

Vision Statement, Goals & Policies, Zoning and Block Frontage Options

Draft, September 30, 2019

Draft Vision Statement

Below is an initial rough draft vision statement used to facilitate discussion at the July 30, 2019 Community Design Workshops:

The South University District is a dynamic neighborhood, where commerce, innovation, and industry interact. The district's historic fabric provides a walkable framework that supports the creation of new places for people to live, work and study, while the retail and freight corridor along Sherman Street continues to play a regional role in providing and conveying goods and services to the larger city.

Below is the recommended update to the vision statement using suggestions from the groups at the July workshops. Key updated elements are highlighted in **yellow**.

*The South University District is a dynamic **crossroads** for innovation, commerce, and **industry amidst a diverse residential neighborhood**. The district's **unique** historic fabric supports the creation of new places live, **learn, work and shop on streets that are walkable and safe**. **Sprague Avenue continues to play a regional role in providing goods and services to the larger city, while Sherman Street and the University District Gateway Bridge connect to educational and medical institutions north and south.***

Draft Goals & Policies

Land Use Goals

- LU-1 Promote increased private investment in the district, especially for housing and employment-related development.
- LU-2 Promote the integration of new housing developments including a mixtures of housing types and prices.
- LU-3 Prioritize pedestrian-oriented development along E Sprague Avenue and near the University District Gateway Bridge landing.

Policies implementing LU-1-3:

- Adjust zoning to emphasize pedestrian-oriented mix of uses along E Sprague Avenue other areas within close proximity to the University District Gateway Bridge landing.
- Continue pro-active engagement with district stakeholders, including property owners, universities, hospitals, light industrial businesses, and housing developers to facilitate desired development.
- Work with the University District Public Development Authority (PDA) to explore opportunities for public/private partnerships facilitating desired pedestrian-oriented developments in strategic locations.

- Work with property owners to locate and identify resources for mitigating environmental contamination.
- Reduce minimum parking requirements for blocks along E Sprague Avenue other areas within close proximity to the University District Gateway Bridge landing.

LU-4 Support the continued viability of existing businesses in the district.

Implementing Policies:

- Configure zoning and design provision changes to balance land use objectives and minimize the creation of non-conforming uses and other negative impacts to existing businesses.
- Continue pro-active engagement with property owners and existing businesses to understand their unique needs and to help mitigate impacts to their businesses.
- Consider the needs of employees and customers of existing business in establishing a management program for on-street parking in the district.

Community Design Goals

CD-1 Foster a distinct sense of place in the district that emphasizes innovative design and creativity.

CD-2 Enhance the district's safety, visual character, and neighborhood amenities to support and encourage residential development.

Policies implementing CD-1 & 2:

- Improve streetscapes within the district to enhance the pedestrian environment while maintaining functionality for existing businesses.
- Promote the creation of new neighborhood amenities that cater to residents.
- Market the district as a place that prioritizes innovative design and creativity.
- Continue pro-active engagement with the PDA, property owners, and existing businesses to promote innovative design within the district.
- Develop programs and work with the PDA to ensure that the open space amenity at The University District Gateway Bridge plaza is well-activated and maintained.
- Identify additional opportunities for neighborhood greenspace and support community-led efforts to secure land for a park.
- Increase the presence of street trees to improve livability, reduce heat island, and reduce stormwater runoff.

CD-3 Focus pedestrian-oriented streetscapes and development frontages along E Sprague Avenue and S Sherman Street, particularly on the blocks closest to the University District Gateway Bridge.

Implementing Policies:

- Enhance E Pacific Ave west of S Sherman Street as a low-traffic, green, pedestrian-oriented neighborhood street.
- Apply pedestrian-oriented block frontages standards in focus areas.
- Use pedestrian-oriented streetscape designs when making street improvements in focus areas.
- Coordinate with adjacent property owners and other stakeholders on strategic placement of street furniture within focus areas.
- Reduce the relative presence of surface parking in focus areas.

CD-4 Reinforce the district's historic legacy as an eclectic industrial mixed-use district.

Implementing Policies:

- Encourage site and building design that honors/draws from the district's industrial legacy.

- Avoid design standards that emphasize a single architectural style.
- Designate areas in the district zoned DTU as “Perimeter Area” on the Downtown Design Review threshold map, providing a level of design review consistent with other areas zoned DTU or located outside of downtown core or gateway areas.
- Structure zoning and development standards to allow flexibility for continued use and adaptive reuse of any nonconforming historic structures.
- Identify resources to assist property owners for renovation and improvements to historic buildings.
- Extend the Surface Parking Limited Area to cover the South University District to prohibit the development of new standalone commercial surface parking lots as a primary use.

Connectivity Goals

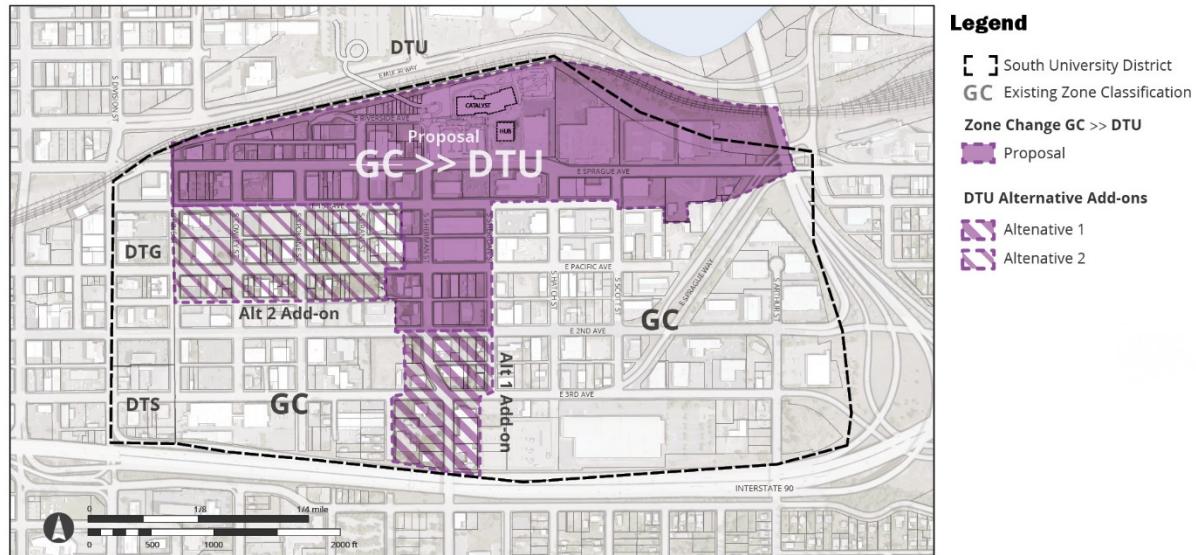
Ct-1 Strengthen connections from the South University District to Downtown, nearby universities, and South Hill medical uses.

Implementing Policies:

- Support efforts to enhance bicycle access through the district and connections to downtown and South Hill medical uses.
- Work with Spokane Transit Authority to optimize transit service in the district, including shuttle service to the South Hill medical uses.

District Zoning

The map below illustrates three alternatives for updated zoning in the district.



South University District Rezoning Alternatives

Proposal

Proposes a change from General Commercial (GC) to Downtown University (DTU) along the E Sprague Avenue corridor and the northern blocks of the S Sherman Street corridor (closest to the University District Gateway Bridge).

Why DTU and why here?

- Proposed boundary focuses on Sprague corridor and portions of Sherman closest to the south bridge landing (retaining the GC designation to remain for most of the district)
- DTU still allows for a very broad mix of uses, but has a greater emphasis on pedestrian-oriented uses
- DTU offers much more flexibility for larger office and institutional uses
- DTU has stronger design standards, particularly in how developments look from the street
- DTU requires design review for larger developments and for some remodels/additions to existing buildings

Alternative 1

Extends the DTU zone over the two remaining southern blocks along S Sherman Street to Interstate 90 and the district boundary.

Why?

- Extension includes the entire S Sherman Street corridor to strengthen the connection through the district to South Hill medical uses and other neighborhoods to the south.

Alternative 2

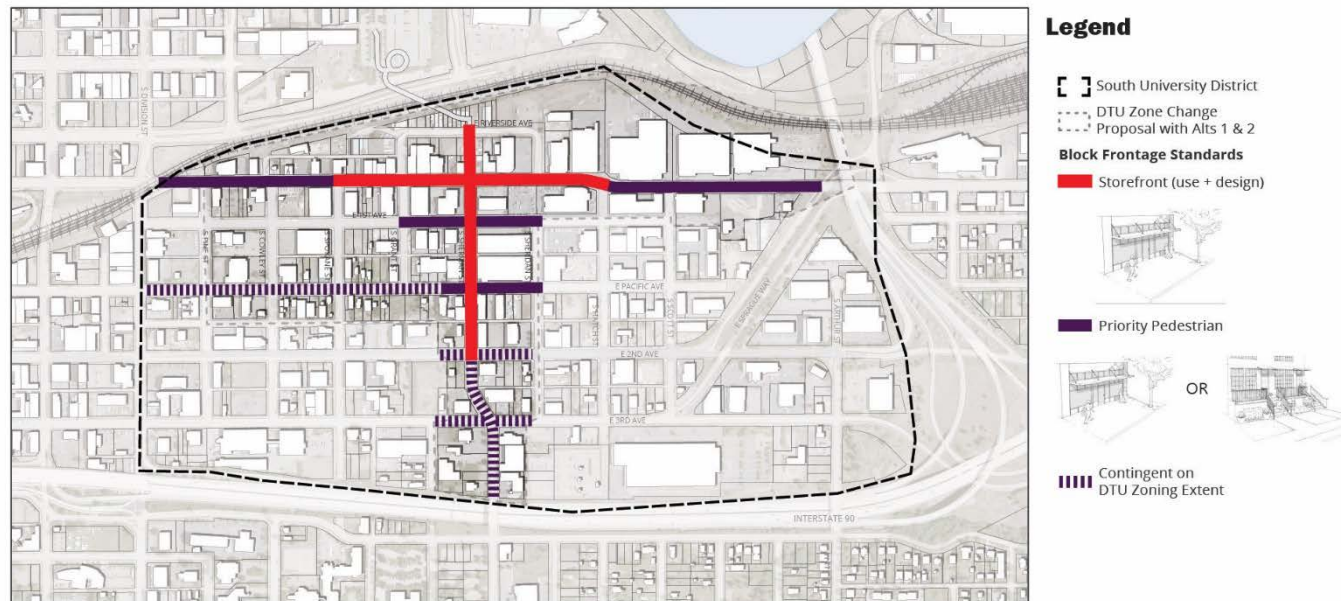
Extends the DTU zone south of E First Ave and west of Sherman to S Short Street to the edge of existing GC zoning.

Why?

- Extension includes the E Pacific Avenue corridor, which provides an opportunity to create a quieter mixed-use neighborhood street.

Block Frontages and Complete Street Designations

The map below illustrates preliminary recommendations for the block frontage land use and design provisions that will be critical in implementing the goals of the district over time.



South University District Block Frontages – Preliminary Recommendation

Proposal

The proposed block frontage /complete street concept calls for the four northern blocks of S Sherman Street and four blocks of E Sprague Avenue (centered on Sherman) to emphasize storefront use and design. This includes buildings with generous window transparency and entrances facing the sidewalk built up to the sidewalk edge and featuring non-residential uses within those ground-level storefronts.

A second “Priority Pedestrian” block frontage designation is included. It allows for the flexibility of storefronts and landscaped setbacks and can accommodate any of the zone’s permitted uses (including ground floor residential). These block frontages emphasize pedestrian-friendly building frontages and limit surface/ground level parking to no more than half of block frontages.

Why?

- The strict storefront approach creates predictability – guaranteeing that when new development occurs, it follows the storefront pattern.

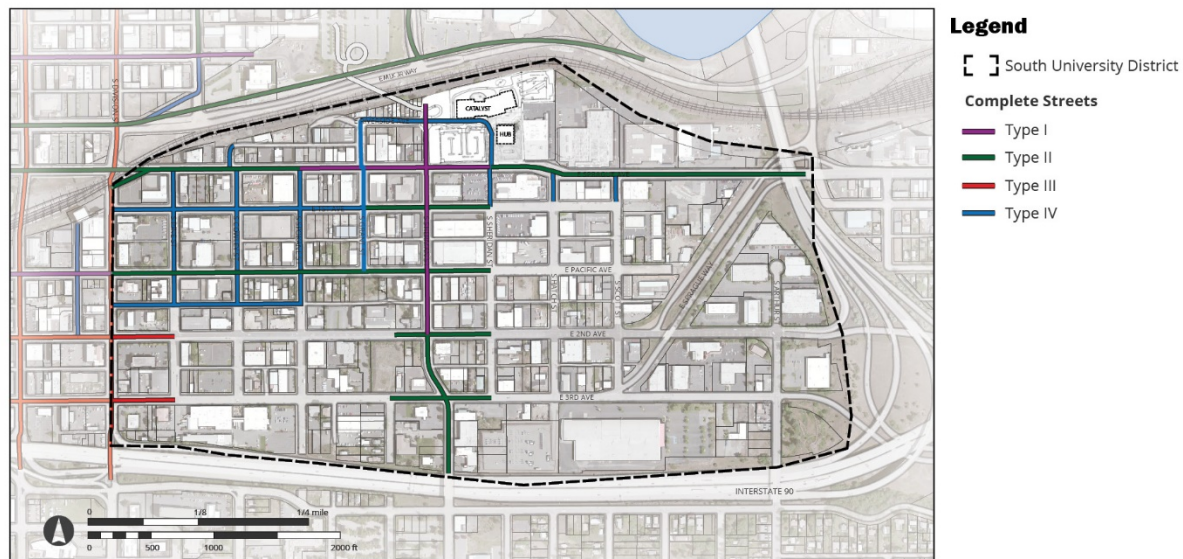
- The concentrated storefront configuration is intended to create a critical mass of ground-level activity necessary to create a vibrant business district while limiting its extent to those most critical blockfronts.

Implementation via Complete Street Designations

The above block frontage approach could be partially implemented by applying Complete Street designations to those areas changed to DTU to best reflect current goals. Complete Streets designations apply in downtown zones such as DTU and set different street standards and desired amenities based upon the intended use and desired qualities of the street. Complete Street Types I (Community Activity Street) and II (Community Connector) are designated along Sprague Avenue and Sherman Street, with Type I Complete Streets concentrated on the intersection of Sprague and Sherman adjacent to the Sherman plaza and south landing of the University District Gateway Bridge.

Why?

- Since Types I and II are nearly identical, they are delineated the same as shown in the block frontage map on Page 5. Types I and II both require generous amounts of façade transparency and require buildings to be placed at or close to the sidewalk edge. They also prohibit parking lots to be placed in front of buildings.
- This approach uses the existing regulatory framework, which makes it easier to implement.



Distribution of suggested updated Complete Street types.

NOTE: Any changes to the existing Complete Street provisions (such as changes to Complete Streets standards to fully implement the block frontage recommendations on Page 5) would be considered as part of a wider downtown planning process, as such changes affect all of the Downtown Zones.