion included park infrastructure (such as a pavilion and more seating), community gardens, and safe third spaces for youth.

One comment raised concerns about homeless camping in and around parks and another raised a similar concern about camping along the Ben Burr Trail. Some commenters saw a need for **housing actions asking for more mixed-use housing, social housing, multi-family housing, and housing rehabilitation funds and/or programs.**

When asked how they would agree with statements characterizing a variety of aspects of life in the 5th Avenue area, feelings were mostly positive about parks, safety, and neighborhood identity; somewhat mixed regarding getting around without a car, cultural relevance, and access to healthy food; and tending to be more negative than positive with respect to housing and economic opportunity/stability in the community. See **Figure 8** for detailed results.

is it “SPOT ON” or “OH, C’MON!” ?



| 8 | Community Satisfaction Rating Activity Results

Image: Leah Murphy



| 9 | Collaborative Map Comments

Image: Leah Murphy

The overwhelming majority of map comments were contributed by residents of the area, though employees and business owners, and visitors contributed as well. Comments mostly pertained to points along the 5th Avenue Corridor, and public spaces, such as Liberty Park, Underhill Park, and along the Ben Burr Trail at the area's periphery. Additional comments were made along 3rd Avenue, running parallel to the I-90 Interstate.

In summary, community members want 5th Avenue to become a safer, greener, more walkable mixed-use neighborhood corridor with stronger local businesses, better bike/pedestrian infrastructure, improved public spaces, and engaged city partnership. Several intersecting priorities surfaced among the comments:

Safety concerns. Safety concerns included high vehicle speeds along the corridor and a lack of safe infrastructure for pedestrians and bicycles such as cross walks at specific intersections. Comments highlighted how safer neighborhoods would in turn contribute to neighborhood pride and greater foot traffic for businesses.

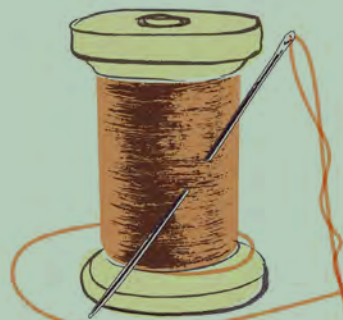
Parks and green spaces. Liberty Park, Underhill Park, and the Ben Burr Trail are neighborhood assets that can be better connected to each other and utilized. The comments called for trees, landscaping, and basic stewardship and amenities like trash cans to make the green spaces more accessible and inviting.

Commercial corridor businesses and activation. Many comments support creating a thriving Main

Street feel on 5th Avenue with active storefronts, small retail, mixed-use housing, and walkable access to stores and services. This street is the heart of the 5th Avenue area, and commenters also envision events such as craft fairs, markets, festivals, and community gatherings as well as art and markers of the neighborhood's vibrant history and identity to be located here.

Housing. Commenters called for mixed-use housing, affordable housing, social housing, and housing rehabilitation support highlighting a desire to keep existing residents from being displaced. Housing comments included locations on 2nd and 3rd where housing was lost by road construction, on 5th Avenue in mixed-used development, as well as the residential blocks in between.

VISION



COMMON THREADS

Three **VISION THEMES**, distilled from thoughtful community conversations, are **THREADED** throughout ReFIVE's ideas.

Each of these themes have **TIE-INS** across the plan's five recommendations chapters, **INTERWEAVING** the community's values with the plan's goals and strategies

VISION THEMES

Respect

Rebalance **EQUITY** issues through economic opportunity, affordability, and environmental justice.

Resilience

Prioritize **SUSTAINABILITY** and climate adaptation in infrastructure, policy, and programming decisions.

Resourcefulness

Foster **PARTNERSHIPS** between the City and social commons; strengthen and leverage nonprofit and community infrastructure.

IDENTITY

LIVABILITY

STABILITY

CONNECTIVITY

PROSPERITY

ReFIVE

Vision Themes

Respect, Resilience, and Resourcefulness are themes that were distilled from thoughtful community conversations and represent the spirit of the 5th Avenue vision. While the Goals and Strategies identify actions at a more concrete level, these Vision Themes set an intention for the way in which the community would like to see the work done.

Respect

Rebalance equity issues through economic opportunity, affordability, and environmental justice.

Resilience

Prioritize sustainability and climate adaptation in infrastructure, policy, and programming decisions.

Resourcefulness

Foster partnerships between the City and social commons; strengthen and leverage nonprofit and community infrastructure.

Goals

Goals are long-term outcomes that the community hopes to achieve by implementing the Plan. They are aspirational, expressing the community's collective desires and values. The five goals of this Plan—**Identity, Connectivity, Livability, Prosperity, and Stability**—are outlined in the summary to the right.

Strategies and Actions

Strategies and Actions describe what must be done to achieve the Plan's Goals. Individual Actions can advance multiple Goals but are organized under thematic Strategies. The Strategies associated with each Goal area are listed in the outline on this page.

Outline of Recommendations

1. Identity: Cement and honor the legacy of the neighborhood's history, fill the environment with art and color, and celebrate today's community with cultural events and programs.

- 1.1: Celebrate 5th Avenue's rich history as the heart of Spokane's Black community
- 1.2: Beautify 5th Avenue
- 1.3: Organize shared experiences that reflect today's diversity

2. Connectivity: Improve the experience of the neighborhood for those who are walking, biking, rolling, or accessing transit.

- 2.1: Make the neighborhood more accessible
- 2.2: Make streets and sidewalks safer and more comfortable
- 2.3: Support neighborhood and district connectivity
- 2.4: Enhance Access to Transit

3. Livability: Make the 5th Avenue neighborhood a welcoming and comfortable space for people of all ages and abilities.

- 3.1: Encourage safe, active, and playful community spaces
- 3.2: Create and expand programs that increase active living
- 3.3: Increase the community's access to healthy food and water
- 3.4: Build neighborhood resilience to urban heat
- 3.5: Mitigate heat, extreme cold, and other climate change impacts

4. Prosperity: Foster more resilient, equitable, and sustainable economies by recognizing and nurturing local community assets such as small businesses, non-profits, and cultural organizations.

- 4.1: Nurture and expand commercial activity and economic development along 5th Avenue
- 4.2: Support new development that advances community goals
- 4.3: Encourage partnerships to connect residents to good jobs and supportive services
- 4.4: Offer technical assistance and funding support to small businesses and entrepreneurs

5. Stability: Ensure the future of 5th Avenue is affordable, racially diverse, and inclusive for a wide range of household types.

- 5.1: Increase housing options and affordability levels
- 5.2: Promote homeownership, especially for first-time buyers
- 5.3: Sustain homeownership for community members
- 5.4: Use creative tools and strategies to acquire sites for affordable housing

Envisioning a Future Along 5th Ave

This Community Plan lays out a vision for the 5th Avenue neighborhood's future as well as goals, strategies, and actions that provide a road map for City and public and private partners to achieve the vision. The 5th Avenue neighborhood is envisioned to have a diverse range of jobs, housing and shopping, a strong, unique identity and culture, green features and sustainable infrastructure, a range of transportation choices, and complete neighborhood amenities.

The projects shown in the Vision Map (**Figure 11**) represent a coordinated set of investments in targeted locations. These projects and interventions are intended to be catalysts for a broader transformation of the neighborhood to achieve the vision.

Future Land Use Framework

The ReFIVE Plan proposes updates to the Future Land Use Map (**Figure 12**) based on community input to promote neighborhood serving mixed-uses and expand housing options while ensuring flexibility and adaptability. These changes provide the foundation for expanded open space, mixed use development and commercial opportunities that support economic prosperity and community wealth building, and a range of residential uses to accommodate affordable and mixed-income middle housing types as well as preservation of homeownership opportunities.

Frances Scott Elementary

Builds on the school as a beloved and well used community space and neighborhood anchor by investing in the schoolyard, transforming it with trees and greenery, and adding programs like a community garden. On surrounding streets, the Plan encourages building mixed-use and housing and makes it safer and more comfortable for people to walk, bike, or

roll to school or to take the bus downtown for work. Changes to the land use framework support mixed use developments with housing, recreation opportunities, and neighborhood-serving commercial sites.

5th Avenue Neighborhood Core

The Plan envisions a vibrant, neighborhood mixed-use core anchored by Carl Maxey Center, Larry's Barbershop, and Fresh Soul Restaurant. A cultural district designation will celebrate Black history and culture, support economic development, attract arts and cultural uses, and add visual interest to the commercial district. Intersection improvements, wayfinding elements, and consistent sidewalk upgrades support traffic calming and walkability. Additional trees add shade and bus stop improvements support pedestrian comfort while accessing transit.

In the shorter term, events, pop-ups, art installations, and other similar strategies activate vacant sites and add art and color to the street. Changes to the land use framework support moderate density housing types so that more people live with convenient access to shops and services.

MLK Center and vicinity

In the area around the MLK Center, the land use framework supports neighborhood-serving mixed use developments. Added mixed use opportunities integrate smoothly with the planned plaza development by Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) at the I-90 pedestrian bridge on Lee Street and nearby community sites such as the MLK Center and Southeast Daycare Center. This area develops as a more robust population center for the 5th Avenue area. The planned WSDOT pedestrian bridges and accompanying plazas are envisioned as community

spaces with enhanced elements that connect into the neighborhood sidewalk grid. Intersection improvements around 5th Avenue at Altamont Street and 5th Avenue at Stone Street to calm traffic and support pedestrians to access transit and nearby destinations.

Liberty Park

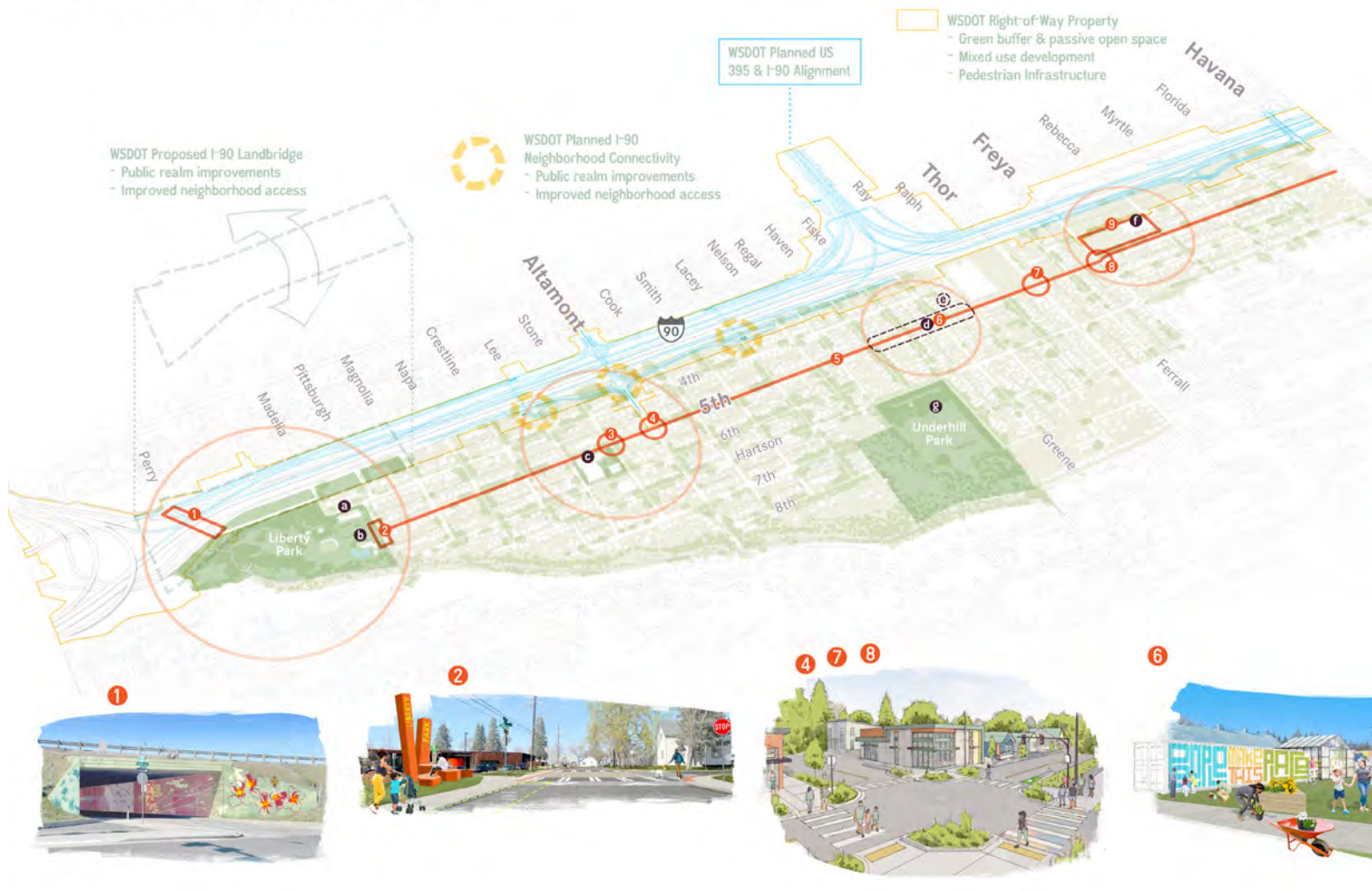
The Plan envisions expanded green space here, connecting to the land bridge proposed by WSDOT. The proposed land bridge is envisioned as a reconnection for the neighborhood—well integrated with the sidewalk and trail networks with seamless connection points. Temporary activations ensure the area is a community asset during the transition. The Liberty Park Library and Liberty Aquatic Center continue to serve as community amenities offering a high quality of life for the surrounding community. The plan envisions public realm improvements or a “Welcome Mat” at 5th Avenue and Pittsburgh Street to highlight this civic infrastructure and create a sense of arrival and connection to the neighborhood.

Changes to the land use framework (**Figure 12**) provide the blueprint for a new open space and a cafe or small-scale business to further activate the park.

Vision Concepts

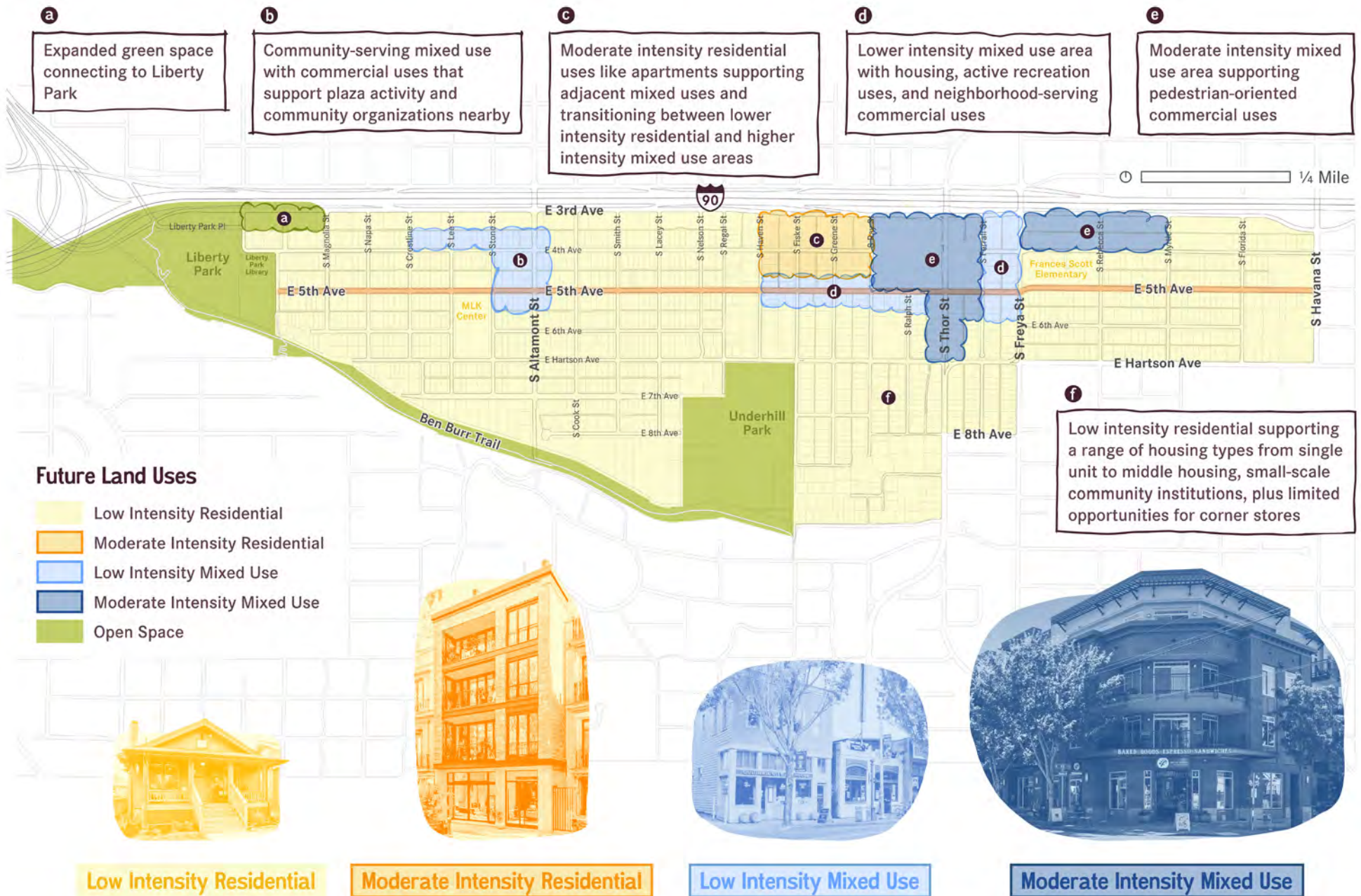
Additional investments and partnerships, more specific to the goal areas, are represented in the chapters that follow. Additional detail on the schoolyard transformation and temporary activation of the CMC lot is presented in the Livability chapter. A specific list of transportation projects is presented in the Connectivity chapter along with additional detail on potential intersection improvements and conceptual Perry Street underpass improvements illustrated here.

ReFIVE VISION MAP



| 11 | ReFIVE Vision Map

Image: Leah Murphy





Early Wins/Day One Projects

The Early Wins/Day One Projects listed below have been identified by the Working Group as steps that can be taken immediately due to opportunities such as available funding or existing relationships. These actions demonstrate the power of change and create momentum to build toward longer-term goals that might require sustained effort across several years.

| 13 | Early Wins/Day One Projects

Strategy #	Day One Project Description	Lead	Key Partners	Level of Investment
1.1a	Pursue the designation of a cultural district for the neighborhood	Fifth Avenue Forward	City of Spokane	\$\$
2.1a	Complete sidewalk improvement on 5th Avenue between Fiske and Haven Streets	City of Spokane	Fifth Avenue Forward	\$\$\$
2.1a	Implement improvement projects around Thor Street/Freya Street couplet between 5th Avenue and Hartson Avenue to support connectivity across Thor/Freya Streets	City of Spokane	Fifth Avenue Forward	\$\$\$
2.2a	Make improvements to Rebecca Street and 4th/5th Avenues . The existing intersection at 5th Avenue has crosswalks on 3 legs; add the missing leg complemented with bump outs and stop controls. The same is true on 4th Avenue. Adding curb ramps—and potentially traffic calming—would make a big difference in a very important area.	City of Spokane	Spokane Public Schools	\$\$\$
2.2a	Make intersection improvements at 5th Avenue and Altamont Street and traffic calming at 5th Avenue and Stone Street near the Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center	City of Spokane	Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center	\$\$\$
2.2a & 2.4a	Make intersection improvements such as bump outs, wider sidewalks, crosswalk markings, and potentially rectangular rapid flashing beacons at 5th Avenue and Greene Street . Coordination with STA on bus stop improvements would also benefit transit riders.	City of Spokane	Fifth Avenue Forward	\$\$\$
3.1a	Create a partnership agreement between Spokane Public Schools, City of Spokane Parks Department, and the Trust for Public Lands and seek funding for a pilot project on a greening schoolyard program for Frances Scott Elementary School.	Spokane Public Schools, City of Spokane Parks and Recreation Department, and the Trust for Public Lands	Fifth Avenue Forward	\$
4.1a, 2.1a	Extend the infrastructure improvements from the commercial businesses along 5th Avenue from Fiske Street to Greene Street to include Carl Maxey Center frontage	City of Spokane	Carl Maxey Center	\$\$\$

1 IDENTITY

This goal area identifies strategies and actions to honor the legacy of the neighborhood's history, fill the environment with art and color, and celebrate today's community with cultural events and programs. Strategies and actions proposed here honor the legacy of the neighborhood as the heart of Spokane's Black community and the homes that were removed to make way for an interstate. They also set a path to ensure that current and future community members see themselves reflected in the environment, with ample opportunity for gathering and making new traditions.



Top Priorities

Celebrate 5th Avenue's rich history as the heart of Spokane's Black community

Identity Strategies

Strategy 1.1: Celebrate 5th Avenue's rich history as the heart of Spokane's Black community

Strategy 1.2: Beautify 5th Avenue

Strategy 1.3: Organize shared experiences that reflect today's diversity

Existing Conditions

Since its establishment, East Central has always been home to a diverse community of residents. This is both a representation of its identity as a welcoming place as well as an outcome of historic policies that instituted redlining and race-based segregation. By 1970, approximately 65% of Spokane’s Black residents lived in just three census tracts: the 5th Avenue corridor and its adjacent areas. That year, one in four residents of 5th Avenue were Black. More recently, however, the concentration of Black residents along 5th Avenue has largely dispersed, and they now comprise 5% of the area’s population.

The community remains much more diverse than other parts of Spokane, with a significant Hispanic/Latino and multiracial population, including Native American and Urban Native populations. The population also includes a significant and growing foreign-born population. Community institutions and local schools share that many families of Marshallese, Hmong, Ukrainian, Russian, Norwegian, Italian, Kazakh, Mexican, Vietnamese, Karen, and South African origin are part of the current 5th Avenue community. Given these significant demographic shifts, it is not surprising that many community stakeholders feel that the area lacks a cohesive identity.

Investments in community identity create unity and a sense of belonging, chances for cultural celebrations and exchange, and opportunities for beautification and public space activation that are relevant to residents and visitors.

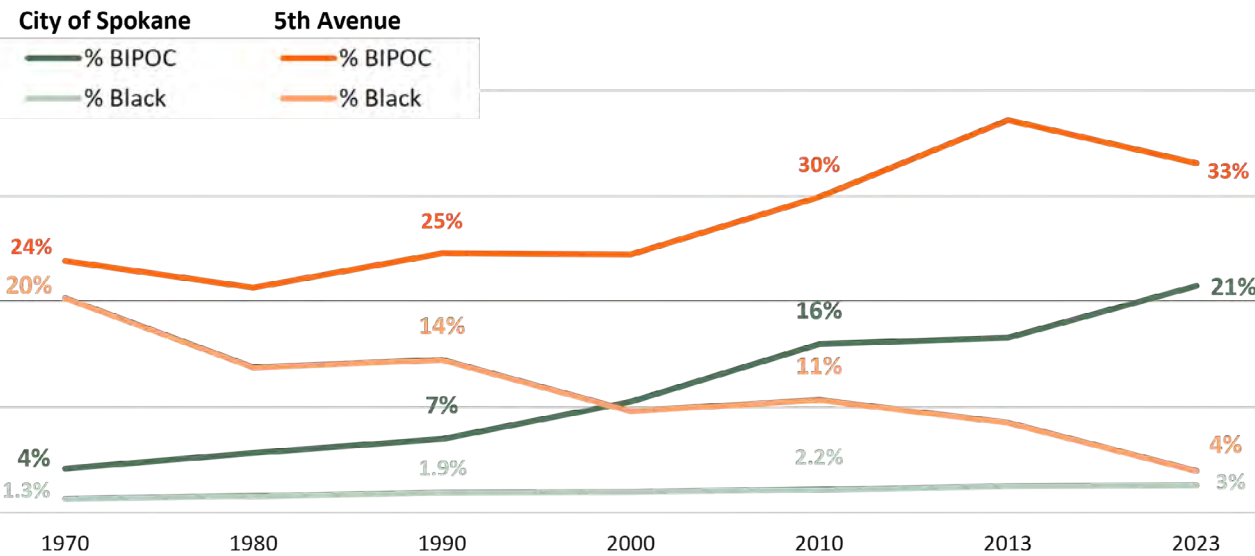
The 5th Avenue area and East Central neighborhood are longstanding hubs of racial diversity in Spokane and represent an especially strong Black cultural center for the city. In 1970, at a time when only 4% of Spokane’s population identified as Black, Indigenous, or other People of Color (BIPOC), 24% of 5th Avenue community members were BIPOC, and 20% of the

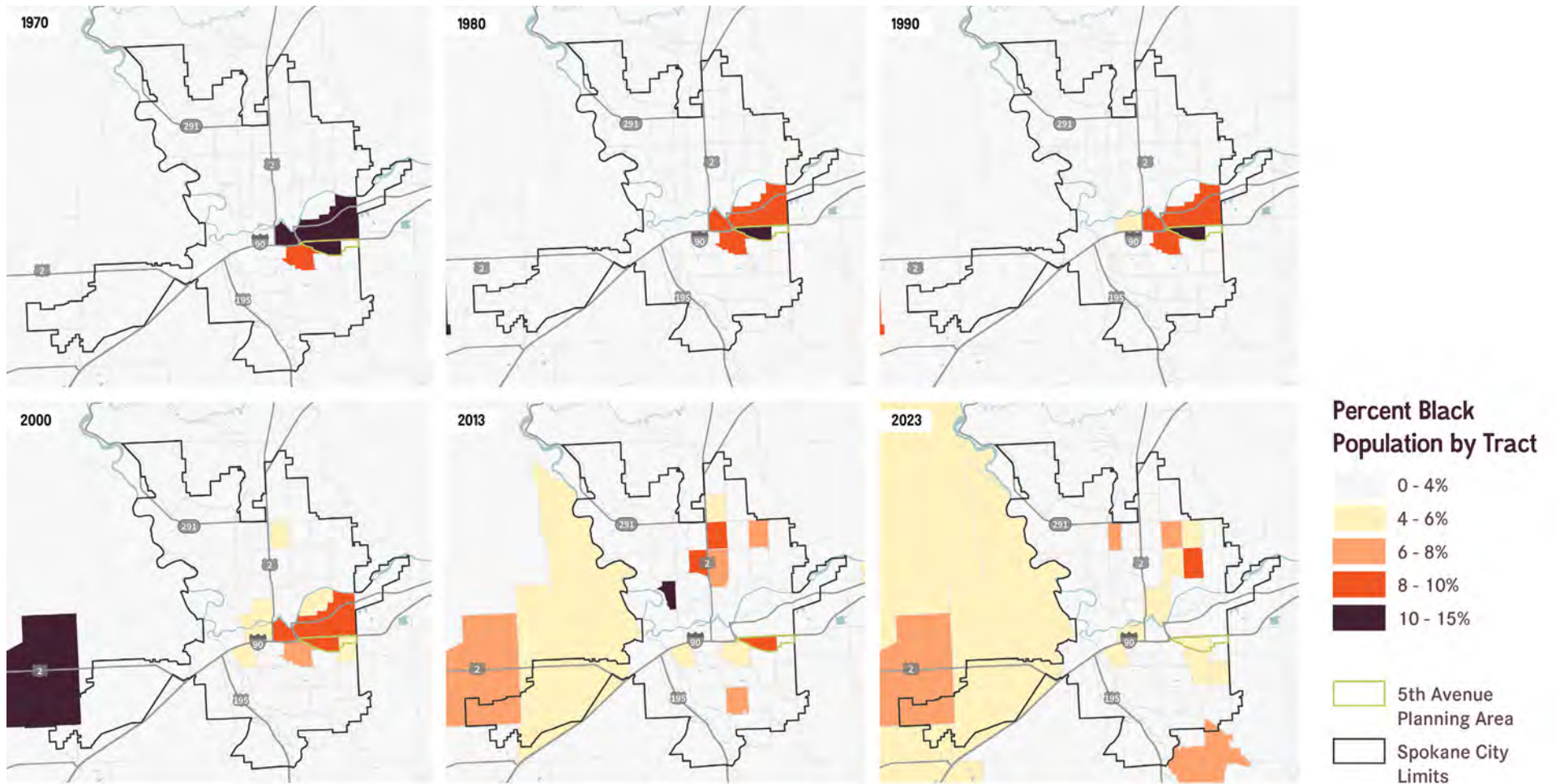
community was Black (Figure 14). This historic concentration of Black Spokanites can largely be attributed to the nationally practiced procedures of housing discrimination and redlining.

While 5th Avenue is the historic heart of Black culture in Spokane, today’s Black community is much more dispersed across the city, a reflection of both more housing opportunities across the Spokane region as well as ongoing residential displacement from

highway construction. Figure 15 visualizes these geographic patterns over time. For a relatively small community, this geographic spread makes it all the more important to maintain the presence of cultural centers and gathering spaces that can unite individuals and families, share an important story from Spokane’s history, and connect new generations of Spokanites with the legacy of the spaces where they live, work, and play.

| 14 | Percent BIPOC and Percent Black Populations of 5th Avenue and the City of Spokane, 1970-2023
Note: BIPOC percentages are inclusive of the Black population
Sources: US Decennial Census, 1970-2010; American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2013-2023)





| 15 | Map Series Depicting the Movement and Dispersion of Spokane's Black Population, 1970 to 2023

Sources: Decennial Census Data 1970-2000 and ACS 5-year estimates (2013 and 2023), compiled by Brown University Diversity and Disparities Project

The 5th Avenue area continues to represent one of Spokane's most ethnically and racially diverse communities, although community demographics are shifting.

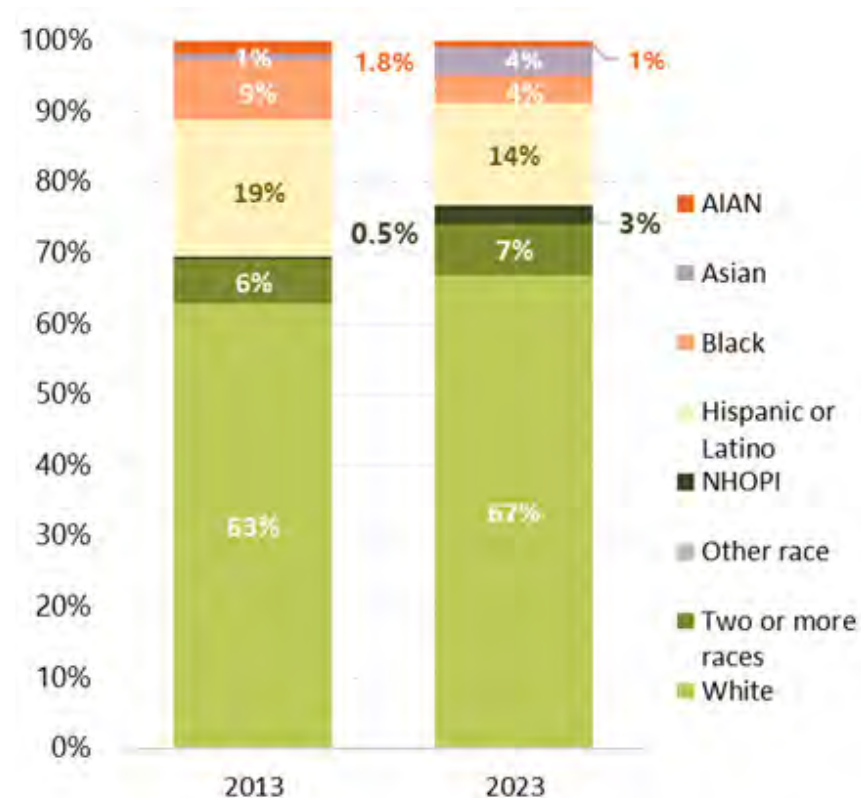
Today, 33% of 5th Avenue's residents identify as BIPOC, which is 50% higher than the citywide rate of 21%. Over the past decade, there has been a notable increase in the community's white population (63% to 67%), Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander population (0.3% to 3%), and Asian population (1% to 4%). Corresponding declines are observed in the Hispanic population (19% to 14%) and Black population (9% to 4%), as seen in **Figure 16**. In 2023, 19% of 5th Avenue residents reported speaking languages other than English at home, compared to 8% across Spokane as a whole, illustrating the ethnic diversity of the neighborhood. Over the past five years, language data shows an increased presence of households speaking Russian, Polish, or Slavic; other Indo-European languages, and other Asian and Pacific Islander languages.

This goal area identifies strategies and actions to cement the legacy of the neighborhood's history, fill the environment with art and color, and celebrate today's community with cultural events and programs.

The 5th Avenue neighborhood is significant to the story of Spokane across the decades. Strategies and actions proposed here honor the legacy of the neighborhood as the heart of Spokane's Black community and the homes that were removed to make way for an interstate. They also set a path to ensure that current and future community members see themselves reflected in the environment, with ample opportunity for gathering and making new traditions. In this Plan's vision, 5th Avenue can become a cultural hub for the greater Spokane area.

| 16 | Population of 5th Avenue by Race and Ethnicity, 2013 and 2023

Sources: ACS 5-year estimates, 2013 & 2023



Strategy 1.1: Celebrate 5th Avenue's rich history as the heart of Spokane's Black community



1.1a Designate 5th Avenue as a cultural district

A cultural district is a strategy for neighborhood revitalization, offering incentives to retain and attract cultural uses in a specific area, while supporting established businesses and non-profits. This type of designation helps entrepreneurs and organizers who are active in the creative space understand where their investments can benefit from the clustering of complementary sites. These districts can also help preserve the cultural and historical legacy of historically marginalized communities. Cities may officially designate areas as “cultural districts,” establishing boundaries that include land use changes and economic benefits. Additionally, cultural districts can receive support for marketing, branding, and public space improvements to attract residents and visitors.

As the historic heart of Spokane's Black community and one of the city's most ethnically and racially diverse neighborhoods today, 5th Avenue is a great location for a cultural district. Community identity and cultural preservation emerged as key issues in recent engagement efforts. 5th Avenue is the center of ongoing community activism, as a beloved place with a compelling story to tell. Defining this area as a cultural district would enhance 5th Avenue as a destination in the region by securing the legacy of the Black community and recognizing the cultural offerings of an ethnically diverse immigrant population.

The cultural district could be supported with the following potential functions:

- ▶ Offer incentives for creative and cultural uses within a designated core.

- ▶ Expand commercial uses along the core of the district to boost opportunities for small business clustering.
- ▶ Encourage funding and support for neighborhood improvement projects, branding and wayfinding signage, etc.
- ▶ Designate an area for storytelling and historic markers. This could include a walking trail with signage, neighborhood guided tours, and video screening rooms.

The 5th Avenue neighborhood has a rich history and a vibrant present that deserve to be celebrated. Developing a culture and heritage route is a way to better connect important sites and moments in the neighborhood, as well as draw people to the community. A culture and heritage route can be a physical trail or a conceptual network that connects significant locations, people, and stories to promote tourism, education, and preservation. The National Trust for Historic Preservation has developed a toolkit to support the creation of heritage trails, which can be a resource for 5th Avenue and the City. Community organizations in the neighborhood should begin planning for a route by identifying a theme, documenting the sites and stories to be featured, and working with the City to establish an approach and timeline for implementation.

- ▶ Create opportunities for pop-ups, events, festivals, and experimental creative uses.

SPOTLIGHT



Examples of cultural districts in other communities include:

- ▶ Seattle's Cultural District program, especially the historic storytelling in the Central Area
- ▶ Mobile, Alabama's Civil Rights and Cultural Heritage District
- ▶ Baltimore, Maryland's Black Arts District
- ▶ Minneapolis, Minnesota's cultural district program



RBG (Red, Black, Green) crosswalks in Seattle's Central District feature the colors of the Pan-African flag.



| 17 | Historic Black Sites Along 5th Avenue

Source: Spokane Historic Preservation Office East Central Cultural Survey

1.1b Commemorate historic sites important to the Black community

Preserving and celebrating Black historic sites increases the visibility and representation of the Black community, fostering a sense of belonging and pride for current and future generations. Community-driven archival projects, like those facilitated by the Carl Maxey Center and Spokane Public Library, enable direct control over narratives, ensuring stories and artifacts are preserved in ways that reflect authentic lived experiences. Honoring these sites educates the broader public about the historic and ongoing contributions of Black residents, helping to challenge stereotypes, address historical inequities, and promote racial equity.

Documentation and preservation strengthen intergenerational ties by capturing family histories, everyday stories, business achievements, and collective resilience, making it possible to pass along for generations vital knowledge and cultural heritage. Recognition of Black historic sites supports efforts to counteract displacement and exclusion, reinforcing cultural landmarks and empowering communities facing change.

The Carl Maxey Center and local historians can collaborate to collect oral histories, conduct archival research, inform commemorative sites, and produce exhibits, publications, or digital storytelling platforms. Community scanning days (to digitize photographs, documents, and artifacts for public access), oral history panels, and interpretive markers placed at each site can enrich visitor understanding and preserve details about leadership, achievements, and everyday life for Spokane's Black residents.

Several historic Black sites along 5th Avenue and within the East Central neighborhood in Spokane should be commemorated, based on their cultural, social, and historical significance to the community.

1.1c Support and showcase Black-owned businesses

Intentional partnership with Fifth Avenue Forward and other neighborhood-based, Black-led community-based organizations to support existing Black entrepreneurs and attract new ones, targeting City grants and technical assistance into the neighborhood, and reducing systemic barriers in permitting are key actions.

The Sandy Williams Black Business Expo is a leading event in Spokane that celebrates and promotes Black-owned businesses through vendor showcases, networking opportunities, and community engagement. The Expo is organized annually by the Carl Maxey Center and was most recently held at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Family Outreach Center on 5th Avenue. It features vendor showcases, inspiring speakers, and network-building activities, and creates direct pathways for Black entrepreneurs to connect with customers, employment prospects, and other businesses. Continuing to support the Black Business Expo will increase visibility and economic support to Black-owned businesses in the neighborhood. Using vacant lots in the neighborhood and closing the street down for temporary pop-up events can be a complementary tactic to the Expo to build awareness and bring more people to the neighborhood.

The City, Fifth Avenue Forward Coalition, and local organizations such as the TakeAll Coalition can also consider the following actions to support businesses:

- ▶ Contract with Black-led organizations to provide culturally specific one-on-one coaching, bookkeeping support, and digital marketing help to existing and emerging businesses.
- ▶ Simplify permits and right-of-way use (signage, sidewalk seating, pop-up and street vending) along Fifth Avenue.



- ▶ Support coalition building for funding and development resources through TakeAll Coalition, Black Future CoOp Fund, the Building Connections Initiative Cohort through Waters Meet Foundation, and other funding opportunities through local foundations and state funding.
- ▶ Explore strategic partnerships with media companies and creative agencies to help Black-owned businesses reach new audiences and receive recognition for their community impact and innovation.
- ▶ Increase the brand visibility of businesses with out-of-home advertising, including transit ads and murals, which play a vital role in building trust.
- ▶ Promote visibility with hashtags like #BuyBlack and #SupportBlackBusiness, and share positive experiences widely.

1.1d Support community storytelling events and celebrations

Community storytelling events and celebrations serve as catalysts for healing, joy, and education. They honor Spokane's Black heritage, support current residents in shaping their shared future, and foster pride rooted in the neighborhood's enduring spirit. Hosting community storytelling events and celebrations can powerfully honor 5th Avenue's legacy as the heart of Spokane's Black community by bringing residents together to share and preserve their collective history. These gatherings encourage intergenerational connections, amplify local voices, and celebrate cultural achievements, ensuring the stories and struggles of East Central's Black population remain visible and valued.

Storytelling events give longtime residents and Black pioneers a space to share memories and memorabilia, passing knowledge about pivotal places like the Carl Maxey Center, Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center, Larry's Barber Shop, historic churches, and community organizations that have shaped 5th Avenue's fabric. By inviting descendants and community leaders to tell their stories, these events help highlight a rich heritage rooted in resilience and optimism, combating the erasure caused by redlining, displacement, and development pressures.

Continuing to support and strengthen existing annual celebrations is also key to the identity of the neighborhood.

- ▶ These include the SERA Community Celebration in Underhill Park, and neighborhood events for Juneteenth, which feature community vendors, music, dance, poetry, and art that reflect the diversity and vibrancy of the Black community.
- ▶ Activities such as youth film screenings, drop-in art workshops, music performances, and food trucks build bridges across generations and backgrounds while making history accessible and engaging for all ages. Events that honor local leaders like Sandy Williams, Carl Maxey, Frances Scott, Ivan Bush, and Reverend Percy "Happy" Watkins; showcase local and regional Black-owned businesses; and promote the work of organizations such as the Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center, Carl Maxey Center, and Spokane Eastside Reunion Association reinforce the tradition of entrepreneurship, advocacy, and self-determination within the neighborhood.
- ▶ Workshops such as the Black Homeownership Forum, put on by Black Homeownership Spokane, and community gatherings drive

ongoing momentum and break down systemic barriers, supporting financial literacy and anti-displacement efforts.

1.1e Offer and encourage historical education programming

Partnering with local museums and cultural centers to host exhibitions, film screenings, and workshops focused on local Black history can reinforce the actions around historic markers, community events, and celebrations. Successful local models exist that can be replicated; for instance, the Carl Maxey Center has partnered with the Shades of Motherhood network, the City of Spokane, Spokane Libraries, and Eastern WA University on educational exhibitions in the past. One example is the partnership between Carl Maxey Center, Spokane Public Library, and the Spokane Historic Preservation Office in 2023 to host a Community Scanning Day that promoted and preserved stories of Spokane's Black community¹. The Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture (MAC) has successfully hosted events, combining documentaries, youth-created films, and hands-on art activities.

Beginning in 2024, the MAC has hosted annual "Our Stories: Black Families in Spokane," furthering a powerful community-led movement to preserve, share, and celebrate the rich legacy of Spokane's Black residents². Existing assets from other parts of the country, like Habitat for Humanity's Advancing Black Homeownership exhibit at the 2024 Housing Washington conference³, can be installed as visiting exhibits.

¹ <https://spokanelibrary.libnet.info/event/8833728>

² innovia.org/news/northwest-museum-of-arts-and-culture-to-host-our-stories-black-families-in-spokane

³ habitat.org/our-work/advancing-black-homeownership/exhibit



Implementation Steps and Partners

- ▶ Support 5th Avenue Forward as the key sponsor to carry the cultural designation forward, and identify additional community partners to bolster the work.
- ▶ Continue pop-up shops or vendor booths at community events and the Sandy Williams Black Business Expo to connect residents with local Black entrepreneurs.
- ▶ Connect Black-owned businesses with existing grants and increase brand visibility through out-of-home advertising and social media hashtags.
- ▶ Organize events to showcase the storytelling video created for Fifth Avenue Forward and find a permanent home for public access to this film.
- ▶ Install plaques, murals, or public art pieces that honor the legacy of Black families, businesses, and leaders who shaped the neighborhood.
- ▶ Offer volunteer opportunities and encourage community members to participate in planning, storytelling, and educational outreach, ensuring the neighborhood's history remains a living, evolving part of Spokane's identity.
- ▶ Continue and expand partnerships between local organizations like the Carl Maxey Center, Spokane NAACP, and other advocacy groups to ensure that celebrations are inclusive and ongoing, not just limited to single events.
- ▶ Explore creative partnerships that could house a permanent collection for Black history in Spokane.
- ▶ Explore strategic partnerships with media companies and creative agencies to expand the reach and recognition of Black-owned businesses and community storytelling.

SPOTLIGHT



Undesign the Redline Initiative

Undesign the Redline is an interactive exhibit created by Designing the We that explains the history of redlining—the explicit devaluation of residential areas based on race—and other once-legal policies that denied Black residents and other people of color access to homeownership in upper Northwest DC and nationwide. It explores how segregated communities developed in the 20th century and the residual, lasting effect of redlining and other public policies. It acts as a catalyst for change that invites visitors to learn, share, and take action to dismantle systemic discrimination.



designingthewe.com/undesign-the-redline

Strategy 1.2: Beautify 5th Avenue

1.2a Add art and design elements that beautify the neighborhood

Streets and sidewalks are more than places for movement; they can also be places to linger and gather, helping to create a more welcoming and comfortable 5th Avenue neighborhood. Adding buffers between the street and sidewalk—such as trees and vegetation, bike lanes, or parked cars—separates people walking and rolling from vehicle traffic while providing ancillary benefits. Trees provide shade, reduce urban heat, and contribute to a calm and pleasant streetscape.

Adding seating, sidewalk cafes, play equipment, and art can create a sense of place and express the neighborhood's identity. Benches provide resting places for people walking and rolling, and sidewalk cafes support businesses and provide more space for people. In partnership with organizations like the Carl Maxey Center, the City could establish a neighborhood placemaking program that supports pilot projects and temporary installations to test approaches that will resonate with community members.

Intersection improvements and painted crosswalks can effectively beautify the neighborhood, especially when coordinated with bus stop upgrades (see bus stop toolkit action in **Strategy 2.4**). Smaller scale changes, like changing the barbed wire fences along vacant lots, can also make the neighborhood more inviting.

This space has a deep history.
Beautify without gentrifying.

Implementation Steps and Partners

- ▶ Partner and collaborate with community members and organizations to create a mural with Airlite paint, which absorbs pollutants from the air, at a key location in the neighborhood.
- ▶ Install temporary wayfinding interventions, leveraging recent branding efforts for the neighborhood.
- ▶ Design gateways, wayfinding, signage, banners, and flags with a cohesive branding and in partnership with local artists.



SPOTLIGHT

Spokane Arts Asphalt Art Program

Transforming streets and crosswalks into public art installations, the Spokane Arts Asphalt Art Program enriches neighborhoods while helping calm traffic. This pilot program will run for at least three years, with Spokane Arts partnering with neighborhoods and local artists to create murals painted directly onto intersections and crosswalks.

These murals showcase local creativity while slowing traffic and beautifying neglected areas. By using streets as canvases, asphalt art brings more art into daily life and strengthens neighborhood identity, pride, and sense of place. Designed and painted with community involvement, these murals also bring people together and add energy and character to Spokane's streets.



spokanearts.org/programs/asphalt-art

Strategy 1.3: Organize shared experiences that reflect today's diversity

1.3a Continue and create new celebrations of arts, culture, and heritage

As one of Spokane's most ethnically and racially diverse communities, the East Central and 5th Avenue areas offer an opportunity to not only support, but to create new celebrations of the vibrant arts, culture, and heritage in the neighborhood. Local celebrations of citywide heritage days, such as African Diversity Heritage Day, Asian, Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Heritage Day, and Native American Heritage Day, can foster greater neighborhood recognition, belonging, and pride.

1.3b Develop local partnerships to create inclusive, representative events

Expanding events, celebrations, pop-ups, and community gatherings help promote physical and emotional well-being, foster social connections, and help with community healing. Ongoing community engagement and close partnership with local organizations can ensure that events and celebrations are inclusive spaces of belonging that reflect the racial, cultural, and economic diversity of the neighborhood.

Implementation Steps and Partners

- ▶ Partner with local businesses, artists, and farmers to host a farmers' market on 5th Avenue.
- ▶ Establish an annual community event that is unique to the neighborhood, promotes the area, supports neighborhood diversity, and encourages visitors.



SPOTLIGHT

St. Petersburg's African American Heritage Trail

This self-guided walking tour covers more than a dozen blocks in downtown St. Petersburg, Florida, providing an overview of African American influence in the community. The trail includes 19 markers that identify the people and places significant to the community's history. Created by the African American Heritage Association, a non-profit "dedicated to preserving and teaching the rich history of black St. Petersburg," the trail is divided into two segments that focus on different eras in the community's and city's development. It chronicles the first 100 years of African American culture, community, and contribution to the city and is visited by thousands of people each year.



stpete.org/residents/parks___recreation/african_american_heritage_trail.php

SPOTLIGHT

Indianapolis Cultural Trail

Indy's Cultural Trail is a 10-mile urban bicycle and pedestrian path that connects neighborhoods, cultural districts, and entertainment venues while serving as the hub of the city's greenway system. The initial trail and its extensions have been a significant undertaking, requiring funding from partnerships with local foundations, the City of Indianapolis, and a non-profit organization that manages the trail. The Cultural Trail has also benefited from a partnership with Pacers Bikeshare, which offers free bikeshare access to all county residents. The trail sees thousands of people walking, rolling, and biking each day and has played an important role in neighborhood revitalization on Indy's near-east and south sides.



<https://indyculturaltrail.org/>

2 CONNECTIVITY

A well-connected neighborhood promotes community health, strengthens social connectivity, benefits local businesses, and even improves air quality. The 5th Avenue community has expressed the desire to improve the experience of getting around the neighborhood with improved safety and ease of access for active transportation modes. The built environment can promote walking, biking, and rolling by offering a variety of destinations, compact blocks, lighting, well maintained and connected sidewalks, landscaped buffers alongside walking areas to provide shade and separation from the street, and places for occasional rest such as benches and local destinations. The strategies and actions in this goal align under this vision of a well-connected 5th Avenue.



Top Priorities

Make streets and sidewalks safer and more comfortable; enhance access to transit

Connectivity Strategies

Strategy 2.1: Make the neighborhood more accessible

Strategy 2.2: Make streets and sidewalks safer and more comfortable

Strategy 2.3: Support neighborhood and district connectivity

Strategy 2.4: Enhance Access to Transit

Existing Conditions

Safe physical connections in the sidewalk, bicycle infrastructure, and transit networks enable social connections, which in turn strengthen and enrich a community. Safety in the 5th Avenue area is a major community priority, as sidewalk gaps suppress commercial activity, inhibit use of parks, and make for unsafe and incomplete routes for school children (Figure 19). This gap, coupled with high vehicle speeds and uncontrolled intersections, creates conditions in which children who live a matter of blocks from school opt out of walking or biking because of the safety risks.

Between 2017 and 2024, there were three traffic fatalities in the 5th Avenue area. Based on 2024 data, the majority of car crashes were along the 5th Avenue corridor, along South Thor Street, and near Frances Scott Elementary School. **The fatal and serious crashes are concentrated on 3rd Avenue, Altamont Street, Thor Street, and Havana Street.**

During engagement for this plan, 5th Avenue community members mentioned walkability and pedestrian infrastructure more than any other theme. People linked the availability and quality of a pedestrian experience to a sense of community, safety, and small business development. Walkability comments focused on creating foot traffic in commercial areas and creating access to parks, libraries, and other community amenities. Specific suggestions included improving street lighting, seating, sidewalk completion, strategic placement of crosswalks, and possibly a no-car pedestrian zone.

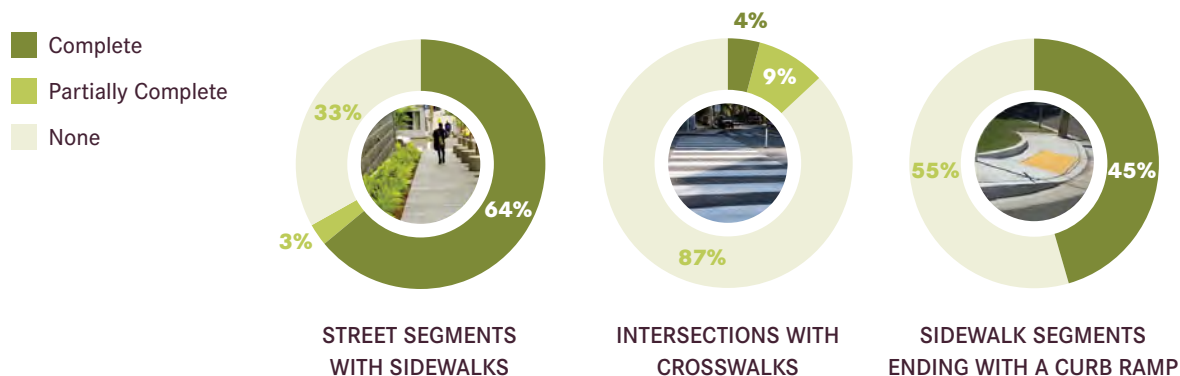
Closely related are common themes related to traffic calming and planning. **Both the volume and speed of traffic are a major concern to community members, affecting not only pedestrian and bicycle safety but also noise, air quality, and ambience.** Community engagement activities received many suggestions for

modifying traffic patterns, bump-outs, speed humps, lane narrowing and other strategies to calm traffic.

Several comments lauded recent improvements to the Ben Burr Trail, but would like to see **further improvements to connectivity and accessibility for bikers transitioning to and from the trail to access neighborhood amenities.** This may include parking for Ben Burr Trail access, bikeways along 5th Avenue, and transition points on both sides of the trail to Perry and to 5th Ave.

| 18 | Datapoints for Sidewalk Network Completeness

Source: City of Spokane, 2025



The sidewalk infrastructure in the 5th Avenue community is mixed, with some areas in good shape and others where maintenance and investment concerns persist. There remains about one-third (36%) of street segments that either have incomplete sidewalks or no sidewalks at all.



During engagement for this plan, community members mentioned walkability and pedestrian infrastructure more than any other theme.

Strategy 2.1: Make the neighborhood more accessible

An accessible neighborhood welcomes people of all ages and abilities and supports active modes of travel—it's a place where residents can easily and comfortably reach schools, parks, and bus stops. A complete and connected sidewalk network, curb ramps at intersections, well-maintained infrastructure, pedestrian-scale lighting, and wayfinding to community destinations all play a role in encouraging people to walk, roll, bike, and take the bus.

Today, parts of the 5th Avenue neighborhood have these elements of a connected neighborhood, but other areas have missing or inconsistent infrastructure. Residents have consistently expressed a desire for

improved accessibility, especially near Frances Scott Elementary School, Liberty and Underhill Parks, across Freya St/Thor St, and throughout the neighborhood to more destinations. **Figure 19** highlights places in the neighborhood that lack basic accessibility features and points to opportunity areas.

Physical infrastructure is expensive, and the actions within this strategy require significant resources. But they also present opportunities for impactful City actions that responds to community needs and partnerships with businesses, community organizations, and residents. The implementation steps focus on setting priorities and exploring lower-cost and tactical approaches to make a near-term impact.



2.1a Connect the sidewalk network to key destinations

A complete sidewalk network is the foundation of an accessible, connected neighborhood and a transportation system that supports people of all ages and abilities. While most streets in the 5th Avenue neighborhood have sidewalks, there are notable gaps near Underhill Park and to the east of Frances Scott Elementary School (see **Figure 19**). The City should work with the community to prioritize key locations for sidewalks and consider non-traditional options for new facilities. These may include shared paths in off-street locations, as well as low-cost walkways on residential streets.

| 19 | Missing Infrastructure in the 5th Avenue Neighborhood

Source: City of Spokane, 2025



2.1b Make street crossings more accessible

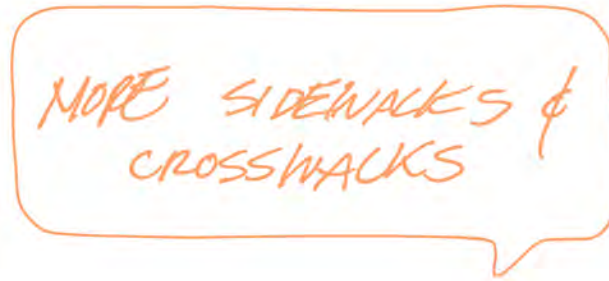
Well maintained curb ramps throughout the 5th Avenue neighborhood is a critical step to make the community more accessible for residents and visitors. Curb ramps make our streets and sidewalks usable for everyone and create a more welcoming and pedestrian-friendly neighborhood. When combined with accessible curb ramps, bump-outs help to shorten crossing distances. Shorter crossings make intersections easier to navigate for children, older adults, and people with disabilities and improve safety for everyone.

Today, there are curb ramps in most of the neighborhood, although some are older and do not meet ADA accessibility requirements. This creates barriers for people using wheelchairs or walkers, pushing strollers, or navigating with limited vision. Installing ADA-compliant curb ramps with tactile warning strips will support more accessible connections to parks, schools, transit stops, and community destinations. Prioritizing bump-outs near these same community destinations will make the 5th Avenue neighborhood's many amenities easier to access for people of all ages and abilities.

2.1c Invest in maintenance to keep existing infrastructure usable

Investing in maintenance helps to ensure that existing sidewalks, crosswalks, and other pedestrian infrastructure in the 5th Avenue neighborhood remain safe, functional, and accessible. While new projects are needed to close gaps, cracked and heaving sidewalks, deteriorating curb ramps, and worn crosswalk markings make it challenging for people to move throughout the neighborhood.

Regular upkeep, such as repairing cracks, clearing debris, repainting crossings, and trimming overgrown vegetation, can significantly improve the day-to-day experience for people walking and rolling without requiring new infrastructure. Prioritizing maintenance



extends the lifespan of existing facilities, reduces hazards, and demonstrates a level of care for the neighborhood. The City should develop an inventory of maintenance needs and prioritize repairs near schools, bus stops, parks, and businesses.

2.1d Improve wayfinding signage to support easy navigation

Improving wayfinding signage can make the 5th Avenue neighborhood more accessible by helping residents and visitors navigate to key destinations, including schools, parks, transit stops, and local businesses. Clear signage can highlight community assets and increase awareness of amenities or destinations that may otherwise go unnoticed. Wayfinding can also foster community pride by reflecting the neighborhood's unique identity and drawing attention to cultural centers and businesses.

The [Wayfinding and Gateway Signage Project](#) is a collaborative effort between Spokane County, the City of Spokane, City of Spokane Valley, City of Liberty Lake, West Plains, Downtown Spokane Partnership, Visit Spokane, Washington Department of Transportation, and the Spokane Regional Transportation Council. With a focus on consistent signage throughout the region, this wayfinding program could be expanded. A temporary wayfinding program that uses low-cost materials like corrugated plastic signs, painted stencils, or decals should also be considered. This approach could be used to test

routes and build excitement while gathering input on the types of wayfinding the community would prefer. These approaches can celebrate the neighborhood's assets and strengthen connections between residents and the places that define their community. Wayfinding improvements could include:

- ▶ Public access to the Ben Burr Trail from the study area, while existent in places, lacks clarity and ease in access.
- ▶ Public access awareness to Underhill Park and Liberty Park should also be bolstered. These parks are located at the far edges of the community and lack directional signage at key moments within the neighborhood.
- ▶ Signage and wayfinding for Liberty Park should be added, at a minimum, at key intersections of E 5th Avenue with S Thor and S Freya Streets.
- ▶ Additional locations along E 5th Avenue should also be considered at key intra-neighborhood connections, such as E 5th Avenue and S



Painted stencils and other temporary wayfinding can identify safe paths, promote school safety, and advance multiple "Connectivity" actions. Source: City of Auckland.

Altamont Street. Signage to promote community centers and the neighborhood business area would support more awareness.

- ▶ Signage for Underhill Park should be considered at key intersections of E Hartson Avenue with S Thor and S Freya Streets, S Altamont Street with E Hartson Avenue, and E 5th Avenue with S Fiske and S Regal Streets.

Implementation Steps and Partners

- ▶ Conduct a community walking and rolling audit to identify and document sidewalk gaps, missing curb ramps, damaged pavement, faded crosswalks and markings, low-light areas, and overgrown vegetation.
- ▶ Develop a prioritization approach for new infrastructure (e.g., sidewalks and curb ramps) and maintenance projects, focusing on schools, parks, bus stops, and other key pedestrian areas.
- ▶ Establish a regular maintenance schedule with dedicated resources, exploring partnerships and new sources of funding.
- ▶ Pilot a temporary wayfinding installation along 5th Avenue using sidewalk paint, decals, or corrugated plastic signs to connect people to important destinations.
- ▶ Partner with businesses and nonprofits to install lighting near shops, transit stops, and activity centers.

SPOTLIGHT

Downtown Spokane Innovation Alleyways

In September 2024, the Spokane City Council created a partnership with the Downtown Spokane Partnership (DSP), allocating approximately \$450,000 of ARPA funds for various projects. One of these projects focuses on alley activation, aimed at improving the community's sense of safety while walking through downtown alleys. The lighting is intended to complement large-scale murals by Spokane-based artists to create a more welcoming space Downtown.



<https://my.spokanecity.org/projects/innovation-alleyways/>

Strategy 2.2: Make streets and sidewalks safer and more comfortable

Making streets and sidewalks safer and more comfortable in the 5th Avenue neighborhood is a top community priority. Residents have consistently voiced concerns about speeding traffic, intersections that are difficult to cross, and other conditions that feel unsafe for people walking, rolling, and biking. While the number of serious-injury and fatal collisions has remained relatively low in the neighborhood (**Figure 20**), work remains to achieve the City's Vision Zero goals.

The actions in this strategy focus on improving safety through a more robust traffic calming program and intersection redesigns that prioritize people walking and rolling. Special attention is given to the area around Frances Scott Elementary where families have expressed an urgent need for safer crossings and slower vehicle speeds—and to programs that connect older adults and all neighborhood residents to important destinations, like the Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center and Carl Maxey Center.

Traffic calming
on 5th between
Freya and Havana—
make it safer to
bike through.



2.2a Expand traffic calming and improve intersections to create safer crossings

Lower vehicle speeds translate to less severe injuries in the event of a collision. Controlling speeds on both arterial streets like 3rd Avenue and 5th Avenue and on neighborhood streets throughout the community will contribute to a safer environment for people walking, rolling, biking, and taking the bus. The Spokane Safe Streets for All (Traffic Calming) program was formed in 2010 and uses a combination of education, enforcement, and engineering tools to shift traffic patterns and reduce speeds. Traffic calming offers many benefits including:

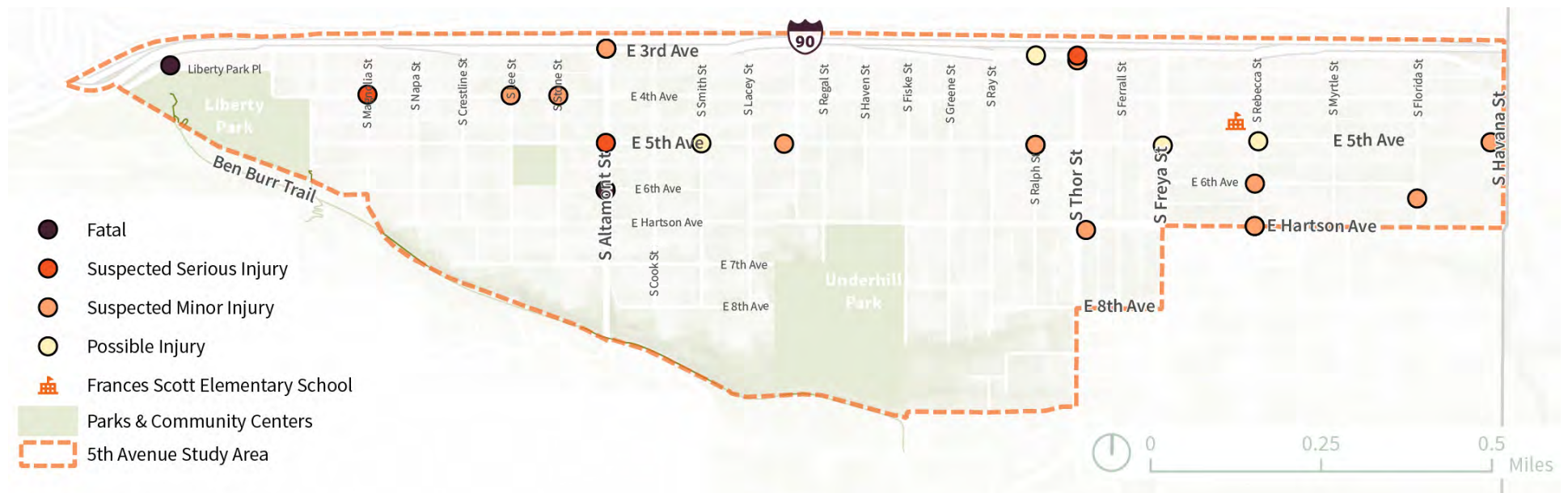
- ▶ Improves neighborhood safety and livability
- ▶ Advances equity by improving access to transportation for all

- ▶ Enhances sustainability by reducing vehicle miles traveled
- ▶ Improves health by upgrading facilities for people walking, rolling, and biking

Calming techniques can include roadway narrowing, pavement markings, and signs. The City has implemented several traffic calming projects in the 5th Avenue neighborhood, such as road narrowing on Hartson Ave with the 2025 sidewalk project, crosswalks at Hartson Avenue and Thor Street, signs on Rebecca Street between 4th Avenue and 5th Avenue, and bumpouts on 5th Avenue between Haven Street and Fiske Street.

Traffic calming near Frances Scott Elementary is especially important because of the school's proximity to Freya/Thor Streets, I-90, and the future US-395. Vehicles in the area often move at higher-than-posted speeds and cut through on 4th and 5th Avenues by the school, creating risks for children walking, rolling, biking, or being dropped off by caregivers.

The City should continue to implement calming measures such as reduced speed limits, sidewalk widening, enhancements like raised crosswalks or intersections, and curb extensions to slow traffic and improve driver awareness, helping ensure a safer environment for the school's students and families.



| 20 | Pedestrian and Bicycle Involved Crashes, 2017-2024

Between 2017 and 2024, there were three traffic fatalities in the 5th Avenue area. Based on 2024 data, the majority of car crashes were along the 5th Avenue corridor, along S Thor St, and near Frances Scott Elementary School. The fatal and serious crashes are concentrated on 3rd Avenue, Altamont Street, Thor Street, and Havana Street. Source: City of Spokane, 2025

| 21 | Potential Key Intersection Improvements

Image: CAST Architecture



- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| ① Shade structures on buildings | ⑥ Complete, continuous sidewalks on both sides of street |
| ② Tree canopy | ⑦ High-visibility crosswalks |
| ③ Bike lane | ⑧ Sidewalks with planting buffers |
| ④ Bump-out | ⑨ Pedestrian light |
| ⑤ Mix of uses | |

Improving intersections throughout the 5th Avenue community is a priority for enhancing safety, accessibility, and connectivity. Today, few intersections in the neighborhood have signal or stop controls, marked crosswalks, and curb ramps. Although the City standard is not to use intersection control on local streets, uncontrolled intersections and unmarked crossings can create barriers for kids going to school, seniors traveling to community centers, and families accessing parks. Community members have highlighted uncontrolled intersections, especially near Frances Scott Elementary and other community hubs, as top priorities for improvement.

By redesigning key intersections with features like high-visibility crosswalks, bumpouts, curb ramps with tactile warning strips, stop controls, and improved lighting, the City can increase pedestrian visibility, improve driver awareness, and help to ensure that people of all ages and abilities can cross the 5th Avenue neighborhood's streets confidently and safely. Improving intersections to make them more comfortable and accessible plays a role in connecting fragmented routes into continuous paths that make walking more practical for more trips.

2.2b Implement safety projects and programs near neighborhood schools

Through our community outreach efforts, including events at Frances Scott Elementary School, people consistently highlighted the need to improve safety for students. Interstate 90 bisects the school boundary, and students living on the north side are required to cross over the freeway to get to school. City streets leading to and around the school, like Thor and Freya Streets, are busy arterials that are often undesirable to walk along or pose challenges for students.

Additionally, families in the area also attend Grant Elementary School and Franklin Elementary School, located outside of the 5th Avenue study area but within the East Central Neighborhood. Both schools are

primarily accessed by Altamont Street, a narrow and winding street with limited visibility and few pedestrian improvements leading south from 5th Avenue. Adding traffic calming, marked crosswalks, pedestrian crossing signs, and flashing beacons (RRFBs) would help to highlight the importance of Altamont Street as a school connection. The City should continue to work with Spokane Public Schools and elementary school staff to expand safety-focused programs and accessibility to and from schools within and connected to the 5th Avenue area. Opportunities include:

- ▶ Pop-up or demonstration projects that test infrastructure improvements;
- ▶ Designating more safe and comfortable walking, rolling, and biking routes;
- ▶ Developing student- and caregiver-led programs (described in **Strategy 2.2c**).
- ▶ Installing temporary infrastructure in conjunction with an event, such as Walk to School Day, can highlight the need for more permanent facilities while giving parents, kids, and school staff the opportunity to test how a new treatment functions.

2.2c Expand “safe routes” programming

Designating routes to community destinations, especially routes that work well for certain groups, can be an easy way to encourage people to walk, roll, and bike to neighborhood destinations. There are many types of “safe routes” programs, including routes for kids going to schools, routes for seniors, and routes to parks and transit stops. A comprehensive safe routes program includes education and encouragement, as well as infrastructure improvements, to support safer and more comfortable travel for people of all ages and abilities.

Safe Routes to Schools programs are well established, both nationally and in Spokane. Programs include



SPOTLIGHT

Frances Scott Elementary School Safe Routes to School

The City of Spokane completed a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) project in 2025 to support pedestrian safety around Frances Scott Elementary School for students and residents alike. Funded by the Federal SRTS grant and Local Arterial Street Fund Match, the project added sidewalks, curb extensions (bumpouts), and enhanced crosswalks in two locations: Hartson Avenue and Rebecca Street. This traffic calming measure will slow vehicles along key streets and improve visibility, creating safer routes for students walking to and from school.



<https://my.spokanecity.org/projects/scott-elementary-safe-routes-to-school/>

SPOTLIGHT

Regal Elementary School Walking School Bus

Regal is one of four Northeast Spokane elementary schools—alongside Bemiss, Cooper, and Stevens—that received a five-year 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) grant in 2023 in partnership with Communities in Schools of Spokane County. The grant provides extended learning opportunities in under-resourced communities. At Regal, where over three-quarters of students qualify for free or reduced lunch, the Walking School Bus has emerged as a meaningful support structure. Groups of students walk to school together under the supervision of school staff and volunteers, helping to improve safety, build stronger routines, and reduce tardiness.



<https://www.spokaneschools.org/article/2238832>

designated walking, rolling, and biking routes; walking and biking school buses; crossing guards; incentives for non-driving travel; and infrastructure improvements to ensure kids are safe on their trips to and from school. The City should continue to pursue WSDOT Safe Routes to Schools funding, supplementing state grants with local resources. Seeking opportunities to expand programming available in other parts of the city—such as the partnership between Gonzaga University and Northeast Spokane neighborhoods—is another way to increase the number of kids who can safely walk, roll, and bike to Frances Scott Elementary and other area elementary schools.

To complement programs for elementary school kids, the City could establish a Safe Routes for Seniors program. The 5th Avenue neighborhood has a relatively large proportion of older adults, many of whom face mobility challenges when navigating uneven sidewalks, crossing wide streets with short signal times, or walking and rolling in poorly lit areas. Providing safe, comfortable ways for older adults to access community destinations (e.g., parks, community centers, clinics) would support their physical and mental health and keep them connected to friends and neighbors. The most successful Safe Routes for Seniors programs engage older adults in identifying important destinations, selecting preferred pathways, and advocating for infrastructure improvements, such as longer signal timing, benches for rest, smoother sidewalks, and better lighting. They also provide travel training to ensure people know how to reach key destinations and use the bus for trips outside of the neighborhood.

Improving connections to and between parks with designated routes can help increase access to open space. The City should explore a Safe Routes to Parks program that identifies and marks safe, comfortable pathways between parks and publishes a map for 5th Avenue residents. Similarly, advancing a Safe Routes to

Transit program would encourage residents to take the bus for more trips, making safe walking, rolling, and biking routes to bus stops easier to find and use.

Implementation Steps and Partners

- ▶ Develop a community-driven program to pilot neighborhood traffic calming with installations such as painted bumpouts, temporary traffic circles, and intersection daylighting projects.
- ▶ Install a demonstration project at Frances Scott Elementary School near 5th Avenue and Rebecca Street in conjunction with Walk to School Day to provide more space for kids walking, biking, and rolling to school.
- ▶ Explore improvements to Altamont Street and parallel routes to support enhanced safety for families and students getting to from the 5th Avenue area to Grant Elementary School and Franklin Elementary School.
- ▶ Partner with an organization to create a walking school bus program to include the 5th Avenue neighborhood.
- ▶ Host community walk audits to identify and map safe routes to area elementary schools, Underhill and Liberty Parks, community destinations, and major bus stops, prioritizing them for future improvements.
- ▶ Explore opportunities to reduce speed limits in high-use areas along 5th Avenue, especially those that serve kids and older adults like the Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center, Friendship Gardens, SERA, and Carl Maxey Center.
- ▶ Explore traffic calming improvements for safety and connectivity at 5th Avenue and Stone Street by the Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center, including bump-outs and raised crosswalks or intersection.

Strategy 2.3: Support neighborhood and district connectivity

A connected neighborhood is about more than pathways to major destinations: it is a place that is both easy to navigate internally and has comfortable and seamless links to the neighborhoods around it. Strategies to support neighborhood and district connectivity will mean that 5th Avenue residents can walk, roll, bike, and take the bus for more trips, leading to increased social cohesion and improved health and wellbeing.

Today, 5th Avenue is bordered by major transportation corridors and geological features that make connecting to nearby neighborhoods challenging. On the north,

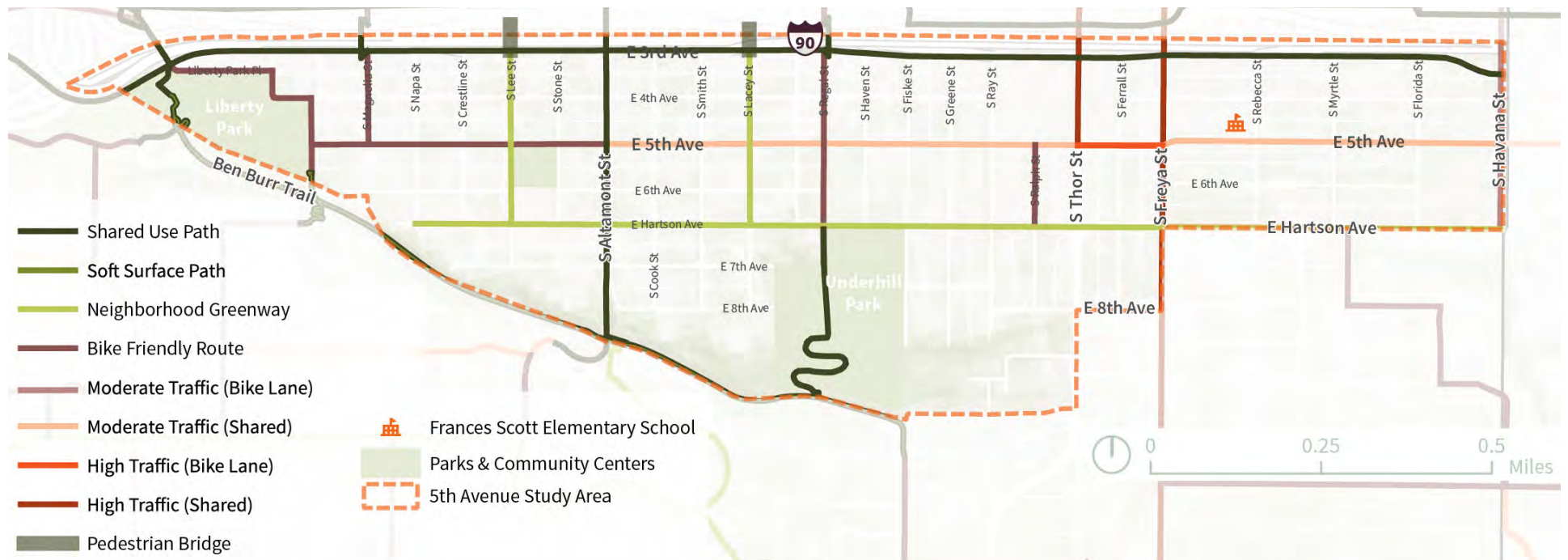
I-90 separates the neighborhood from the Sprague Union District, creating a barrier for residents who might otherwise walk or roll to nearby shops and services. On the south, the Ben Burr Trail frames the southern ridge of the neighborhood, nearly 100 feet above the nearby dead-end streets. The City of Spokane's Bicycle Master Plan outlines a vision to make it easier for people of all ages and abilities to bike safely throughout the city, but separated, protected facilities are limited in the neighborhood.

To further increase neighborhood connectivity, it is important to advance a safe, comfortable, connected



| 22 | Proposed 5th Avenue Bike Network

Source: City of Spokane, 2025



bicycle network; support seamless connections between modes of travel; celebrate the 5th Avenue neighborhood's past and present; and link people beyond the neighborhood's boundaries. People who live and work in and visit 5th Avenue must have both the information and facilities they need to connect to neighborhood assets and enjoy nearby amenities.

2.3a Expand the bike network throughout the neighborhood

Today, 5th Avenue residents have few bike facilities that meet the needs of people of all ages and abilities. There are currently no marked bike lanes in the neighborhood, and the Ben Burr Trail is the only fully separated facility. There are "bike friendly routes" on both quieter neighborhood and higher-traffic volume streets. The designated routes and markings are an important first step, but they are not facilities on which most people feel comfortable riding.

The City's Bicycle Master Plan outlines a vision for new connections in the neighborhood (**Figure 22**), including a shared-use path on 3rd Ave to provide a safe, separated east-west route parallel to I-90. Using a network approach, the City should focus on filling gaps between existing and soon-to-be constructed routes with greenways, bicycle boulevards, and temporary bike lanes, seeking opportunities to advance priority bike projects more quickly.

Building its existing programs, the City could use low-cost materials to establish designated and protected routes through more of the neighborhood. Upgrading existing "bike friendly routes" with traffic calming, traffic diverters, signs, and markings would help more people feel comfortable biking on neighborhood streets. The City could also use flexible posts and wheel stops to mark separated space for people biking, focusing on connections to Frances Scott, neighborhood parks, bus stops, and areas with high rates of bicycle-involved collisions, such as the 4th Ave and Magnolia St and the 5th Avenue and

Altamont St intersections. By connecting existing bicycle infrastructure and expanding the bike network, residents would enjoy safer, more direct routes to more community destinations.

2.3b Use neighborhood mobility hubs to integrate modes

To support better access to the neighborhood's transportation options and make it easier for residents to move into, out of, and around the neighborhood, the City should pilot a neighborhood mobility hubs program. Mobility hubs are locations where multiple modes of transportation, such as bikes, scooters, transit, and walking and rolling paths, intersect and help to support sustainable, low-cost, and active travel options. Often developed at or near bus stops, they can include infrastructure (e.g., sidewalks, bike paths, bumpouts), as well as seating, scooter parking zones, bike racks, and wayfinding.

Piloting a mobility hubs program would give the City and residents an opportunity to determine what types of features and amenities are most valuable for the 5th Avenue community. Developing temporary mobility hubs near destinations such as the Carl Maxey Center and Frances Scott Elementary would enhance transportation access, equity, and convenience, and foster a sense of community as residents enjoy additional public space.

2.3c Complete and enhance key connections

Better connecting the 5th Avenue community to neighborhoods across the city is a priority for residents and businesses. Focusing on missing links in the existing trail network and enhancements to underpasses and other pedestrian connections are two ways the City can help to address this need. Underpass improvements can be expanded beyond murals to create a greater sense of safety and comfort, including lighting improvements, wayfinding, sidewalk widening, and barriers or buffers from traffic.

The Ben Burr Trail is a high-quality facility on the south edge of the 5th Avenue neighborhood that is currently difficult to access. The City should explore approaches to link the streets that dead-end at the ridge to the trail through a combination of wayfinding and low-stress pathways. Additionally, advancing efforts to connect the Ben Burr Trail to Underhill Park, Liberty Park, and the Children of the Sun Trail would create a continuous corridor for walking, biking, and rolling to and through the neighborhood. These connections would improve mobility and increase residents' access to parks and open space, making 5th Avenue a more livable neighborhood.

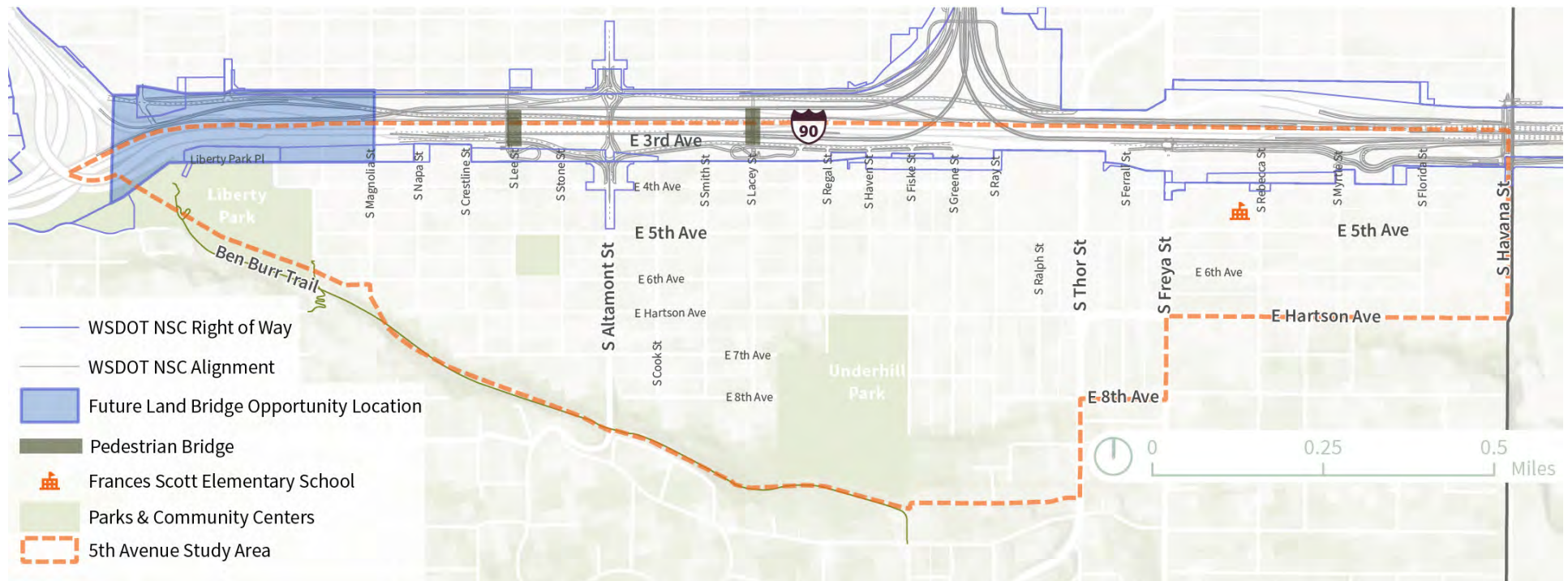
While there are existing public access points for the Ben Burr Trail, they are informal, unclear, and difficult to find and use. The City should better define these access points as formal trailheads with signs and wayfinding, highlighting both the Ben Burr Trail and broader regional connections. Providing amenities such as trash and recycling bins, restrooms, drinking fountains, lighting, seating, and limited parking would also improve community access to the trail.



The mural at 3rd Avenue and S Altamont Street, by local artist Daniel Lopez (Godffiti) is an example of the City's efforts to improve underpasses throughout Spokane.
Source: Spokane Talk

| 23 | WSDOT Project Map Adjacent to 5th Avenue

Source: City of Spokane, 2025



2.3d Address barriers and improve I-90 crossings

In past engagements, 5th Avenue residents have consistently mentioned the need to improve connections to the East Sprague Business District and the Perry District, noting the importance of increasing access to local businesses and resources. Today, there are just four points of connection north across I-90 for people driving and two for people walking, rolling, and biking. Similarly, connections under and across the southern ridge include one underpass and one pedestrian pathway.

Currently, WSDOT plans to rebuild the existing pedestrian bridges over I-90—better connecting 5th

Avenue to the East Sprague District—with construction expected to start in summer 2027 (**Figure 23**).

Enhancing connectivity between 5th Avenue and the Perry District will require more focused planning that explores a wide range of strategies. From wayfinding to hill-climb assists to new or improved pedestrian and bicyclist connections, the City should work with the neighborhoods to consider near- and longer-term opportunities to better link their key destinations over and through the ridge. More information about WSDOT progress is available at nscplace.com.

Implementation Steps and Partners

- ▶ Develop a neighborhood greenway or slow-streets program to upgrade “bike friendly routes” with traffic calming, diverters, and wayfinding.
- ▶ Partner with the community organizations like the Carl Maxey Center and the MLK Center to pilot a neighborhood mobility hub program with a basic toolkit of low-cost materials.
- ▶ Host a community storytelling workshop to identify sites and people to highlight through a heritage route.
- ▶ Install temporary wayfinding to increase the visibility and connectivity of trails.



| 24 | Perry Street Underpass Mural Conceptual Rendering

Image: Leah Murphy



- ▶ Continue to work with WSDOT to advance plans for enhanced I-90 pedestrian connections.
- ▶ Seek grant funding to rebuild the pathway connecting Hartson Avenue (south of Ben Burr Trail) to Liberty Park. The rebuild should meet ADA standards for grade, widen the pathway, and install lighting.
- ▶ Provide an opportunity for secondary level trail connections via the public right of way. These connections should have less development intensity than the formalized trailheads at Liberty Park and Underhill Park. Formalized parking is not recommended in these locations to respect adjacent homeowners. Simple site amenities such as litter bins, benches, and public lighting should be included to promote safe and inviting connections.

Strategy 2.4: Enhance access to transit

Seamless access to public transit—coupled with high-quality transit service—expands the range of destinations that people can reach without a car and provides important connections to opportunities across the city and region. While the most common type of transit is buses and other shared vehicles operated by a government agency, the definition of public transit has broadened to include microtransit and shared micromobility devices, such as scooters and bicycles.

Today, the primary bus corridor in the neighborhood is along 5th Avenue, with nine stops served by Spokane Transit Authority's (STA) Route 94 toward downtown and Millwood. Additionally, Route 34 connects people to Spokane Community College and South Hill, and Route 294 transports kids to three elementary schools and Ferris High School. The number of routes serving the neighborhood is important, but equally important is how often the buses arrive, how many hours of the day they operate, and how reliable they are.

Beyond service, the experience someone has while waiting for and riding the bus or using a micromobility device is an important part of making transit a viable option for more trips. Of the 27 bus stops in the 5th Avenue neighborhood, only five have shelters, and most lack basic amenities (**Figure 27**). Actions to improve bus stops, increase the number of shelters, and expand access to micromobility services are all important to create better connections to and within the 5th Avenue community.



The bus stop at 5th Avenue and Greene Street, which lacks a shelter and amenities, is typical of stops throughout the neighborhood.



SPOTLIGHT

Reconnect Rochester's Bus Stop Cubes

In 2014, Reconnect Rochester developed an idea for flexible, modular seating that could help to address the lack of benches at bus stops. The simple two-foot cubes were inspired by children's blocks and were initially wood blocks built in partnership with the City of Rochester and Habitat for Humanity. The wood cubes were seasonal, on the street from May through October. Today, the cubes are made of fiberglass for year-round use and are installed based on local requests and funding partnerships, focusing on stops that are well used but lack seating.



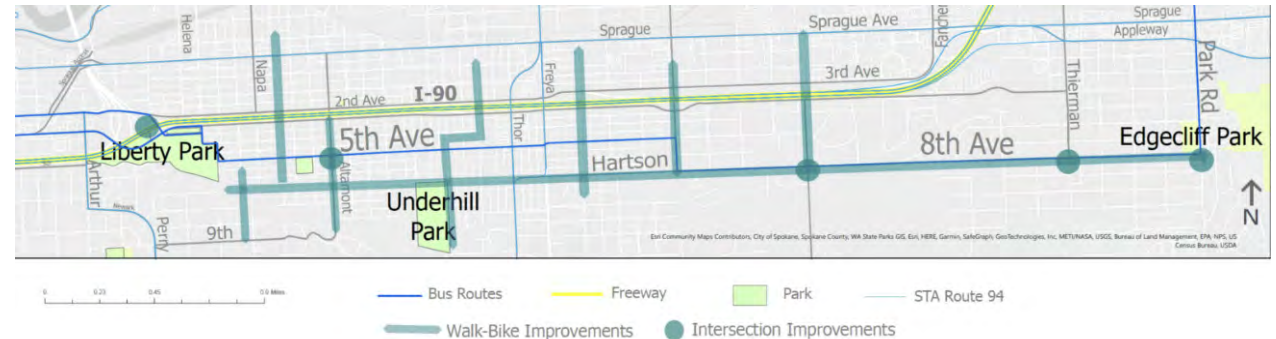
<https://reconnectrochester.org/2014/11/do-it-yourself-bus-stop-seat-cube/>

Spokane Transit Authority partnered with the cities of Spokane and Spokane Valley on a federal Reconnecting Communities grant application in 2023 to provide multimodal transportation improvements along transit Route 94 Millwood/East Central. The Liberty to Edgecliff Improvements for Accessibility (LEIA) program proposed to reconnect communities along Interstate 90 disproportionately burdened by transportation infrastructure, focusing on 5th and 8th Avenues between Spokane's Liberty Park and Spokane Valley's Edgecliff Park. Though the application was not successful in the last round of federal funding, the proposal highlights the ongoing need for transit and infrastructure improvements in the 5th Avenue area. The LEIA program proposed strategic and focused construction of sidewalks, bicycle facilities, crosswalks, lighting, traffic signals, and transit stops in East Central. This included:

- ▶ Development of Liberty Park Olmsted Overlook Interpretive Site
- ▶ Crossing improvements at the Perry Street underpass
- ▶ New/improved sidewalks and bicycle facilities and pathways on Hartson Avenue as well as north/south streets connecting to 5th Avenue
- ▶ Traffic signal at 5th Avenue and Altamont Street
- ▶ Complete infrastructure improvements on 5th Avenue from Haven Street to Greene Street to support the neighborhood business district
- ▶ Transit access upgrades for Route 94, including sidewalks, ramps, bump-outs, boarding and alighting pads, standard shelter, trash cans, and benches
- ▶ Lighting and environmental upgrades along 5th Avenue
- ▶ 5th Avenue Concept Cross Section (Haven Street to Greene Street)

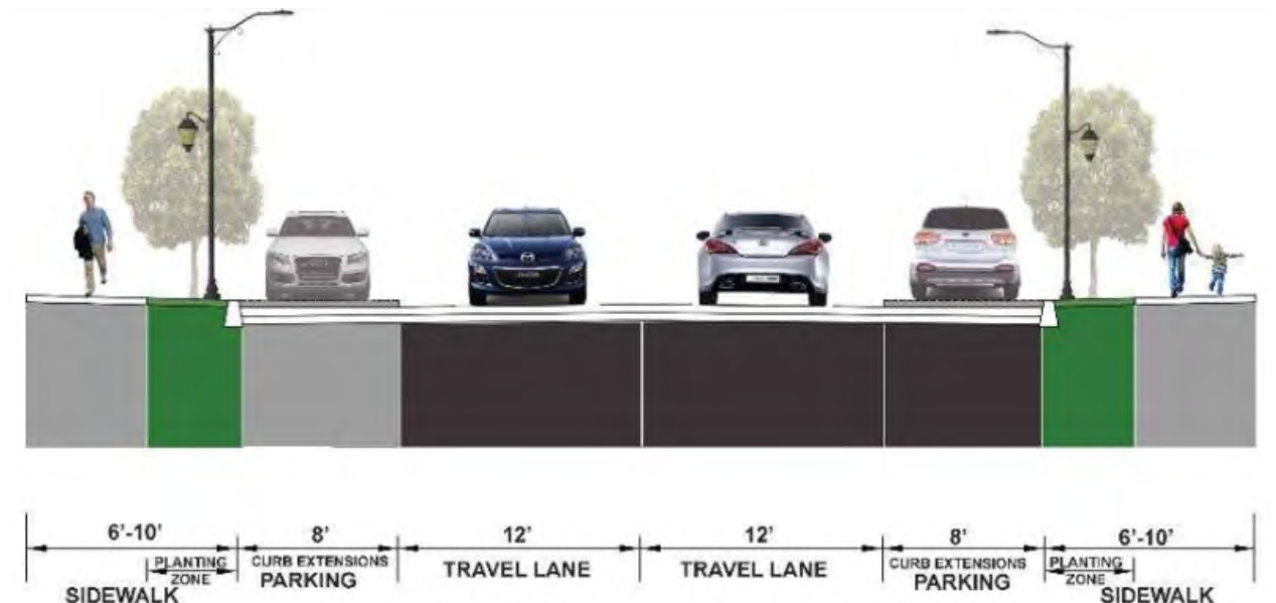
| 25 | 2023 Liberty to Edgecliff Improvements for Accessibility (LEIA) Program Proposed Improvements Map

Image: STA



| 26 | 2023 Liberty to Edgecliff Improvements for Accessibility (LEIA) Program 5th Avenue Conceptual Section (Haven to Greene)

Image: STA



The LEIA program received support from a wide range of community and neighborhood partners, including the Carl Maxey Center, East Central Neighborhood Council, Spokane Public Library, Spokane Public Schools, Washington State Senators and Representatives, and WSDOT. The vision, while not yet fulfilled, offers a comprehensive strategy for STA, City of Spokane, and the community to continue to advocate for funding and completion to improve access, foster equitable development, and reconnect the divided East Central and 5th Avenue community¹.



2.4a Invest in expanded local transit service

Increased transit service in the 5th Avenue neighborhood would improve mobility, community connections, access to opportunity, and equity throughout the area and connections inside and out of the area. Today, STA Route 94 is the primary transit service through the neighborhood, linking people to downtown Spokane and routes that provide access to the city and region. However, to make transit a high-quality travel option for more residents—especially those who rely on the bus—service frequency, span, and reliability must be improved.

The City should explore options to buy additional STA service on select routes, especially those that serve historically underinvested neighborhoods like 5th Avenue. At the same time, 5th Avenue community organizations and residents should advocate for improved service, focusing on nearer-term opportunities to adjust schedules and enhance connections that would better meet the neighborhood's needs. These types of changes would make it easier for more people to use transit and increase access for all 5th Avenue residents.

¹ <https://www.spokanetransit.com/projects/neighborhood-access-equity/>

2.4b Create a bus stop toolkit to improve the rider experience

When the wait for a bus is longer than 10 minutes, having a place to sit, protection from the elements, and a comfortable environment becomes increasingly important. The City should partner with STA to create a bus stop improvement toolkit that includes a combination of temporary and more permanent approaches to enhance the passenger experience, especially at stops along 5th Avenue and near the school, community center, and parks. The toolkit could include seating options, structures to provide shade and weather protection, signs, and various types of lighting. The toolkit could also include design templates for concrete bumpouts into the parking lane and ADA-compliant features to make stops safe and accessible for people of all ages and abilities. To ensure these new features are well maintained, the City and STA could establish partnerships with community organizations, the Carl Maxey Center and Frances Scott Elementary, and neighborhood volunteers.

2.4c Partner to offer more transit shelters

Transit shelters can be expensive, and STA has bus stop design standards that set thresholds for stops to receive shelters (i.e., stops with 25 or more weekday boardings or that serve as transfer points between bus routes). These thresholds limit the number of stops in the 5th Avenue neighborhood that are eligible for STA-provided stops, but there are opportunities for the City and community organizations to play a role in creating more sheltered bus waiting areas.

In some cities, partnerships can be as simple as a local business near a bus stop extending its awning to provide weather protection and shade for transit riders. Other communities have established formal programs that allow businesses and non-profits to purchase new shelters or contribute to enhanced



SPOTLIGHT

Spokane Reimagined

In Spokane, Spokane Reimagined, a local transportation safety advocacy group, community members have built and installed hand-built, hand-painted benches in each of the city's 29 neighborhood districts. The benches were the group's kickoff for the national Week Without Driving challenge and were installed in almost every case next to a bus stop without existing seating, and without the permission or foreknowledge of either the city of Spokane or the Spokane Transit Authority. With its guerrilla bench installation, Spokane Reimagined hopes to underscore its calls for the Spokane Transit Authority to invest in widespread installation of seating at bus stops. Image: Sarah Rose



| 27 | Bus Stops and Shelters in the 5th Avenue Neighborhood

Source: City of Spokane, 2024



shelters. The City should first work with the 5th Avenue community to determine which locations are priorities for shelters. From there, the City could support a partnership program to help achieve the community's goals and create a welcoming transit experience for everyone in the neighborhood.

Priority bus stops for improvements include:

- ▶ Bus stops by the Liberty Park Library, MLK Center and Frances Scott Elementary School, S Pittsburg, 5th Avenue and Stone Street, 5th Avenue and Freya Street (corner of the property 5th and Freya)
- ▶ Thor Street and 8th Avenue and Havana Street and Hartson Avenue
- ▶ Harston Avenue and Thor Street

2.4d Explore a neighborhood microtransit program

Microtransit is an on-demand, flexible public transportation service that blends aspects of traditional, fixed-route public transit with the nimbleness of private ride-hailing services (e.g., taxis, Lyft, Uber). Microtransit services use smaller vehicles—such as minivans and shuttle buses—and serve specific zones. The services adapt to passenger needs rather than operating along designated routes, and they work well in lower-density and more residential areas, often connecting people to higher-frequency transit services as a “first/last mile” service.

The City should work with the 5th Avenue community and STA to explore the possibility of a neighborhood or small-area microtransit program to complement existing services. If STA is unable to support a program, the City could consider contracting microtransit service with a private operator. Organizations such as the Carl Maxey Center could also consider establishing a volunteer-driver program focused on connecting older adults in the community to services.

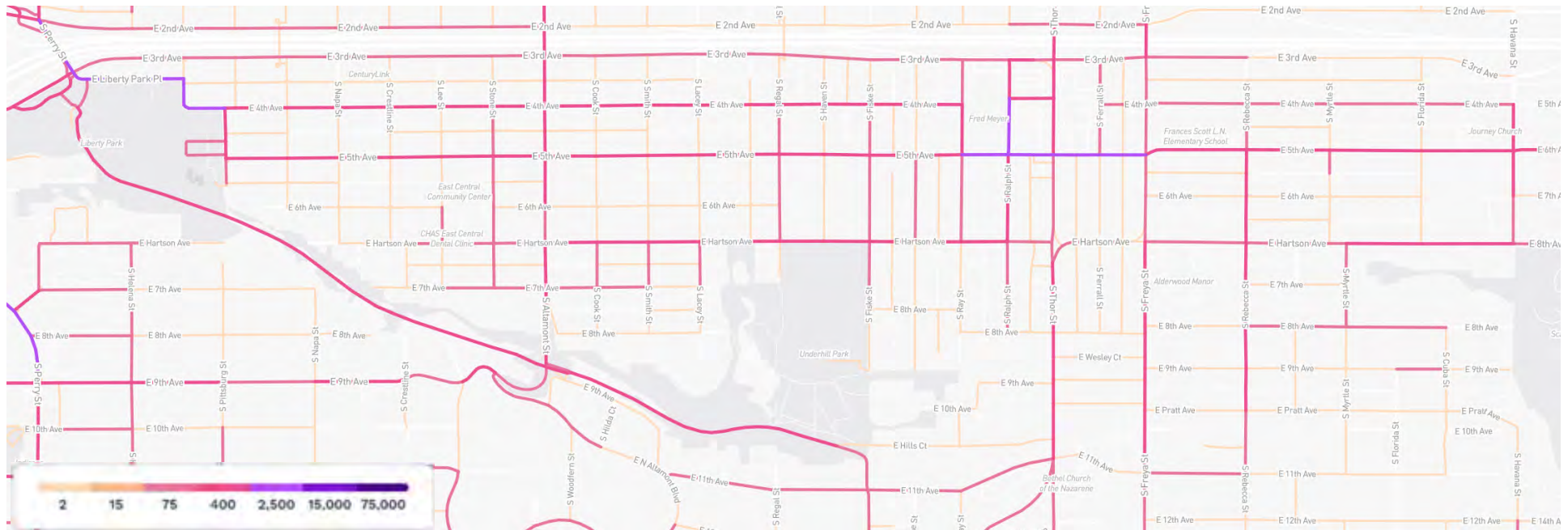
2.4e Expand micromobility access in the neighborhood

Spokane’s WheelShare micromobility program¹, relaunched in 2024, provides shared electric scooters and bikes for use citywide through a contract with Lime. Today, micromobility use in the 5th Avenue neighborhood is high relative to other neighborhoods (**Figure 28**); scooters and bikes provide connections to bus stops, as well as to important community destinations. However, there are opportunities to expand the availability and affordability of micromobility programs to create a more accessible and inclusive transportation network.

¹ <https://my.spokanecity.org/projects/wheelshare/>

| 28 | Micromobility Use in the 5th Avenue Neighborhood

Source: Spokane, WA | Micromobility Dashboard



The City could work with Lime to increase the number of micromobility devices available in the 5th Avenue neighborhood, establishing incentives for the provider to exceed its contract requirements of 10% availability in underserved areas citywide. The City or neighborhood organizations could also explore opportunities to subsidize or reduce qualification thresholds for the Lime Access program, providing deeper discounts for more 5th Avenue residents.

Implementation Steps and Partners

- ▶ Partner with the community to pilot a bus stop cube or similar bus stop seating program in the 5th Avenue neighborhood.

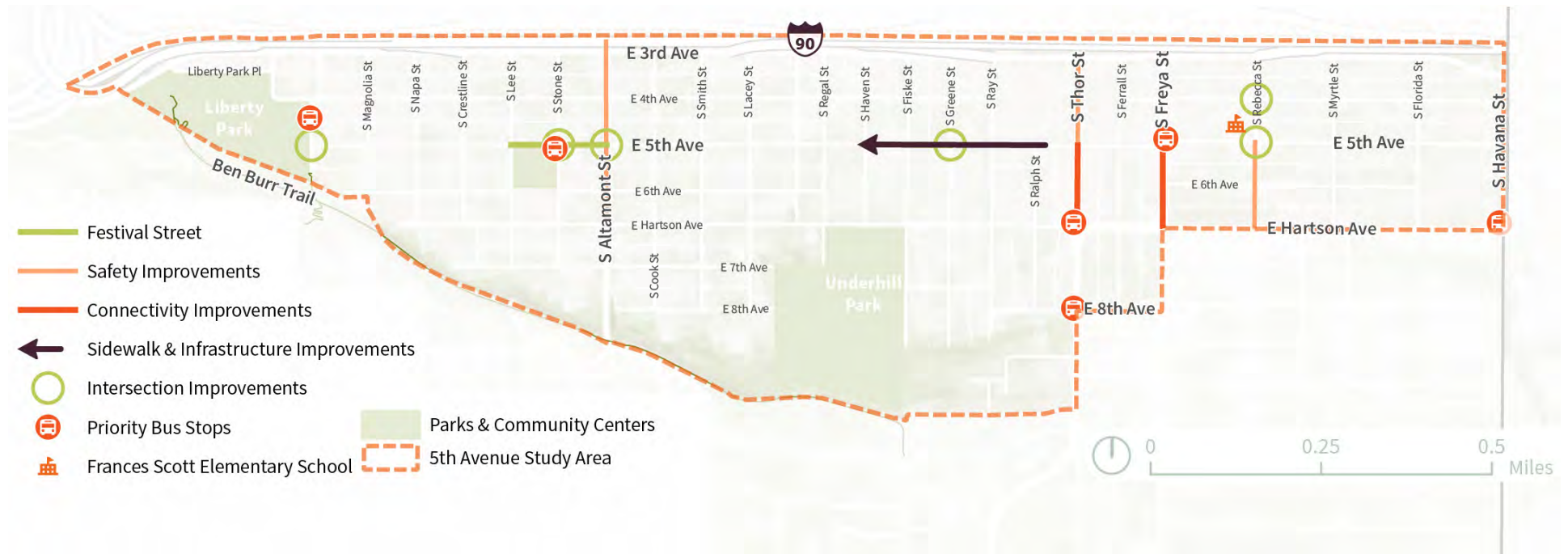
- ▶ Prioritize the neighborhood's busiest bus stops for near-term enhancements, such as work by a local artist.
- ▶ Work with Spokane Transit Authority to develop a toolkit and partnership program to support upgrades to and maintenance of existing bus stops.
- ▶ Conduct a community survey to identify interest in a volunteer driver program, considering a pilot program to support access to transit stops and key destinations.
- ▶ Explore an update to the WheelShare contract to require deployment of more than 10% of

micromobility devices in designated equity focus areas, including 5th Avenue.

- ▶ Prioritize the neighborhood's busiest bus stops for near-term enhancements, such as work by a local artist. Based on 2024 data, the neighborhood's most-used bus stops that lack shelters are at 5th Avenue & Thor Street, Pittsburg Street & 4th Avenue, Thor Street at Hartson Avenue, and 5th Avenue & Freya Street.
- ▶ Continue to seek support and funding for the 2023 LEIA Program to improve multimodal transportation along transit Route 94 and 5th Avenue.

| 29 | Proposed Connectivity

The map below summarizes desired improvements to multimodal transportation and safety described in the actions. Sources: City of Spokane, 2024; Seva Workshop, 2025





SPOTLIGHT

Maui's Temporary Wayfinding Program

In Wailuku, Maui, a partnership program supported the installation of 55 temporary pedestrian wayfinding signs. The partnership between the Wailuku Community Association, the Hawaii Public Health Institute, and the Maui Redevelopment Agency was designed to help residents and visitors explore the town's historic center by walking and rolling. The signs pointed to many types of destinations, including parks, gyms, theaters, museums, shops, and restaurants, and included estimated walking times to make navigation easier. The signs both improved wayfinding and also promoted healthy living by encouraging active modes of travel.



<https://www.hiphi.org/new-pedestrian-wayfinding-signage-in-wailuku-town/>

Oakland's Community-Led Traffic Safety Pilot Program

Launched in July 2025, Oakland's Community-Led Traffic Safety Pilot Program is a three-year effort to empower residents, business owners, and community groups to take a more active role in traffic safety on local streets. Developed in response to advocacy efforts and limited City resources, the program includes three types of projects: curb extensions, intersection daylighting, and traffic circles. Applicants are required to show broad neighborhood support for an installation and have an evaluation and maintenance plan. Community-initiated projects can be permitted for three months and then renewed for another six months to test different approaches. After the pilot, the City uses the evaluation findings, with a focus on safety, to determine whether a pilot project can be installed permanently.

<https://www.oaklandca.gov/Public-Safety-Streets/Traffic-Safety/Community-Led-Traffic-Safety-Pilot-Program>

Los Angeles' Safe Routes for Seniors Program

LADOT's Safe Routes for Seniors is a community-driven program to improve mobility, safety, comfort, and social connections for older adults. It focuses on making Los Angeles streets safer and more accessible for older adults by identifying priority routes, improving pedestrian infrastructure, and providing travel training in neighborhoods with high numbers of seniors. The program addresses challenges such as long crossing distances and missing curb ramps, and empowers older adults to identify transportation needs, program elements, and routes that connect to improved quality of life activities. In Historic Filipinotown, LADOT installed high-visibility crosswalks, added curb extensions to shorten crossing distances, and upgraded curb ramps, making it easier and safer for seniors to get around.



<https://ladotlivablestreets.org/programs/safe-routes-for-seniors>



SPOTLIGHT

Minneapolis' Neighborhood Mobility Hubs

The Minneapolis Mobility Hubs program is a City-led initiative to make transportation more accessible, sustainable, and seamless by connecting multiple modes of travel at key locations throughout the city. Launched as a pilot in 2019 and expanded in 2020, the program now includes 25 hubs across 14 neighborhoods. With a focus on low- or no-carbon transportation options, the hubs connect public transit, bike and scooter sharing, amenities (e.g., bike parking, wayfinding), and technology. The pilots featured low-cost, quick-install treatments such as bollard bumpouts, modular seating, corrugated plastic wayfinding signs, planters, and paint, which have been transitioned to more permanent materials. The City has partnered with Metro Transit, mobility service providers, and local organizations to co-create, implement, and maintain the hubs, working with an Ambassador Program that promotes neighborhood stewardship and resilience.

<https://www.minneapolismn.gov/government/programs-initiatives/transportation-programs/mobility-hubs/>

Seattle's low-cost walkway program

Seattle's low-cost walkway program uses wheel stops, paint, and posts to make it faster and more affordable to build separated places for people to walk and roll.



Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority's Community Partnership Investment Program

The Community Partnership Investment Program (CPIP) allows businesses, organizations, and individuals to fund new or enhance existing shelters to improve the transit waiting environment. Community partners can enhance a basic shelter layout with special designs, bike racks, and community branding. In Cleveland, Lincoln Electric recognized that a large number of its employees were commuting to work by bus. Through the CPIP, the company worked with Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA) to install a shelter on its property, which includes a custom design and Lincoln Electric branding. The Union Miles Development Corporation, a community-based organization in Cleveland, also collaborated with GCRTA to apply custom art to shelters, responding to an idea that emerged from community forums with frequent transit riders. The project featured six local and national leaders, building social capital and a sense of community pride thanks to a local artist's work.

<https://www.riderta.com/cpip>



SPOTLIGHT

Ride Free Lafayette

Ride Free Lafayette is a free, on-demand, door-to-door service that connects people to places around the Colorado community. It operates seven days a week from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., with no limits on the number of trips.

Source: Boulder County



3 LIVABILITY

The 5th Avenue neighborhood can become a welcoming and comfortable space for people of all ages and abilities. The nearby freeway has several identified impacts to the environment, such as increased noise, air pollution, and urban heat island effect. The strategies and actions in this goal address these conditions to create a beautiful, healthy environment for the local community to enjoy. This vision is complemented by programming for people that makes it easier to live a full and healthy life in 5th Avenue. This includes food access, active living programs, meeting basic needs for individuals experiencing housing and/or food insecurity, and addressing the impacts of climate events.



Top Priorities

Encourage safe, active, and playful community spaces; increase the community's access to healthy food and water

Livability Strategies

Strategy 3.1: Encourage safe, active, and playful community spaces

Strategy 3.2: Create and expand programs that increase active living

Strategy 3.3: Increase the community's access to healthy food and water

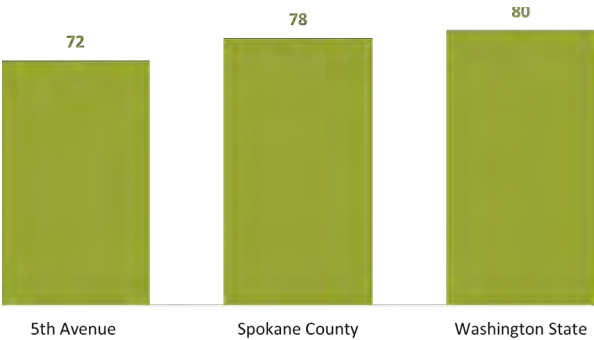
Strategy 3.4: Build neighborhood resilience to urban heat

Strategy 3.5: Mitigate heat, extreme cold, and other climate change impacts

Existing Conditions

The 5th Avenue area is a great place to live, with Liberty Park and Underhill Park as anchor green spaces; proximity to the Ben Burr Trail; family amenity access at the Frances Scott Elementary, MLK Family Outreach Center, Liberty Park Library and Aquatic Center; and pockets of quiet streets offering a peaceful home setting. **The neighborhood has been negatively impacted by the freeway for decades, however, with negative externalities including by air pollution, urban heat, and noise.** Not only were these harms introduced by the freeway, but the area’s ability to mitigate these harms has also been limited by the loss of tree canopy and ongoing displacement. Liberty Park would be changed forever in 1968 when Washington State placed I-90 directly through the heart of Liberty Park, destroying 19 of its 21 acres, and once the freeway was completed, one of Spokane’s prettiest parks envisioned by the famed Olmsted Brothers was lost forever. Today, the area has average tree canopy coverage of 14%, compared to Spokane’s overall

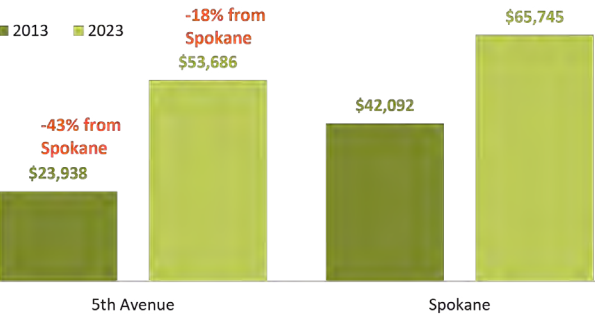
| 30 | Life Expectancy Data for 5th Avenue, Spokane County, and Washington State, 2015
Sources: Tejada-Vera B, Bastian B, Arias E, Escobedo LA, Salant B, Life Expectancy Estimates by U.S. Census Tract, 2010-2015; National Center for Health Statistics, 2020



coverage goal of 30%. The compounding effects of these environmental factors can be linked to higher rates of chronic ailments such as asthma, and even lower life expectancies (Figure 30).

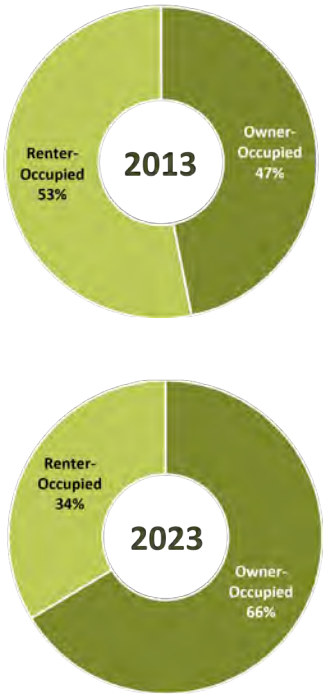
The 5th Avenue area has long been a pocket of more affordable housing and home to more people with relatively low incomes, compared to the Spokane average (Figure 31). Social supports, free and low-cost opportunities to promote wellness, and the availability of fresh healthy food are incredibly important to lower-income communities who tend to have limited access to transportation. Lower-income populations are also more vulnerable to heat events, because they are more likely to lack access to cooling in their homes.

| 31 | Median Household Income in 5th Avenue and Spokane, 2013 and 2023
Source: ACS 5-year estimates, 2013



In recent years, there has been a shift toward higher rates of homeownership and rise in median household income (Figure 32). It is possible that this shift reflects displacement of renters and lower-income households, making it important to **support homeownership pathways and implement anti-displacement measures to ensure that livability investments will benefit long-time residents.**

| 32 | Housing Tenure in 5th Avenue, 2013 and 2023
Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates 2013 and 2023



Strategy 3.1: Encourage safe, active, and playful community spaces



3.1a Leverage Frances Scott Elementary as a community park space

The City of Spokane Parks and Natural Lands Master Plan has recently

identified the eastern portion of City Council District 2 as in need of public open space. The Frances Scott Elementary school not only falls within this geographic area, but it is also one of the largest publicly owned parcels within the neighborhood, an asset that would enable it to function as a critical piece of urban open space infrastructure.

Frances Scott Elementary is home to a diverse student body, representing a community of families that would benefit from added amenities at the school. In the 2025-26 school year, 80% of students came from low income households. In addition, 19% of students at Frances Scott are English language learners and 55% identify as BIPOC. The school has large populations of Hispanic/Latino students, as well as multiracial students. Nearly 20% of students at Frances Scott Elementary are multi-language learners, and over 30 different languages are spoken in the school community. This is reflective of the community's demographics, as 5th Avenue continues to represent one of Spokane's most ethnically and racially diverse communities.

The schoolyard at Frances Scott Elementary School is outdated and lacks modern amenities. It has a mix of asphalt for structured play, open field space and a small play structure, all enclosed within chain link fencing. The yard borders Freya St to the west, a busy and loud major arterial, residential streets to the north, south and east. The school is less than 500 feet from the I-90 and US 395, the North Spokane Corridor which is currently under construction and will intersect

with I-90 a few blocks to the west. The school has been in this location since 1908, over 50 years before I-90 first bisected the neighborhood, including the school community which extends north and south of I-90. Exposure to continuous air and noise pollution, as well as visual impacts from the freeway, are a community concern and environmental justice issue for students, families, and residents in this area.

Children's health outcomes are positively correlated with both physical activity and time spent in nature. Transforming the school yard at Frances Scott Elementary School into a shared public space that serves broader activity functions would provide opportunities to support healthy child development and increase local community access to nature.

The school property should be re-imagined in a way that accommodates both student recreation and public open space during non-school hours. Successful examples of this type of thinking are evident across



SPOTLIGHT

Together Spokane

More than 200 projects will transform every Spokane neighborhood over the next 20 years. Part of this focus is integration of school playfields into after-hours parks to increase community access. For many, the "neighborhood park" is the green space and playground at the local elementary school, including families and the community around Frances Scott Elementary School. Spokane Parks and Spokane Public Schools will work together throughout the Together Spokane initiative to increase access and improve safety during times of open public use outside of school hours across the city.



<https://www.togetherspokane.org/>



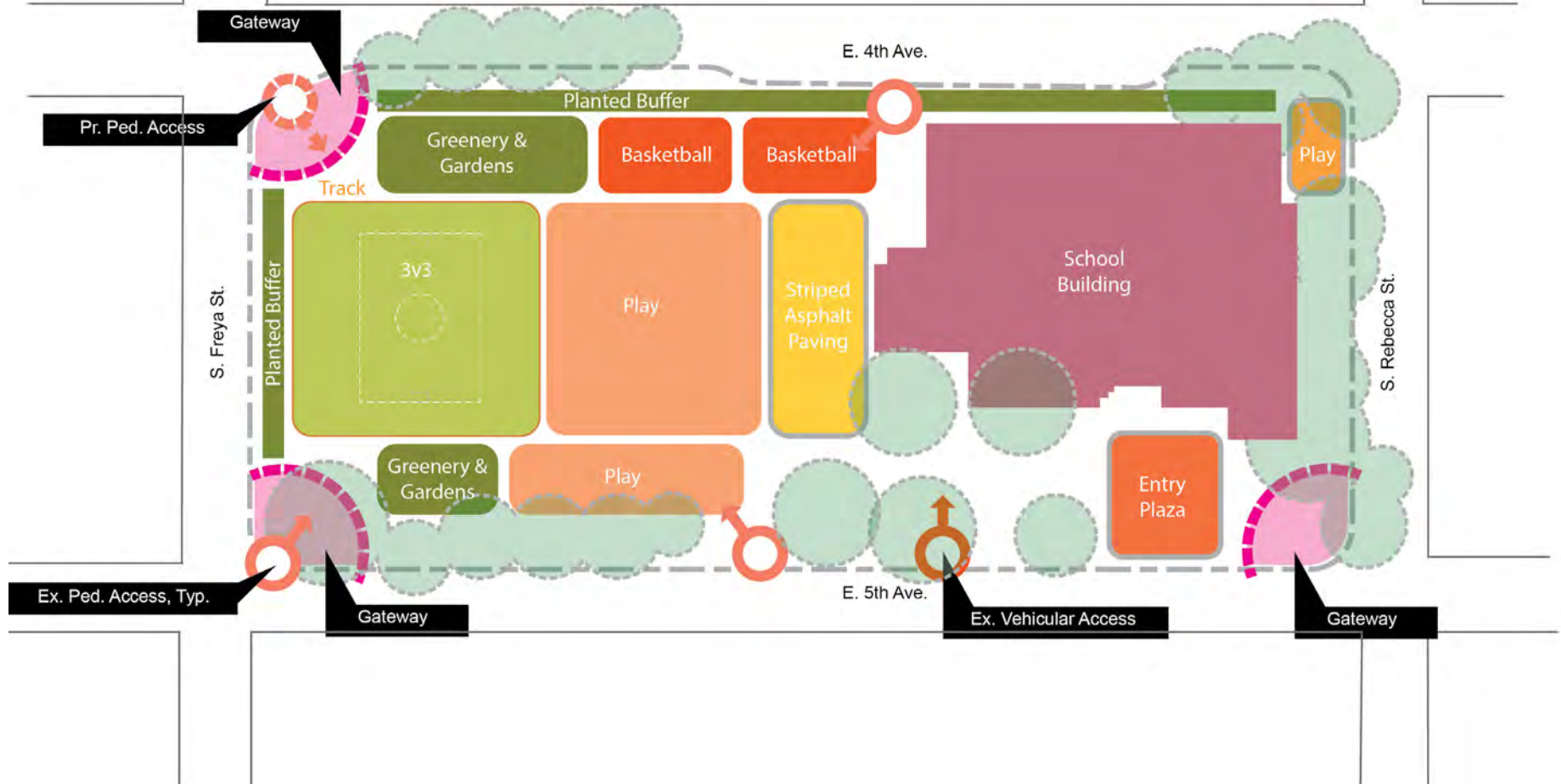
Roadway Planted Buffer



Track Example



Garden Classroom Example



| 33 | Conceptual Programmatic Plan, Francis Scott Elementary Schoolyard

Image: Studio Seyfried

the United States and made possible by the Trust for Public Land Community Schoolyard Program. Spokane Public Schools, the Frances Scott Elementary School, and the City of Spokane Parks department should conduct a visioning effort to facilitate gathering ideas, developing a high-level vision, and collaborating with the community. This effort will transform the schoolyard as an inviting public space in the 5th Avenue community.

The City Planning team consolidated the early ideas in April 2026 for improvements into four (4) main categories and asked students to vote for what improvements they would like to see on their school yard. The category that received the most votes was “Play structures and Courts” (81 votes), followed by “Trees, Nature and Plants” (62 votes), “Things I can play with, move or build with” (46 votes) and “Space to rest, find shade and be calm” (45 votes).

SPOTLIGHT

Trust for Public Land Community Schoolyards Program

The Trust of Public Land (TPL) has been partnering with communities and school administrators to open schoolyards to the public after school hours and transform them from blacktops into vibrant play spaces, connecting students and neighbors alike to the benefits of the outdoors. TPL uses a highly structured participatory design process to re-imagine school yards and continues to lead the movement to transform asphalt schoolyards into vibrant green spaces that improve overall community health.



<https://www.tpl.org/our-mission/schoolyards>

3.1b Support activation of vacant land

Privately owned vacant and underutilized spaces in the 5th Avenue neighborhood retail core offer a unique opportunity for building collaboration among local property owners, community leaders, and the City on temporary open space activation strategies. These pop-up style events, often referred to as tactical urbanism, are cost effective, quick to produce, and efficient ways to inject activity and vibrancy into a community. Pop-up style events allow for low capital avenues for business owners to showcase their wares and engage with community members. The City should work with local landowners and potential vendors to ensure that traditional barriers, such as overly bureaucratic permitting processes, are not a hinderance.

The conceptual drawing on the following page illustrates how, with City support and local coordination, multiple private actors in a community can convene in a common space to create an integrated and vibrant experience including food, vendors, art, shade, green spaces, seating, and programming.



| 34 | **Carl Maxey Center Corner Lot Interim Uses Conceptual Rendering**
Image: Leah Murphy



| 35 | “Welcome Mat” Gateway Improvements at 5th Avenue and Pittsburg Street Conceptual Rendering

Image: Leah Murphy

3.1c Expand and improve access to parks

The 5th Avenue area is home to two significant neighborhood scale parks, as well as the Ben Burr Trail. City work in 2024 in Liberty Park included a new play structure to complement the rebuilt Liberty Park Library. In 2025, the City completed much-needed basketball court upgrades to Underhill Park in a partnership between Spokane Parks and the Spokane Eastside Reunion Association to support youth camps, expand offerings with pickleball courts, and enhance lighting for safety. However, access to get to these spaces from across the neighborhood is generally

lacking. Community feedback has consistently stated that both Underhill and Liberty Park are located at the far edges of the neighborhood and are hard to get to from different parts of the area, particularly east of Freya St. Additionally, since these parks are located at the edges of the community and buffered by non-residential land uses, there are both real and perceived safety concerns. The City should work to enhance access, wayfinding, and safety features of each of these parks to ensure their long-term success.

In the conceptual rendering above, a large visual sign highlights Liberty Park as an exciting destination and marks the entrance, drawing visitors from the nearby bus stop as well as further points. Sidewalk extensions, bump outs, and a raised sidewalk slow vehicular traffic to improve pedestrian safety and access. These improvements work together as a “welcome mat” for people as they access the range of amenities located here.

Implementation Steps and Partners

Action items for improvements include:

- ▶ Ensure any new park development and upcoming park redevelopment has adequate lighting and electrification to ensure safety and accessibility during park operating hours.
- ▶ Create an MOU between the Spokane School District, City of Spokane Parks Department and the Trust for Public Lands on a greening schoolyard program for Frances Scott Elementary School.
 - Initiate a visioning process with community engagement for re-design of school yard
 - Create initial concept design and refine through additional engagement
 - Secure funding and complete construction
 - Put in place stewardship and ongoing programming

Need places for kids
in the evenings
↳ Libraries, community
gathering places



Strategy 3.2: Create and expand programs that increase active living

3.2a Provide public realm amenities

All public spaces throughout the neighborhood should encourage use and be safe and comfortable. The neighborhood suffers from a lack of both fixed and movable public seating. Elements like fixed benches were observed, inconsistently, only along bus routes or where private business owners procured and placed seating immediately adjacent to their respective establishments. At bus stops without seating, people—often carrying bags and groceries—were frequently seen sitting on the curb. Additionally, there are very few seating opportunities within the existing Underhill and Liberty Parks. The Parks department should work to ensure that increased seating options are provided both within the park and along the park perimeter to encourage park visitors to come more often and stay longer.

3.2b Introduce pedestrian scale lighting to create a safe, welcoming environment

Throughout our engagement activities, many 5th Avenue residents expressed concerns about inadequate lighting near bus stops, parks, and walking paths. Dark streets and sidewalks can limit mobility, reduce visibility, and make people feel less safe as they walk and roll. Today, there is only one street in the neighborhood without street lights, but people noted that existing lights are not bright enough and there is no pedestrian-scale lighting.

Consistent and regular pedestrian scale lighting along highly traveled corridors and within public spaces is paramount to creating a safe and welcoming environment after sunset. Highly traveled pedestrian corridors that link the neighborhood with key public spaces and commercial areas should be identified for increased pedestrian scale lighting and/or decorative

lighting. These include, but are not limited to:

- ▶ all streets bordering public park spaces and the Frances Scott Elementary school property,
- ▶ E 5th Avenue,
- ▶ S Regal Street,
- ▶ S Fiske Street, and
- ▶ S Altamont Street, which connects the study area with the Sprague Avenue Commercial District.

Well-lit streets and pathways increase visibility and make nighttime travel feel safer and more comfortable. Adding or upgrading lighting around key destinations and along common paths of travel helps people access community resources and creates a better-connected mobility network. Improved lighting encourages more walking, rolling, and transit use while also activating the neighborhood after dark.

The City should assess existing streetlights to determine where upgrades are needed and add pedestrian-scale lighting in priority areas. Those may include the streets and sidewalks around Frances Scott Elementary—such as Thor St between 3rd Ave and 5th Avenue—and near other major destinations.

Strategy 3.3: Increase the community’s access to healthy food and water

3.3a Create a culturally relevant community garden

Community gardens are impactful neighborhood assets with a wide versatility of uses that can have many public health benefits. Efforts to establish, maintain, and provide programming with community gardens can support access to local produce, strengthen community, enhance educational opportunities, and improve individual mental and physical health. Introducing a space for community gardening in the 5th Avenue area would support the community’s priorities for improving community health and would expand options for locally-cultivated, culturally relevant produce among the community’s diverse population.



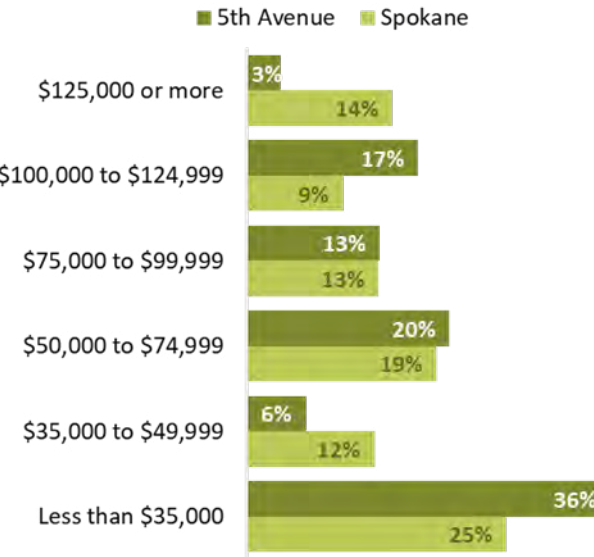
According to Spokane Community Gardens, the City of Spokane is home to almost 60 community gardens of varying sizes with a breadth of opportunities for community involvement. The 5th Avenue area currently does not have a designated, functioning community garden, although it has housed community gardens in the past. The East Central Community Organization managed a community garden at a plot of 4th Avenue and S Pittsburgh Street until the development of the Rose Apartments at that location in 2021. From 2014 until 2020, there was a community garden at Underhill Park. Today, the closest community garden to 5th Avenue is in the nearby South Perry neighborhood, where the Grant Park Community Garden currently hosts 44 plots and offers frequent workshops and events for families.

3.3b Expand access to culturally relevant, affordable groceries and emergency food services

The 5th Avenue community has historically been home to Spokane’s most ethnically and racially diverse communities, with many low-income residents who lack access to affordable, healthy, and culturally relevant foods and produce. Today, 33% of 5th Avenue’s residents identify as BIPOC, which is 50% higher than the citywide rate of 21% (Figure 14). In 2023, the median household income for all residents of the 5th Avenue area was \$53,686—18% lower than the Spokane median. Over one-third of 5th Avenue households made less than \$35,000/year, underscoring the need to consider the impact poverty has on households in this neighborhood, including on food security (Figure 36).

A livable neighborhood with high-quality, affordable, and culturally familiar foods has been a clear community priority for 5th Avenue residents. The closest grocery store, Fred Meyer, is a chain store that is not affordable for many households and is not representative of the ethnic diversity of the neighborhood. Along with establishing a community garden, there is a desire to expand and support programs like food banks, emergency food services, farmstands, farmers markets, and community kitchens that promote food security and contribute to community vibrancy and cultural programming.

| 36 | Household Incomes by Bracket in 5th Avenue and Spokane, 2023
Source: ACS 5-year estimates, 2023



3.3c Establish space for a community kitchen

Community kitchens provide social, nutritional, and economic benefits to communities by offering a shared space for residents to cook, learn skills, and connect with others. A community kitchen in the 5th Avenue area can provide free and culturally important foods, as well as educational programming like cooking classes and nutritional information for all ages. Establishing such a facility could help reduce food insecurity while strengthening vocational skills, a sense of community, and cultural vibrancy among community members.

3.3d Expand community health initiatives

Supporting community education and awareness around key community health concerns is important for sustaining and expanding community health initiatives. One key community health priority surrounds clean drinking water for families and residents of the 5th Avenue area. In September 2025, Spokane Public Schools found that a high number of drinking water fountains and sinks at Frances Scott Elementary School tested above the legal lead limit. Though no amount of lead is safe to ingest, the legal threshold for school drinking water is 5 parts per billion of lead. Sinks at Frances Scott Elementary ranged from 7 to 479 parts per billion, making it the school with the highest amount of lead across Spokane Public Schools.

The disproportionate levels of lead contamination at Frances Scott Elementary underscore the need for expanded community education and awareness to support testing and action planning.

Implementation Steps and Partners

- ▶ The City, in partnership with STA, should work to ensure that all bus stops within areas of low tree canopy and extreme urban heat have both fixed seating and shade elements,

either through street tree plantings or physical structures.

- ▶ **Identify a suitable location for a community garden in the 5th Avenue area and determine the designated landowner.** Work with the City of Spokane's Planning and Development Department to complete the necessary permitting requirements. Consider priority groups for programming, organizational capacity, and land suitability when assessing site opportunities, which include:
 - **Liberty Park:** Hosts suitable terrain for garden plots. The Liberty Park Public Library may be a strong partner for programming, if there is capacity and funding.
 - **France Scott Elementary School:** Available space on the playfield for a community garden plot may be of particular value in youth programming. A community garden may align with the projects proposed through a possible Greening Schoolyards partnership with Trust for Public Lands.
 - Interested residents' properties.
 - **Churches:** Revitalize the community garden area that once existed behind Jacob's Well; explore opportunities at the other churches in the neighborhood.
 - **Local Businesses/Organizations:** Carl Maxey Center, the Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center, or other establishments with space and capacity.
- ▶ **Bring community garden programming to 5th Avenue.** Connect with organizers of existing programs in Spokane such as the [Spokane Urban Agricultural Network \(SUAN\)](#), [River City Youth Ops](#) (previously Project Hope), the [Grant Park Community Garden](#), and other active, local urban

agriculture entities to explore opportunities for developing programming for the 5th Avenue community garden. Partner with organizations like 5th Avenue Forward and the TakeAll Coalition to pursue funding for new, culturally relevant programming directed towards residents.

Programming considerations:

- Host a breadth of programs grounded in cultivating culturally relevant and nutritious produce, cooking traditions and gardening skills, environmental stewardship, and youth education.
- Local capacity to manage and maintain the growth of the community garden and its programming. While the community has consistently expressed the desire for this work, securing funding and establishing a network of staff (paid or volunteer) is necessary to sustain this work.



Funding new or expanded programming:

- There are numerous sources of funding that may support programming at the new community garden. Many community gardens across Spokane are successfully sustained through locally-sourced efforts, in addition to grants and donations from the City and charitable foundations.
- Within Spokane County, the Associated Garden Clubs of Spokane organization, has funding available to pay for the material costs of setting up a brand new community garden including plants, planters, building materials, fencing, roofing, signs and markers, and more. Funding is prioritized for applicants such as informal community groups, nonprofits, and public entities. Similarly, the Spokane Parks Foundation offers community grants funding up to \$6,000 for a 12-month project.

Additional programming and funding opportunities:

- There are various free resources available through the Washington State University (WSU) Extension Spokane County Master Gardening program. The Master Gardeners volunteer their time to help enhance the knowledge of horticulture and conservation of natural resources in Spokane County. They offer classes and events, host a plant clinic and resource center for questions on identifying plants, pests, weeds, and other horticultural topics.
- In addition, WSU Extension Spokane County also offers low-cost or free educational resources. [The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program](#) (EFNEP) assists families with free nutrition advice and classes to promote affordable and healthy eating. Although geared towards small farms, [The](#)

[Food Systems and Agriculture](#) program still provides helpful information for community gardens such as information on water conservation, crop and soil health, noxious weeds, pests, and networking such as the Washington Sustainable Food & Farming Network.

Prioritizing youth programming:

- Partner with Frances Scott Elementary School to lead programs for youth that emphasize environmental stewardship, nutrition, cooking and gardening education, and cultural food traditions and knowledge.
- ▶ **Expand and amplify existing emergency food services** offered from the [Food Bank](#) at the Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center on 5th Avenue, which provides groceries once a month for qualifying seniors, to serve more of the community and provide more culturally appropriate groceries. Explore opportunities to expand this service to further improve food accessibility for low-income and low-mobility populations in the 5th Avenue area.
- ▶ **Support regional farmstands and cultural farmers markets** that offer locally-grown fresh produce and products, as well as vendors and cultural programming that reflect the diversity of the 5th Avenue community.
 - Establish a 5th Avenue farmers market at a community location. This could involve coordination with the existing farmer's market in nearby Spokane Valley, The Scalehouse Market.
 - Partner with existing culturally relevant markets and food vendors, like the Global Food and Art Market by the organization Thrive International Spokane. El Mercadito by Latinos en Spokane is an example that

offers free, fresh cultural foods and features Latino food vendors, artisan crafts, live music and performances, and health care services through CHAS Health. El Mercadito is hosted at Liberty Park on the last Saturday of every month.

- ▶ **Identify funding opportunities for a community kitchen** from the City, philanthropic entities, or other sources to convert or develop a space in the 5th Avenue area and related programming and staffing.
- ▶ **Explore a partnership with existing community kitchen programs** in Spokane, such as:
 - [Women and Children's Free Restaurant and Community Kitchen](#): This nonprofit serves free meals and grocery boxes in the Emerson/Garfield Neighborhood of Spokane.
 - [Latinos en Spokane](#): In addition to hosting the El Mercadito cultural market at Liberty Park the last Saturday of every month, they have a community kitchen in the North Central region of the city that can be rented or shared by food businesses.
 - [2nd Harvest](#): They offer cooking classes for all ages; however, their programming is currently paused until 2026.
 - [One World Spokane](#) – While this organization has closed on East Sprague, they used to be a pay-what-you-can café model offering local, organic, sustainable foods with their own community garden, local chefs, and music events. With some funding and support, this could be replicated in 5th Avenue.
- ▶ **Lead remediation at Frances Scott Elementary** can be funded through different avenues: To help fund this priority, Frances Scott Elementary School can:

- Apply for the [Lead in Water Remediation](#) Grant through the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.
- Request free post-remediation retesting through the state Department of Health after replacing and conditioning fixtures.

The City should also explore business partnerships to improve lighting through lower-cost options such as storefront displays and string lights. These types of lighting improvements signal investment in the neighborhood, reinforce connections between businesses and the community, and draw more people to the neighborhood after dark, strengthening both accessibility and local economic vitality.

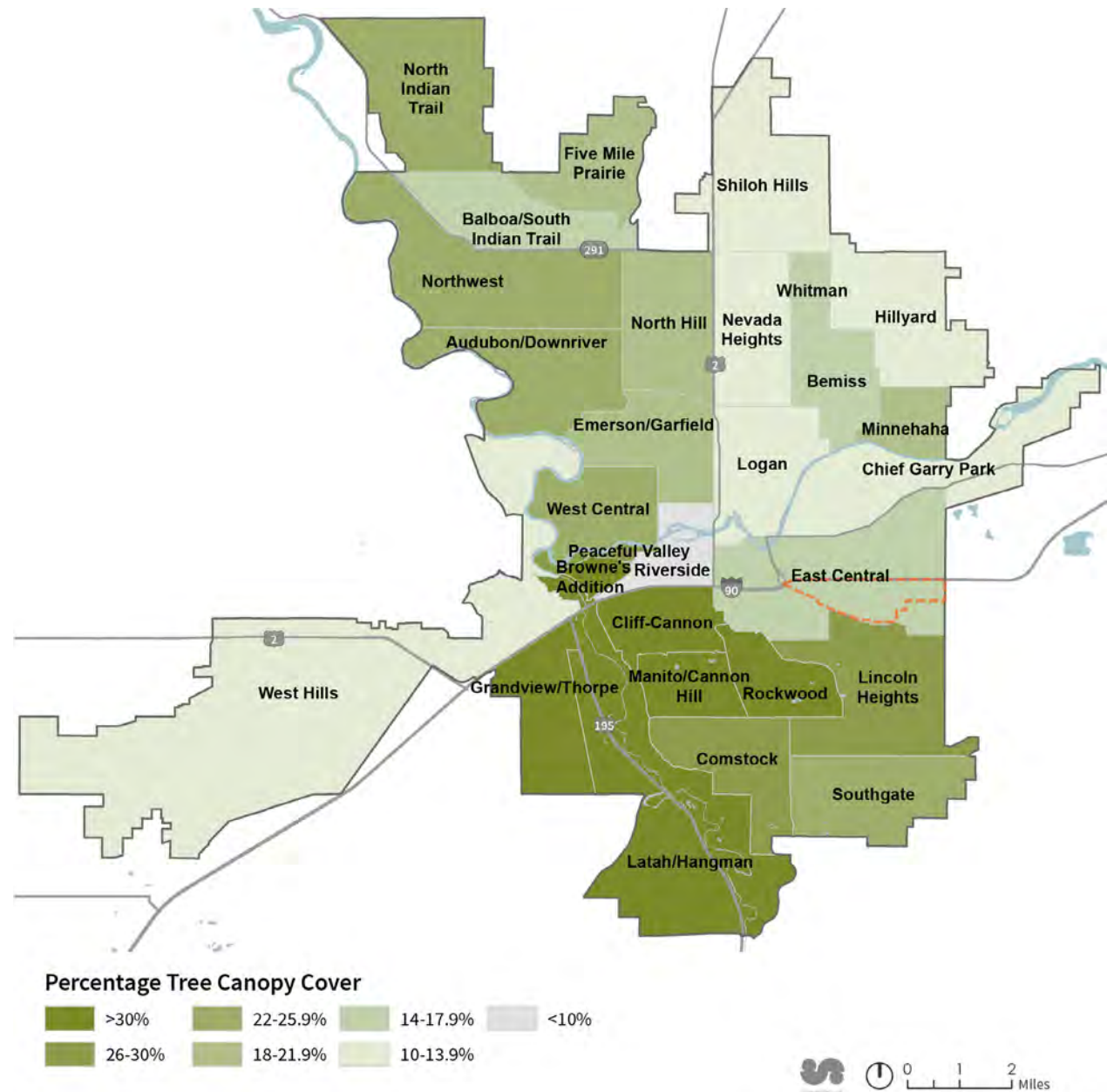
Strategy 3.4: Build neighborhood resilience to urban heat

In East Central, a recent Gonzaga climate study found that only 30% of surveyed residents have access to central air conditioning. Fewer than half of the respondents feel knowledgeable about heat or smoke related illnesses. Community members expressed a strong interest in restoring neighborly care through check-ins, community events, and block teams to support the most vulnerable. Survey and community dialogues revealed strong support for green infrastructure: 76% of residents want more trees and 66% favor community gardens and green spaces, compared to options like cool roofs (51%) or more parks (43%). Many prefer to stay home during climate events, highlighting the need for solutions like weatherization, A/C, and in-home air quality improvements.

Residents cited key barriers to using public cooling or clean air centers, including safety or inclusivity concerns (34%) and pet restrictions (28%). To make public “resilience hubs” more inviting, top suggestions included free Wi-Fi (60%), food and snacks (52%), and activities for all ages.

| 37 | Percent Tree Canopy Coverage by Neighborhood

*The 5th Avenue area has an average tree canopy coverage of 14%, compared to Spokane’s overall coverage goal of 30%.
Source: City of Spokane*



| 38 | Existing Street and City Property Tree Survey

Source: City of Spokane



3.4a Expand tree canopy and the green footprint

A phased approach to urban greening and transit improvements is recommended for the 5th Avenue neighborhood. The priority is to plant trees and install shade structures at bus stops and along sidewalks, ensuring residents and visitors benefit from increased shade and cooling. Transit stops and pedestrian areas should be upgraded with benches and cooling features, such as misting stations or shaded seating.

Piloting tree planting projects on unbuildable City-owned lots will improve climate resilience and engage community members in environmental stewardship. Innovative methods like native meadow plantings and micro-forests, such as the Miyawaki forest, can work well in the neighborhood.

The Miyawaki Method is an approach to rapid reforestation that creates dense, native forests in

small urban or degraded plots of land. Developed by Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki (1928–2021), the method is based on studying potential natural vegetation and the traditional Chinju no mori shrine forests of Japan. It layers a dominant tree species with complementary subspecies, shrubs, and ground-cover plants to recreate natural forest structure and symbiotic growth.

Forests established using this method grow up to 10 times faster and become roughly 30 times denser than those using conventional planting techniques. Within two to three years, these micro-forests become self-sustaining ecosystems that restore biodiversity, improve soil health, and support local climate resilience, making the Miyawaki approach especially valuable in cities adapting to heat and environmental stress.

3.4b Add cooling features in parks and playgrounds

Cooling features, like splash pads, water fountains, misting stations, and shaded areas, reduce the risk of heat-related illnesses such as dehydration, sunburn, and heat stroke, especially for children, older adults, and heat-sensitive populations. Splash pads, misting stations, and proper shade allow parks and playgrounds to remain accessible and comfortable even on the hottest days, encouraging longer play and active outdoor use throughout more months of the year. Parks with cooling features better support social gathering and community well-being, serving as “cool zones” that encourage residents to stay active and connected during periods of high heat. These features improve the experience for families, making outdoor recreation sites more inviting and inclusive. These features came up frequently in our community engagement for the Plan and are all features the community desires.

3.4c Improve indoor air quality

In this neighborhood where baseline health disparities already exist, the compounding effects of heat and smoke are a serious concern. Community members have voiced that on the smokiest summer days, it can feel unsafe to breathe freely or go outside at all—yet staying inside without proper ventilation can be equally hazardous.

The following actions can improve home safety:

- ▶ Expand weatherization and A/C assistance programs for vulnerable households.
- ▶ Distribute emergency “resilience kits” with fans, masks, and cooling supplies.
- ▶ Promote indoor air quality with HEPA filters and DIY air purifier workshops.

3.4d Continue to invest in parks and open space accessibility

Recent improvements to expand recreation amenities, renovate existing sport courts, and enhance ADA accessibility have occurred at Liberty Park in 2023 and Underhill Park in 2025. To continue to support accessibility, parks and open spaces should reflect and integrate ideas that expand the reach of welcoming people of all ages and abilities. This includes interventions such as adding accessible equipment, design elements that support accessibility and programming shared experiences that are accessible.

The Together Spokane levy that passed in 2025 outlines priorities for renovation and replacement at Spokane Parks, including a focus at Underhill Park¹. All playground replacements will include dedicated play equipment for both the 2-5 and 5-12 age groups, inclusive play features, and enhanced ADA pathways to the playgrounds from the surrounding park. Large playgrounds like Underhill Park will include additional play features and new rubberized play surfacing instead of wood fiber surfacing to further enhance accessibility and quality. Replacement restrooms will meet modern building code regulation and ADA access requirements and will include enhance ADA pathways to the restrooms.

¹ <https://my.spokanecity.org/parksrec/levy/renovate-and-replace/>

Engagement with the disability community, local families of all backgrounds, and organizations that provide programs at local parks and open spaces will be needed to surface deeper insights for specific improvements.

Implementation Steps and Partners

- ▶ These actions should focus on City-owned properties first, then expand to City and WSDOT rights-of-way.
- ▶ Urban tree planting should follow contemporary guidelines, emphasizing large, open tree pits that allow for healthy root growth and stormwater infiltration. Impermeable surfacing and metal tree grates directly adjacent to tree trunks should be avoided to promote tree health and longevity.
- ▶ Urban Forestry’s initiatives SpoCanopy and CoolCanopy provide funding for free trees to property owners in neighborhoods like 5th Avenue through 2028. Conduct community engagement to promote the program and connect interested homeowners with plantings that are appropriate for their site conditions.

Strategy 3.5: Mitigate heat, extreme cold, and other climate change impacts

3.5a Support heat pump installations to help people stay cool indoors

Cities can support heat pump installations through a mix of financial incentives in partnership with local utilities, targeted programs for vulnerable residents, contractor support, and policy tools that make efficient cooling the default in buildings.

3.5b Deliver multilingual, community-led communications and resource distribution

The Gonzaga study revealed that the community lacks information on heat/smoke safety and health risks and highlighted the need for practical, multilingual workshops on first aid, cooling strategies and preparedness. Pairing these educational events on heat safety awareness with supplies such as fans and filters can increase their reach and impact. Engaging the schools and healthcare providers in sharing health guidance is also an effective strategy.

3.5c Support a Resilience Task Force

Beyond infrastructure, policy and advocacy are needed for longer term adaptation strategies. Community members are interested in forming a community climate resilience task force or panel that would give East Central residents a voice in city planning and climate policies. Engaging with local government on issues like cooling center operations, neighborhood planning (for more green space), and emergency communication is also important for systemic change.

3.5d Equip community institutions to serve as Resilience Hubs

Local institutions like the Carl Maxey Center, Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center, and Liberty Park Library can function as community-led climate response centers providing support to residents

SPOTLIGHT

Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center

In 2026, Avista Utilities partnered with the Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center and the City of Spokane to officially open the first neighborhood community resilience hub in East Central. The project is designed to back the existing year-round mission of providing food bank services, childcare services, and support for families that strengthen community connections and the ability to endure extreme weather events and unplanned outages such as a windstorm, extreme heat event, or fire.

The updates to the building's heating, ventilation, and air conditioning will provide the center with

a common space for heating and cooling. The MLK Center will be listed on the City of Spokane's critical infrastructure and will provide support for customers who have medical power dependencies, as well as other vulnerable customer groups. To support this effort and expand the focus on resilience hub, the City of Spokane can explore partnerships and opportunities for regular maintenance and upkeep of the building facilities, including new roofing that can accommodate additional solar infrastructure.



before, during, and after a climate emergency, such as heatwaves or flooding, as outlined by the Gonzaga Climate Institute. With generous support from the Avista Named Communities Investment Fund, the Climate Institute is working with the community buildings to establish them as Level 1 Engagement Hubs. At the Carl Maxey Center, residents envision it becoming a Level 2 Resilience Hub with updates to support relief and become a welcoming hub with A/C, food, Wi-Fi, and activities. They desire longer hours, familiar staff, and cultural comfort to make the space effective and well used. Formalizing neighbor check-in programs and expanding social events and regular gatherings are also seen as important activities. As a trusted neighborhood anchor, equipping the Carl Maxey Center with supplies and longer hours will increase the resilience of the neighborhood, ensuring that all needs can be met in everyday life and during times of crisis.

Implementation Steps and Partners

Partnerships with Avista, Gonzaga Climate Institute, Commerce, SNAP, and other partners

Avista is an investor-owned utility that is the service provider to Spokane for both electricity and natural gas. They offer incentives through contractors (cost reduced at the point of purchase through the participating contractor). This is a common way to provide financial assistance.

- ▶ Work with Avista to explore the creation of bonus or “boost” rebates that cover most or all costs for low- and moderate-income households, including installation and decommissioning of old equipment.
- ▶ Partner with utilities to combine funding so residents see a single, simple incentive offer.
- ▶ Partner with Avista to run free or very low-cost heat pump programs for income-qualified

homeowners and renters, with parallel free weatherization to improve comfort.

- ▶ Support energy assistance programs provided by utilities and community agencies through collaboration and coordination.
- ▶ Tie renter-focused upgrades to anti-displacement tools, like short-term rent covenants or protections, so landlords cannot immediately raise rents after installing a heat pump.

Outreach, technical assistance, and market building

- ▶ Provide multilingual education materials on heat pump benefits for cooling, typical costs, incentives, and what to expect during installation, with simple decision trees for different housing types.
- ▶ Convene local and regional partners (utilities, neighborhoods, community organizations, contractors) into a unified campaign with shared branding, messaging, and metrics focused on keeping residents safely cool as summers get hotter.

Policy, codes, and planning tools

- ▶ Integrate heat pump deployment targets into the City’s climate and resilience plans, linking them explicitly to heat-health action plans and building decarbonization strategies.
- ▶ Align permitting and inspections to streamline electrification projects (e.g., expedited permits for qualifying heat pump installations or combined permits for panel upgrades plus equipment).
- ▶ Launch a neighborhood alert system (texts, flyers, bulletin boards).
- ▶ Establish “block captains” for emergency check-ins and information sharing.

- ▶ Stock emergency supplies at trusted community locations like the Carl Maxey Center and the MLK Family Outreach Center.
- ▶ Continue to explore opportunities to increase resilience infrastructure for public buildings and facilities, including the Spokane Public Library, MLK Center, and Frances Scott Elementary School.

4 PROSPERITY

This Plan drives prosperity both at the individual level and at the community scale. Workforce development pathways and a connection to banking services are important components for wealth building at the individual level. At the community level, a complementary mix of uses and services contribute to neighborhood identity and livability. Fostering inclusive economic development adds vibrance to a community that is ready for fresh energy. Community wealth building recognizes and nurtures local assets such as small businesses, non-profits, and cultural organizations to foster a more resilient and sustainable economy. A healthy ecosystem of commercial activity provides employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, adds destinations for a more complete neighborhood, and creates interest to attract visitors.



Top Priorities

Nurture and expand commercial activity and economic development along 5th Avenue

Prosperity Strategies

Strategy 4.1: Nurture and expand commercial activity and economic development along 5th Avenue

Strategy 4.2: Support new development that advances community goals

Strategy 4.3: Encourage partnerships to connect residents to good jobs and supportive services

Strategy 4.4: Offer technical assistance and funding support to small businesses and entrepreneurs

Existing Conditions

The 5th Avenue area is **predominantly residential**, but there is **cluster of regional-serving commercial** anchored by the Fred Meyer, a small node of **neighborhood-serving commercial along 5th Avenue** from S Greene Street to S Haven Street, and a site at the intersection of 5th Avenue and S Altamont Street. These are complemented by institutional sites such as Frances Scott Elementary, MLK Family Outreach Center, Liberty Park Library and Aquatic Center. The neighborhood developed more closely connected with the nearby Sprague commercial district but the I-90 freeway development has fractured this relationship,

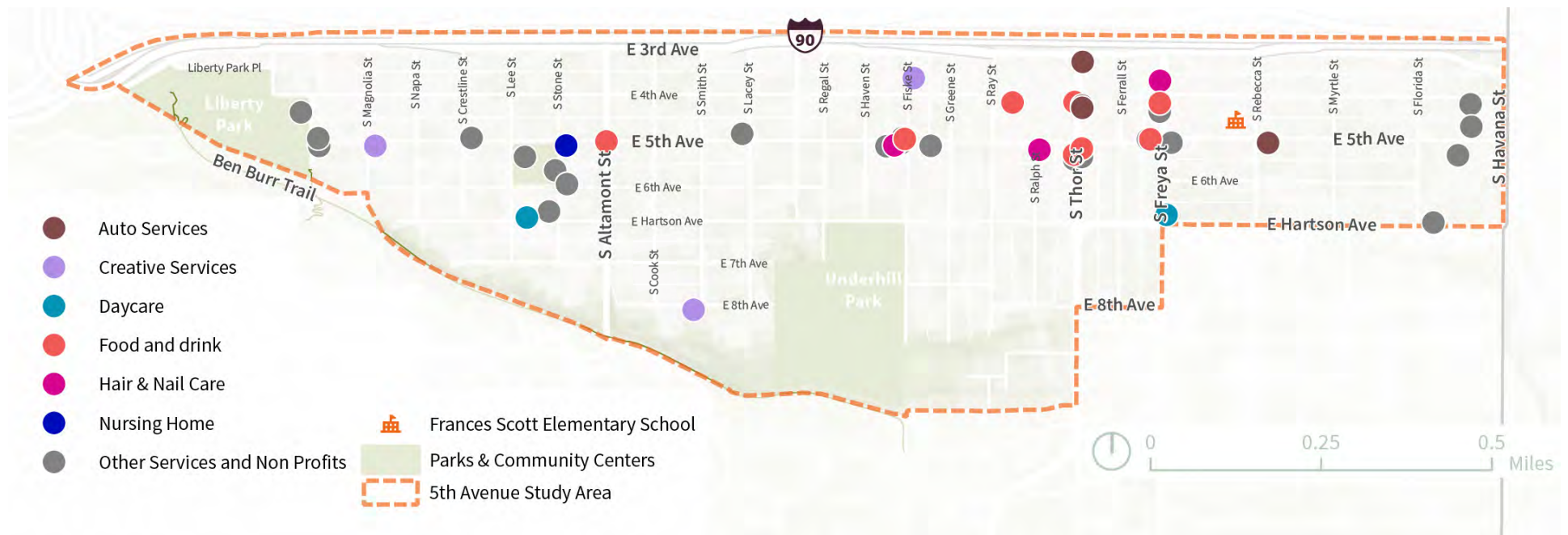
leaving **gaps in the available services and shopping options for today's residents.**

The majority of working 5th Avenue residents **commute to job centers outside the area for employment given the limited options within the neighborhood boundary.** Residents can commute to employment opportunities in downtown Spokane via bus service that runs along 5th Avenue. Sectors of employment for neighborhood residents is highest in the education/healthcare/social assistance industries (27%), manufacturing (13%), and arts/entertainment/

recreation/food services industries (11%). This neighborhood is home to a cluster of auto-oriented and regional-serving businesses around S Thor Street and a small hub of local businesses and non-profits along 5th Avenue (see **Figure 39**). The 5th Avenue area, however, **lacks the concentration of employment, shopping, or service opportunities that can bring jobs closer to home, reduce driving trips for daily needs, and serve as a local economic engine for building community wealth.**

| 39 | Map of 5th Avenue Businesses and Services

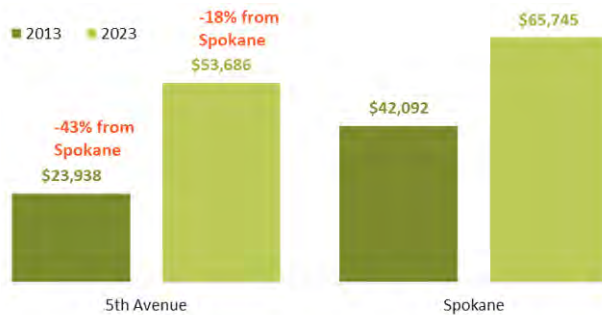
Sources: IRS 990 data, 2023; Spokane Business Association, 2025; SCOUT Spokane County, 2025



The median household income in 5th Avenue is 18% lower than Spokane overall, at \$53,000. The median household income in the area is rising, however, along with educational attainment, closing the gap relative to Spokane (see **Figure 40**). Community wealth building strategies should open pathways for entrepreneurship, workforce development, and local business growth, especially for the existing base of lower-income households.

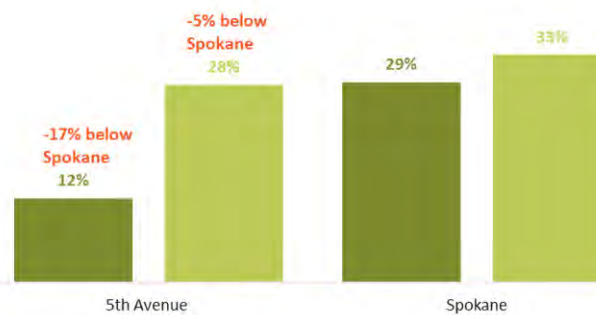
| 40 | Median Household Income in 5th Avenue and Spokane, 2013 & 2023

Source: ACS 5-year Estimates, 2013 & 2023



| 41 | Percent of Population with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher in 5th Avenue and Spokane

Source: ACS 5-year Estimates, 2013 & 2023



Strategy 4.1: Nurture and expand commercial activity and economic development along 5th Avenue



4.1a Support the health of existing businesses and community spaces, especially those adding to the cultural identity of 5th Avenue

There is an existing cluster of local businesses on 5th Avenue, such as Fresh Soul Restaurant and Larry's Barber Shop, and non-profit and community organizations, such as Spokane Eastside Reunion Association (SERA) Youth Center, the Carl Maxey Center, and Jacob's Well Church (see [Figure 42](#)).

Aligned with the community wealth building focus, growth in this subarea should benefit these longstanding businesses and property owners rather than displace them. Support can look like public realm improvements in and around these sites, communicating proposed land use changes with these property owners, and engaging business owners as leaders of a potential cultural district and/or business improvement area.

4.1b Activate commercial sites, including opportunities for popup events, markets, and festivals

There are a few sites in the subarea that currently could be used for commercial purposes but are vacant or primarily used as parking lots. These places offer important opportunities for temporary activations (especially parking lots), entrepreneurial ventures, or acquisition. Temporary activations could include festivals and events, farmers markets, or food truck corrals. These activations build community and identity with a short-term commitment and very low setup cost.

In September 2025, the City of Spokane passed legislation to reduce administrative and cost barriers for block parties and community gatherings that create temporary pedestrian-only environments ("play streets") between June and October. While the 5th Avenue corridor itself does not qualify under this program, given its bus routes, parallel neighborhood streets and areas adjacent to the neighborhood's parks would be good candidates for use of this program. Requirements include notification of houses along the impacted streets, setting up barricades at blocked intersections, and securing a permit from the City of Spokane. The permit is free, however, as long as the event is free and open to the public.

In April 2026, the City of Spokane designated portions of 5th Avenue, between Lee and Altamont Streets, and Haven and Green Streets, as festival streets. This removes some barriers for neighborhoods and event organizers to host events on public streets.

4.1c Activate existing neighborhood commercial structures

Pre-existing commercial structures in residential zones may be reused for low-impact neighborhood scale and neighborhood serving businesses, after approval of a conditional use permit. There are a few addresses in the subarea that qualify under the City's ordinance ([Chapter 17C.370 SMC](#)) that expanded potential for commercial structure for sites that are historically documented as having served a neighborhood commercial use. This also aligns with revitalizing historic uses that were once vibrant and thriving as part of a cultural district concept.

A 2017 list of potentially eligible sites includes:

- ▶ 328 S Fiske Street – Former commercial use
- ▶ 2702 E 5th Avenue – Former Masonic Lodge, historic property-eligible
- ▶ 615 S Thor Street – Service/professional use, currently vacant

4.1d Expand areas that allow for commercial uses

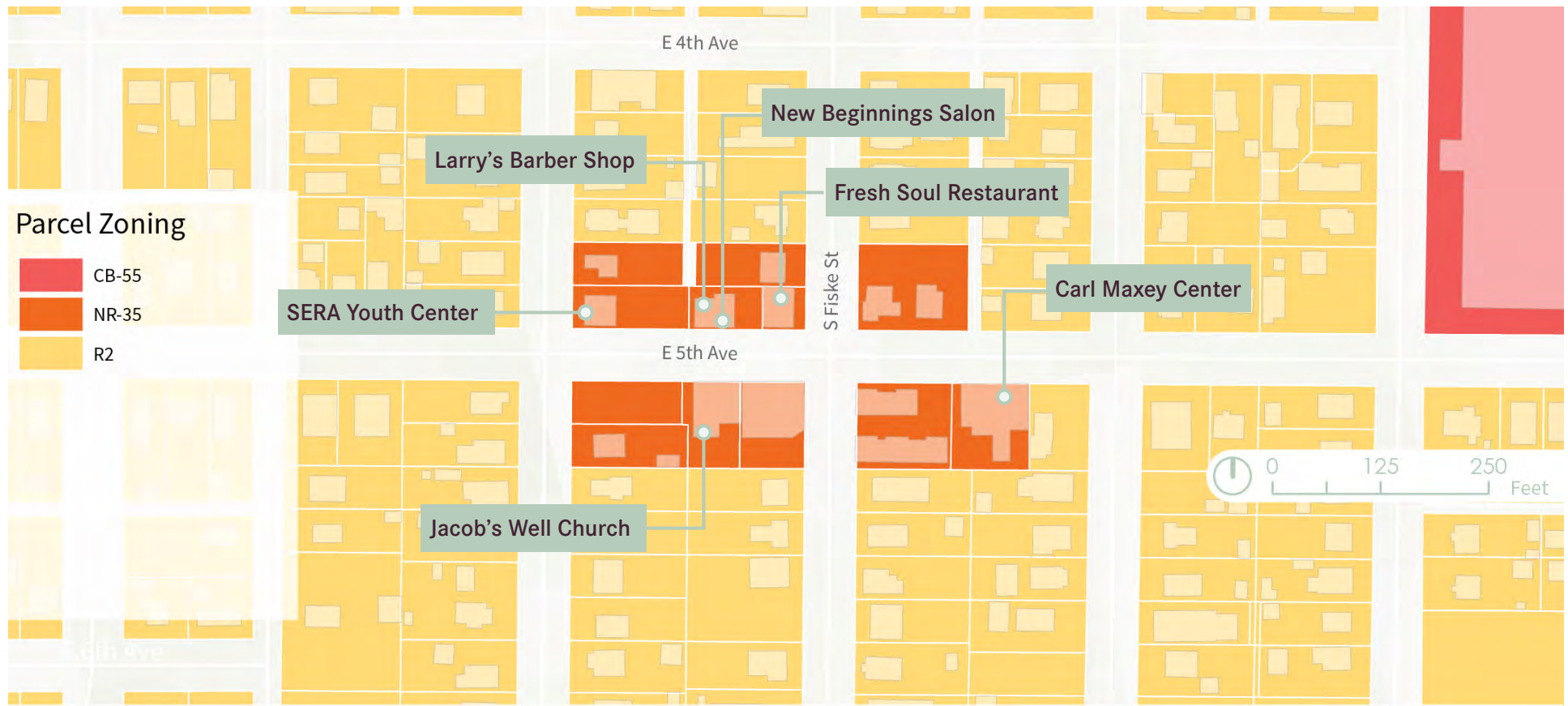
There are a limited number of existing sites that allow commercial uses in the subarea. Expansion of the I-90 infrastructure under the US 395 project impacted existing commercial in the 5th Avenue area over the last decade and reduced the available parcels zoned commercial. Proposed land use changes in this Plan emphasize building momentum along the 5th Avenue corridor, fostering connectivity between existing nodes of activity, and building in as much flexibility as possible for adaptive re-use of existing structures or integration of home businesses. In addition, the surplus lands present an opportunity for new economic development sites that offer higher volumes of employment for the community.

Implementation Steps and Partners

- ▶ Update land use to expand opportunities for commercial uses and mixed uses with more community-oriented development in the subarea, particularly along 5th Avenue.
- ▶ Consider how to facilitate adaptive reuse of existing structures for commercial businesses or community organizations.
- ▶ Support the Carl Maxey Center in future site expansion planning, through land use changes,

| 42 | Hub of Local Businesses on 5th Avenue

Source: Scout Spokane County, 2025



technical assistance, partnerships for grant funding, or otherwise.

- ▶ Engage with property owners on sites that have a grandfathered allowance for corner store businesses to ensure they are aware of this opportunity.
- ▶ Support the pilot of a neighborhood farmer's market event as proof of concept and opportunity to identify barriers that can be reduced or eliminated for similar pop-up events. Potential

sites include the parking lot at 5th Avenue and S Haven Street.

- ▶ Convene a workshop for potential local developers in the neighborhood. This 'developer bootcamp' could strengthen relationships and serve as an opportunity for the City to share community and development priorities, along with identified resources and pathways, with those in the development community.

Strategy 4.2: Support new development that advances community goals

4.2a Align future land use to support a mix of residential and commercial uses, focused growth, and enhanced community vitality

The proposed land categories outlined here help envision future development outcomes in the 5th Avenue study area. These categories illustrate the possibility of outcomes informed by community engagement, market research, and the vision of the 5th Avenue area. They are simplifications of existing land uses or future considerations in alignment with the PlanSpokane 2046 Comprehensive Plan. The proposed land uses are intended to explore the area's future growth. They do not compel development but reflect what changes could be made to support the desired vision.

A. Low Intensity Residential

Low Intensity Residential reflects existing residential uses. Examples include single-unit houses, duplexes, triplexes, town homes, and other middle housing. In the future, this area would also allow small stores and shops primarily serving people who live and work near them, such as gathering spaces, coffee shops, corner stores and home based businesses.

B. Moderate Intensity Residential

Moderate Intensity Residential currently allows midsize housing like middle housing and multiplexes, along with apartments, that are thoughtfully integrated near the moderate intensity mixed use areas and services with close access to public transportation. This designation encourages infill development that provides support to local businesses with increased foot traffic and provides a transition between the lower intensity residential and the moderate intensity mixed use. In the future, this area would also allow retail, and service uses that are appropriately scaled for

the overall area and focused primarily on serving the residents of the area.

C. Low Intensity Mixed Use

Low Intensity Mixed Use would be a new category that would focus on predominately small-scale neighborhood serving retail mixed together with residential uses. In the area along 5th Ave, the lower intensity mixed use corridor would provide a transition to the moderate intensity mixed use area along Thor Street. Streetscape improvements like curb extensions and marked crosswalks, paired together with traffic calming would improve pedestrian experience through this area. Commercial uses in this area front the street, allowing ease of access for pedestrians from the sidewalk.

D. Moderate Intensity Mixed Use

Moderate Intensity Mixed Use would be a new category that would encourage development that increases density and supports a mix of residential and commercial, office, and service uses. The streetscape has pedestrian-oriented amenities and infrastructure that promotes a safe, walkable, and vibrant environment. Future development should focus on serving the community and adjacent residential neighborhoods by creating accessible community public space and a varying scale of commercial space to support more diverse small businesses. Buildings are street facing with functional entrances and the land uses create activity along the street.

For feasibility, multifamily development sites need to be larger in size: at least 0.4 acres and ideally closer to 1 acre. The allowed use table for added density and height along key corridors should discourage uses like storage units and prioritize active uses, such as residential or community-serving commercial.

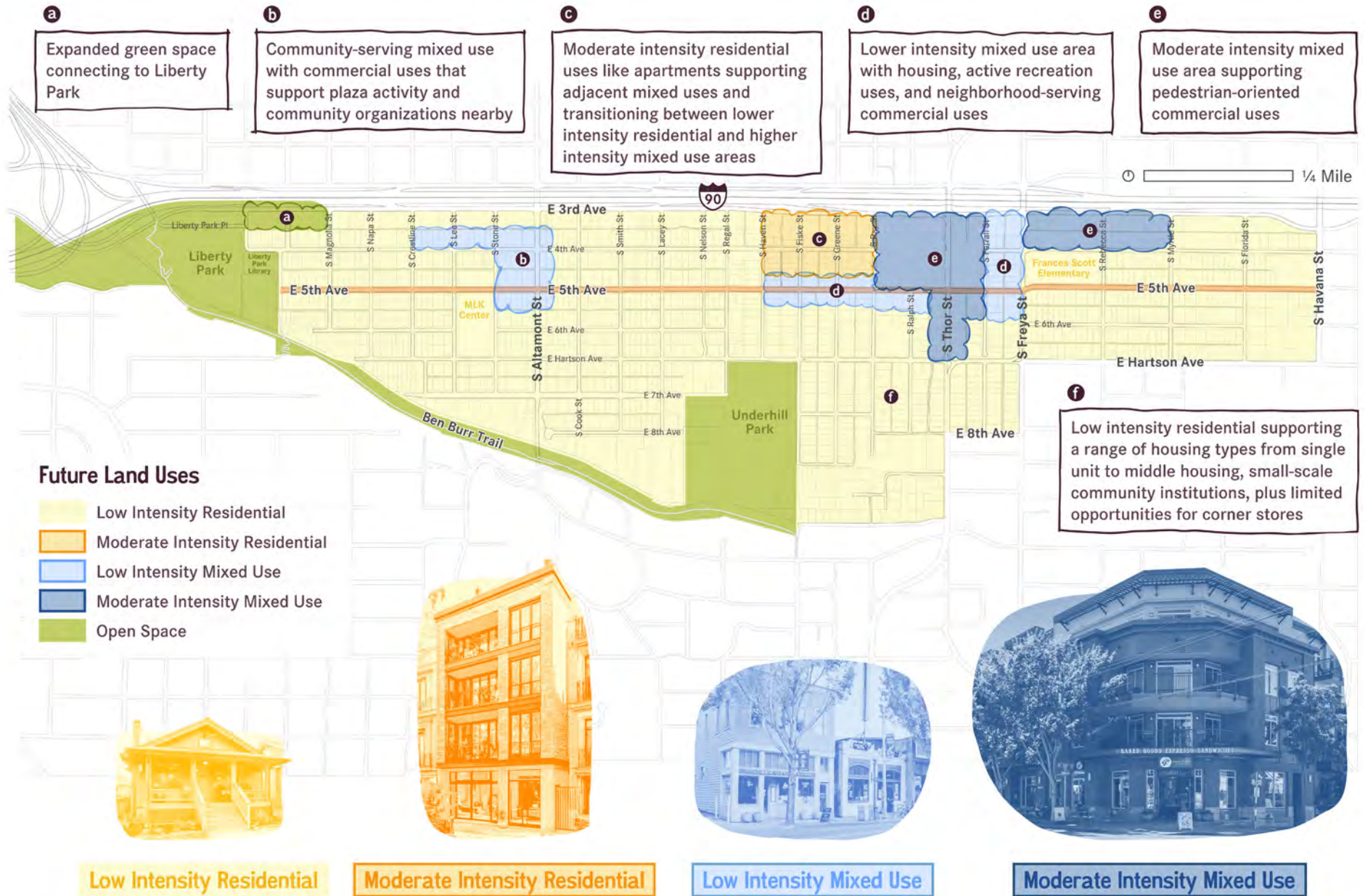
These regulatory updates reflect an overall vision of 5th Avenue as an area that is transitioning toward becoming a transit-oriented corridor with denser residential activity and a greater mix of uses available. This sets the stage for continued growth and development over time, maintaining a healthy balance of high-quality neighborhood amenities.

Figure 43 maps these proposed land use categories, identifying areas that allow commercial uses at two levels of intensity in the color blue. This Plan proposes building upon existing commercial nodes for a clustering of businesses and amenities in key areas. This includes areas to the north of the Martin Luther King Jr. Family Resource Center, an expanded corridor along 5th Avenue near current Fresh Soul Restaurant, extending the corridor around Fred Meyer to the south on Thor Street, and allowing for a mix of uses that includes commercial on streets to the north and west of Frances Scott Elementary.



| 43 | Proposed Future Land Use Map

Source: City of Spokane. Image: Leah Murphy



4.2b Address infrastructure needs to encourage affordable housing development

Stakeholder engagement for this Plan identified the need for infrastructure investments in key areas in order for affordable housing development to be feasible. These areas include any of the WSDOT ROW potential surplus land that may become available for community redevelopment and areas adjacent to the Ben Burr Trail and Underhill Park. The City can fund infrastructure improvements in coordination with a developer building income-restricted affordable housing or other community benefit uses for the neighborhood. Without this action, development in these areas is much more likely to be market rate or to not happen at all, given the high cost of these improvements.

Implementation Steps and Partners

- ▶ Connect community partners interested in 5th Avenue development opportunities with available resources for project financing, such as Department of Commerce's Planning and Predesign Capital Equity Program or its Capacity Building, Outreach, and Support Program.
- ▶ Engage City departments, philanthropic foundations, private investors, and community organizations with funding and technical capacity to acquire real estate for community uses.
- ▶ Assess public infrastructure needs on the surplus lands, such as sidewalks and streetlights, and ensure that community benefit uses will not be prohibited from development due to high upfront costs.

Strategy 4.3: Encourage partnerships to connect residents to good jobs and supportive services

4.3a Raise awareness about existing resources

Raising awareness about education, training and hiring resources that can increase access to good jobs in growing industries for underserved individuals and communities is an important way to connect residents to opportunity. There are existing organizations who provide these pathways but could use support to connect staff with interested community members.

4.3b Convene community and citywide service providers

Connecting service providers that serve a large geographic area with local organizations can foster opportunities for greater coordination, resource sharing, and network support meant to support the residents of 5th Avenue. These may be stakeholders that provide programming and services in the 5th Avenue community or citywide. During stakeholder engagement conversations, it was noted that increased communication and collaboration is needed to more fully form a network of support.

Implementation Steps and Partners

- ▶ Connect service providers, such as the Spokane Workforce Council, with local community organizations to increase their reach and impact in 5th Avenue. This includes connections to training and hiring resources for employers and the Next Generation Zone career center for young adults.
- ▶ Explore possibilities for shared resources that could benefit multiple providers working in this space, such as providing engagement staff, administrative support, and/or office space for those without a physical office in East Central.



SPOTLIGHT

Wishing Tree Books

Wishing Tree Books is an independent business in the neighboring South Perry District of Spokane. The store sets a precedent for adaptive re-use of a single-family structure for commercial purposes. In addition to its primary function as a local bookstore, Wishing Tree acts as a community gathering and event space, partners with local libraries and schools to promote early reading for kids, and participates in local events and celebrations. Businesses such as these contribute to neighborhood identity and character but can be near impossible to finance within the cost of new construction.



wishingtreebookstore.com

Exploring a TIF for 5th Avenue

A Tax Increment Financing (TIF) area is a tool that can be used by local governments to redirect tax revenue for public benefit. The TIF area boundary is established surrounding a site with new public infrastructure, such as the incoming WSDOT interchange sites. Properties within this area are expected to experience an increase in assessed value as a result of public infrastructure investments, and the TIF allows for the tax revenue associated with that increased land value to be collected into an account that can be used for public improvements in the neighborhood. A 5th Avenue TIF could act as an anti-displacement measure if funds are used to support affordable housing goals and/or the integration of local businesses and nonprofits into redevelopment sites. It also supports equity and the Plan's themes of respect and resourcefulness, ensuring that any financial benefits for property owners that result from highway infrastructure are reinvested for community benefit. If desired, this strategy requires additional study and a public process.

Source: <https://mrsc.org/explore-topics/finance/revenues/tax-increment-financing>

- ▶ Host service provider meet and greet sessions to make connections among the various agencies providing different forms of support.

Strategy 4.4: Offer technical assistance and funding support to small businesses and entrepreneurs

4.4a Increase access to small business services

These include services such as business planning support, business administration advice, legal services, and human resources capacity. It is common in moderate-income and immigrant communities for individuals to operate solo practitioner businesses out of their homes, such as tax preparation or accounting services. Many of these entrepreneurs could use support to improve their administrative efficiency and better operate or expand their activities. The 5th Avenue community is fortunate to have access to skilled technical assistance for these individuals, but support may be needed to make the initial connection.

4.4b Connect business owners and entrepreneurs with grant opportunities and lenders

Lenders such as Numerica Credit Union specialize in supporting small businesses and entrepreneurs. For business owners who don't have a strong credit history, it is particularly important to match with a lending institution that understands the unique needs of entrepreneurs.



SPOTLIGHT

TakeAll Coalition

The TakeAll Coalition is a 501c4 advocacy and education coalition committed to advancing the interests of Black-led businesses and nonprofits in the greater Spokane area. Their mission revolves around raising awareness of federal, state, and local policies that directly impact the Black community. In addition to advocacy, TakeAll serves as a vital resource sharing hub, offering valuable information and support to its members. Through collaborative efforts with coalition member organizations, stakeholders, and policymakers, TakeAll strives for success and prosperity.



takeallco.com

Implementation Steps and Partners

- ▶ Use digital subscription resources through Startup Spokane at the Liberty Park Library to identify individuals running home businesses in 5th Avenue to better understand the landscape of which industries and occupations are present in the area
- ▶ Proactively reach out to current and prospective business owners in 5th Avenue, and connect them with resource providers such as TakeAll Coalition, SIMBA, Carl Maxey Business Services, Nuestras Raices, AHANA Multi-Ethnic Business Association, Startup Spokane Library Center, Spokane Workforce Council, and the Washington State Small Business Development Center at WSU
- ▶ Convene small business resource fairs for information exchange and networking among organizations in East Central
- ▶ Evaluate models for revolving loan funds, such as that in the North Monroe Business District

Ensure open channels of information sharing between the city, city-wide agencies, and place-based nonprofits in the 5th Avenue community to keep abreast of the range of funding opportunities available to support small businesses and entrepreneurs. These funding streams can fluctuate over time or respond to acute challenges as they arise. A few examples of opportunities that are currently available in Spokane include: <https://spokaneworkforce.org/business-investment-grant/>; Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners (SNAP) support for applying to [Commerce support initiatives](#); IGNITE Northwest; Spokane Angel Investor Network



SPOTLIGHT

The Spokane Independent Metro Business Alliance (SIMBA)

The Spokane Independent Metro Business Alliance (SIMBA) creates an environment for local, independently-owned businesses and nonprofits in Spokane and Eastern Washington to thrive through organizing, education, direct support, and advocacy. SIMBA's mission is to empower and enrich entrepreneurs, micro- and small businesses, and local consumers through education, community engagement, and advocacy throughout Spokane and Eastern Washington. SIMBA envisions an inclusive, thriving, locally-focused business ecosystem where independent entrepreneurs and small business owners engage with their communities, sustain the local environment, and gain equal access to financial independence.



<https://www.spokaneindependent.org/>

5 STABILITY

Affordability, racial diversity, and inclusivity for a wide range of household types are crucial issues for the long term stability of the 5th Avenue community. As demographics have shifted, 5th Avenue's aging, predominantly single-family housing stock has significantly increased in sale price in recent years. A wider range of housing types and ownership models can alleviate displacement pressures and create pathways for cost-burdened households to stay in the neighborhood. Denser residential patterns and multi-family housing can also support the growth of local commercial activity and community wealth-building. These strategies increase pathways to homeownership, expand the variety of housing types available in 5th Avenue, and support multifamily residential and mixed-use developments along key corridors.



Top Priorities

Promote homeownership, especially for first-time buyers; use creative tools and strategies to acquire sites for affordable housing

Stability Strategies

Strategy 5.1: Increase housing options and affordability levels

Strategy 5.2: Promote homeownership, especially for first-time buyers

Strategy 5.3: Sustain homeownership for community members

Strategy 5.4: Use creative tools and strategies to acquire sites for affordable housing

Existing Conditions

5th Avenue is home to about 950 housing units, predominantly single-family homes that are relatively older in age and smaller in size when compared to Spokane's housing stock overall. Two-thirds of housing units are owner-occupied (66%) and one-third are renter-occupied, higher than the city homeownership rate of 58% in 2023. **5th Avenue is an important hub of homeownership in Spokane: a quarter of owner-occupied households identify as BIPOC, which is significantly higher than the citywide rate of homeowners who identify as BIPOC (15%). However, among renters neighborhood demographics show a decline in the number of Black and Hispanic households which indicates that the future of 5th Avenue as a continued home for these groups is at risk.**

This area has experienced a **rapid increase in home prices and, in connection with this, experiences a high rate of housing cost burden.** See **Figure 44** and **Figure 45**. In 5th Avenue, 27% of households report that half or more of their income is paid toward housing costs (severely cost-burdened) and another 18% of households report paying more than 30% of their income toward housing costs (cost-burdened). These **cost-burdened households may cut back on other important expenses related to healthcare, nutrition, or education to try and avoid displacement, emphasizing the importance of expanding access to affordable housing in the community.**

There has been little housing development activity in recent years, so most home sales in 5th Avenue reflect turnover of existing properties. Stakeholder engagement referred to these turnovers as “lipstick renovations”—where a home that potentially used to serve as an affordable rental is quickly renovated and sold to a buyer at a price out of reach for existing residents. Another impact of affordability challenges

noted during engagement is that **longstanding homeowners may be aging in place without making important updates and renovations to their home over time.** During engagement, the community emphasized repeatedly the need for greater affordability, addressing housing insecurity, and making sure that 5th Avenue remains a welcoming community for a racially diverse base of residents.

Anti-displacement measures are an important focus for strategies and actions in this chapter, reflecting community priorities and honoring the neighborhood's legacy.

| 44 | Housing Cost Burden Rates in Spokane and 5th Avenue, 2021

Note: Cost burden percentage rates indicate percent of household income paid toward housing costs, including utilities. Source: CHAS dataset based on ACS 5-year estimates 2017-2021



| 45 | Average Sales Prices for Homes in 5th Avenue, 2010-2024

Source: Zillow ZHVI for zip code 99202, average of monthly data for 2010-2024



Strategy 5.1: Increase housing options and affordability levels

5.1a Continue to encourage building middle housing types

Middle housing types include 2-3-4-plexes, cottage housing clusters, ADUs, or small lot homes. Typically, these units come to market at a price point that is lower than single family home alternatives. Sometimes these homes can be arranged in a cluster with shared greenspace for added quality of life to occupants. Flexibility to be creative with site planning can be key

to ensuring that alternate housing formats are able to be produced within existing lot sizes.

Given the current market realities in Spokane, mirroring statewide trends, new housing units of any format are unlikely to be affordable to moderate- and low-income households, so the pursuit of partnership with affordable housing partners like Habitat for

Humanity are an important pathway to ensuring that middle housing homeownership opportunities are available to 5th Avenue community members. This policy can have significant impacts in the neighborhood, as middle housing types are allowed in lower density residential zones (shown in light yellow in **Figure 43**) and can fit onto many parcel types.



| 46 | Examples of “Missing Middle” Moderate Density Infill Housing

Increasing “missing middle” moderate density infill within existing neighborhoods can improve housing affordability. The images above illustrate some of the types of development that fall within the “missing middle” category. Image: CAST Architecture

5.1b Pursue opportunities to attract larger format subsidized affordable housing development

This policy connects with land use strategy outlined in **Action 4.2a**. Income-restricted affordable housing developments of a standard building format are most feasible on lots sized 1 acre or more. The 5th Avenue neighborhood lacks sites that currently meet this description, although the surplus lands offer an important area for opportunity here. Within the context of affordable housing, engagement conversations highlighted a priority for family-sized units, especially near the elementary school. Areas identified in darker blue and darker orange on the future land use map (**Figure 43**) are also compatible with this policy.

5.1c Continue to advocate for community redevelopment of WSDOT ROW potential surplus lands

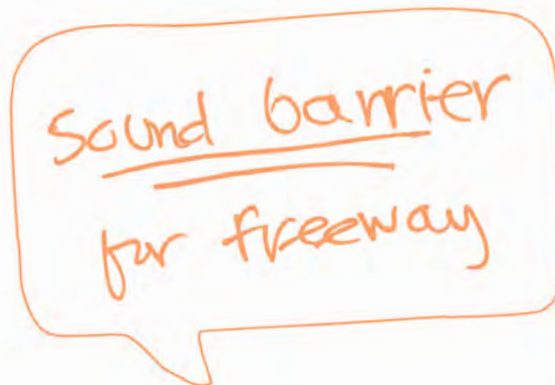
Many longstanding challenges rooted in historical trauma continue to challenge the 5th Avenue area, and it remains one of the most vulnerable areas in the City of Spokane. Recent increases in the cost of living have heightened the need to preserve and increase housing affordability in the 5th Avenue area to mitigate displacement and support residents' continued heritage and legacy in East Central. This Plan envisions new housing development on WSDOT ROW - potential future surplus lands along I-90. Community priorities for housing in these potential surplus lands are described below:

- ▶ In the western portion, affordable housing for seniors paired with small-scale commercial and supportive services is an important consideration
- ▶ In the central portion, mixed use affordable housing paired with affordable homeownership opportunities (or potential community land trust) would add density closest to commercial areas

- ▶ In the eastern portion, affordable family-sized housing, mixed use small-scale commercial, and supportive community services would be well suited given proximity to the elementary school

The WSDOT ROW potential surplus lands were a place of residential development for over 100 years, well before I-90 was constructed, so restoring housing in this area is a crucial form of justice and reconnection for the community. Housing development on lands adjacent to the highway will, however, require a specific approach. Additional density and new development should be paired with buffering and mitigation interventions that improve environmental quality for residents with better design, green space, and mitigation for traffic/environmental impacts. Highway-adjacent communities often face higher rates of respiratory and cardiovascular illness, stress, and other negative health outcomes because of exposure to air pollution and noise. A mix of site planning, building design, and mechanical systems can substantially reduce noise and pollution exposure.

The table on the following page summarizes suggested interventions across these broad categories.



SPOTLIGHT

Beacon Pacific Village

Other communities provide examples of quality affordable housing developments with the proper considerations to be healthy homes even in proximity to freeways. In Seattle, Beacon Pacific Village is a new mixed-use development that provides one such example. The development features 160 income-restricted affordable units; a mix of unit sizes that ranging from studios to 4-bedrooms; an integrated childcare center and two playgrounds; an elder care facility; public art integration; and direct proximity to the Pacific Tower healthcare and education campus. Environmental considerations include an Energy Recovery Ventilation system, triple-pane insulated windows, and insulated walls which all combine to reduce noise and air pollution impacts.



<https://www.coopartnerships.org/blog/2024/a-sneak-peek-of-beacon-pacific-village>

Type	Primary benefit	Typical tools
Site planning	Reduce baseline exposure	▶ Maximizing distance and elevation changes between units and the travel lanes wherever possible; even shifting buildings to the far edge of a parcel, using parking or non-sensitive uses along the freeway edge, cuts exposure. ▶ Use internal street grids so that bedrooms, courtyards, and play areas are oriented away from the freeway and toward the quietest side of the site. ▶ Reserve the freeway-adjacent edge for less sensitive uses: parking structures, commercial, circulation cores. ▶ Avoid placing play areas, seating, or outdoor amenity spaces along barrier gaps, where noise and pollutant concentrations can remain high.
Outdoor barriers	Cut noise, some dispersion	▶ Berms, walls, vegetation belts
Building envelope and orientation	Block noise & infiltration	▶ Tighten the envelope with high-performance windows and doors (e.g., double or triple glazing) and continuous air-sealing at facades facing the roadway to reduce both noise and infiltration of fine/ultrafine particles. ▶ Use higher mass exterior walls; avoid operable windows oriented directly toward the freeway as the primary means of ventilation ▶ Orient units so that most bedrooms and living spaces face away from the freeway
Mechanical & filters	Clean indoor air	▶ Provide mechanical ventilation with no reliance on open windows for fresh air; systems should allow windows to remain closed while still meeting ventilation codes. ▶ MERV 13+ filters and consider activated carbon or other gas-phase filters to address ultrafine particles and traffic-related gases
Policy & education	Long-term risk reduction	▶ Ensure robust operations and maintenance: Require regular filter replacement, commissioning, and long-term compliance monitoring in development agreements or conditions of approval. ▶ Put in place truck routing restrictions, lower speed limits, or roadway operational changes that reduce emissions near housing. ▶ Incorporate disclosure and education for residents about noise, air quality, and the importance of keeping windows closed during peak traffic with filtration running, especially for sensitive populations.

Implementation Steps & Partners

- ▶ Consider land use changes to expand locations where midrise housing could develop and partner with affordable housing developers to prioritize a project in 5th Avenue.
- ▶ Ensure that land use categories assigned to WSDOT ROW potential surplus lands, once released for development, are compatible with common subsidized affordable housing formats to strengthen MFTE compatibility and a potential LIHTC applications.
- ▶ Pursue the use of 1590 HEART funds for an affordable housing and/or transitional housing development specifically geared to seniors experiencing housing instability, paired with healthcare facilities.
- ▶ Address housing instability by connecting service providers to understand the landscape of shelter beds and transitional housing options, particularly for seniors and during cold weather months.

Strategy 5.2: Promote homeownership, especially for first-time buyers

5.2a Expand access to downpayment and closing cost assistance

One major hurdle to buying a home is the upfront cost in cash. It can take years and years for a household to save enough money to be able to consider buying a home, especially for those who have student debt and/or do not have parents contributing supportive funds. This reality compounds the divide in generational wealth building and makes homeownership feel unattainable to many. There are organizations in Spokane working to address this issue and the City can support these groups by connecting them with resources, such as funding and staff capacity. In addition, recent landmark legislation in Washington State provides downpayment assistance for moderate-income BIPOC residents whose parents or grandparents lived in Washington prior to Fair Housing legislation in 1968.

5.2b Support culturally relevant training and education for prospective first-time homebuyers

The process of buying a home is complicated and intimidating for a first-time buyer. Lessons in personal finance, understanding the potential benefits of homeownership, and working with lending institutions and realtors are important first steps into this path. In addition, the long-term commitment to maintenance and upkeep that leads to better outcomes for a home can be more arduous than anticipated. This action promotes supporting training and education that can help boost success for those who are inexperienced in the homeownership market, particularly when language or cultural barriers act as further barriers to access. During stakeholder interviews, it was highlighted that credit scores were a key barrier to homeownership for residents in the 5th Avenue

Renting Versus Buying

Home ownership is one of the most common strategies for wealth building in the United States, although it comes with financial risk as well. Advantages to home ownership include locking in stable monthly housing costs over time and favorable tax policy, such as the mortgage interest deduction. It also offers geographic consistency, which can promote stronger social networks. Some renting families prefer the flexibility of rental housing and the freedom from large, unexpected maintenance expenses. Other renters would like to own their home and simply cannot afford it. Ownership requires substantial savings for a down payment along with a credit history that lenders find acceptable. Due to historic and ongoing systemic discrimination, low-income and BIPOC households frequently struggle with either or both of these criteria. These barriers reduce one's ability to access the potential financial and social benefits that can come with homeownership.

Sources: Brookings, 2019; Urban Institute, 2018; Center for Investigative Reporting, 2018; The Urban Institute, 2024

community. Focused coaching on improving credit scores, identifying a lending institution, and understanding probable long-term costs are important pairings to downpayment support.

Implementation Steps & Partners

- ▶ Resource local organizations that support first-time homebuyers, such as Black Homeownership Spokane and Habitat for Humanity's Advancing Black Homeownership program.
- ▶ Raise awareness about the State's Covenant Homeownership Program to identify potential applicants and assist with the application process.
- ▶ Identify lending institutions that are friendlier to first-time buyers and people with limited or imperfect credit history.
- ▶ Provide homeownership training in languages that are spoken in 5th Avenue other than English, such as Spanish, Ukrainian, and Marshallese.



Black Homeownership Spokane (BHS) Cohort program certificate earners at the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center. The 10-month program helps participants gain access to down payment assistance and provides financial education and housing navigation to help Black residents build generational wealth. Image: Converge Media

Strategy 5.3: Sustain homeownership for community members

5.3a Raise awareness about funding support for home repairs and weatherization as anti-displacement tools

Data analysis, site visits, and engagement conversations all confirm that housing stability is a concern and that the 5th Avenue subarea is home to many aging homeowners who need financial and administrative assistance to complete necessary home repairs. There are reports of families who desperately need accessibility investments but lack the funds, as one example. Existing programs through the City's Community, Housing, and Human Services Department and partners can support these homeowners but funds are limited and awareness raising is an important component to ensuring that the available benefits make it to this neighborhood.

5.3b Connect residents with utility assistance programs

Like **Action 5.3a**, there are programs that help with utility assistance for low-income homeowners including the City's Public Works Utility Billing UHelp program, SNAP Energy Assistance, and Avista among others. Stakeholder engagement highlighted this need in the neighborhood, identifying reports of individuals going without heat in the winter as a cost-saving measure. No one in the community should have to be cold and financial support can bridge this gap for impacted households.

Implementation Steps & Partners

- ▶ Door-to-door awareness building of resources for home repairs, utility assistance, and weatherization funds. Increase available funds for these types of projects.
- ▶ Connect identified residents experiencing housing instability with networks of support and wraparound care resources to mitigate other compounding challenges.
- ▶ For structures identified as significant by the City's historic preservation office, connect interested homeowners to façade improvement grants.

Strategy 5.4: Use creative tools and strategies to acquire sites for affordable housing

5.4a Pursue a proactive land banking strategy

One key anti-displacement approach proposed in this Plan is a coordinated land banking effort. This initiative would purchase multiple sites in the subarea at the same time for simultaneous conversion to community benefit uses, such as affordable homeownership. This approach maintains a housing scale compatible with adjacent sites in the neighborhood but bakes in long-term affordable homeownership for the future of 5th Avenue. Qualities that would be important for selecting sites include:

- ▶ **Size:** Sites are ideally 0.4 acres or more, to allow for creative middle housing formats
- ▶ **Orientation:** Corner lots, sites adjacent to parks or community institutions, or sites identified as having historic significance to the cultural identity of the neighborhood are particularly good choices for this strategy
- ▶ **Current use:** Sites that are vacant, have structures in need of extensive rehabilitation, or sites identified as opportunities for neighborhood commercial uses are good candidates here.

5.4b Identify an organization interested in pursuing a community land trust or co-op development model

A community land trust or cooperative housing model is best situated for success with grassroots origins. Community members must be excited about the concept and feel invested in making it a success. This type of housing development would be an excellent match for connection with the cultural communities that have deep ties to 5th Avenue. The City can support this effort by connecting this partner organization with opportunity sites, reducing any barriers in permitting or site design requirements, and adding financial support.

5.4c Provide needed infrastructure investments to reduce affordable housing development costs

These infrastructure investments are especially critical in areas that currently lack the necessary water or sewer connections, sidewalks, or other capital investments to be compatible with residential development. This need was highlighted during stakeholder engagement and will be an important consideration alongside the land banking strategy identified in **Action 5.4a**.

Implementation Steps & Partners

- ▶ Partner with the Spokane Land Bank.
- ▶ Work with local churches to understand options for site conversion to affordable housing.
- ▶ Explore a scattered site LIHTC application that acquires a bundle of sites in the neighborhood for simultaneous redevelopment by Habitat for Humanity, or others, to affordable homeownership opportunities.
- ▶ Leverage existing initiatives and financing opportunities, such as the Spokane Land Bank and Washington State Housing Finance Commission Land Acquisition Program (LAP) to acquire property for community benefit projects at opportunity sites.
- ▶ Identify an organizing entity and interested community members to pursue a community land trust or cooperative housing development within 5th Avenue.

IMPLEMENTATION

Moving Forward

With this Plan in place, the community has established a framework for aligning efforts across the city, coordinating with partners, and measuring progress.

Performance Monitoring

- ▶ The City will monitor and evaluate outcomes on a regular basis. Monitoring provides an early warning system if goals are not being met. It also can alert the City to early successes so that resources can be focused on actions that are the most effective. This Plan’s monitoring program has two components—implementation monitoring and performance monitoring, described below.
- ▶ Implementation monitoring will track which of the actions are being implemented and the extent to which City partners, including other public agencies and private sector entities, are participating.
- ▶ Potential Implementation Monitoring actions to track:
 - Establishment of Cultural District
 - Land use changes
 - Traffic calming on 5th Avenue
 - Community schoolyard at Frances Scott
- ▶ Performance monitoring will show whether actions are achieving the desired results. Performance indicators that map to key vision themes are listed on the following page. Indicators that link to existing City plans were prioritized. We recommend these data be updated regularly over time and adjustments made to the Implementation Matrix as needed.

| 48 | Performance Monitoring

Goal	Performance indicator
1: Identity	▶ Count of Black-owned businesses ▶ Attendance at community events
2: Connectivity	▶ Sidewalk network completion ▶ STA boardings in 5th Ave Rt 94 ▶ Vision Zero target: 0 fatalities
3: Livability	▶ Percent tree canopy cover : Target 30% ▶ Parks facilities condition assessment rating
4: Prosperity	▶ Commercial vacancy rate ▶ Count of small businesses
5. Stability	▶ Units of middle housing production ▶ Renter-occupied housing cost-burden ▶ Duration of residence

