

What We've Heard



South University District Engagement Results Summary

September, 2019

The South University District Subarea Planning process is exploring adjustments to zoning and development standards for the South University District to reflect the goals of the community for the future of the area. Recent investments in infrastructure, including the University District Gateway Bridge and Sprague Avenue improvements, have already generated considerable interest in private investment in the district. Potential changes to zoning and development standards could make the area more attractive for residential and mixed-use development, attract different types of employers, strengthen the identity of the area, and make the area more friendly for pedestrians.

The results of early engagement efforts for the planning process, including an online survey, community workshop, and series of focus group meetings, are summarized here.

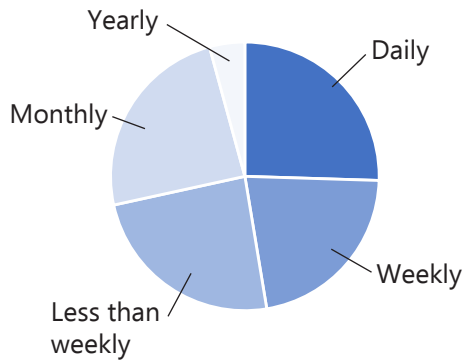
ONLINE SURVEY

7/22-8/11/2019 – 308 respondents

Survey Summary

On the whole, survey respondents were generally in favor of the South University District becoming a more mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly environment.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU VISIT?



Survey Preferences

STRONGEST PREFERENCES

- Sherman Street should become a 'main street' for the area.
- Buildings should not be replaced with parking lots.
- Side streets should be oriented towards bikes, pedestrians and local access.
- The district should evolve towards a mix of employment, residential, and retail uses.

OTHER PREFERENCES

- Parking should be consolidated in central locations if possible.
- Drive-through facilities should not be allowed.
- Design review should be required.

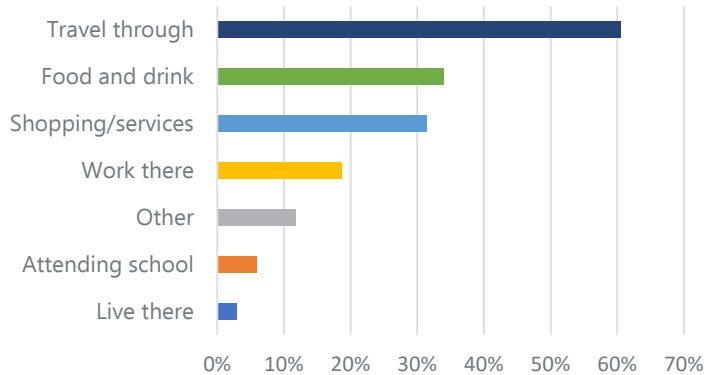
MIXED OPINIONS

Participants did not express a strong preference as to whether the district should be distinct from or a part of downtown, what types of industry should be present, or what types of uses should be allowed along street frontages on Sherman.

308 survey respondents

- **21% work** in the U District
- **47% visit** at least weekly

HOW DO YOU USE THE SOUTH UNIVERSITY DISTRICT?



Open-Ended Comments

Survey participants were also asked: "do you have other ideas or concerns about the future of the South University District area?"

Respondents shared a range of views. In general most responses shared a positive vision for future change in the district. The most common topics shared were:

- the need for more pedestrian and cyclist friendly infrastructure and connections to other districts,
- the need for more housing,
- the need for retail amenities like restaurants, and
- the need for a park, more trees or open space.

The increasing presence of homelessness and perceptions of declining safety were the most commonly shared concerns.

EXAMPLE COMMENTS

"I believe a mix of educational/commercial spaces with equitable housing and amenities would be ideal."

"Mixed use with housing options for students attending school at the University District. More restaurant options that make the neighborhood unique and livable."

"There are a lot more homeless people in this area as of late. I've owned my property in the district for over 30 years and I've never seen it this bad."

"Keep multimodal facilities and services in mind when planning for the area. Walking, bicycling, and transit access is important for a vibrant area."

COMMUNITY DESIGN WORKSHOP

7/30/2019 – 20 participants

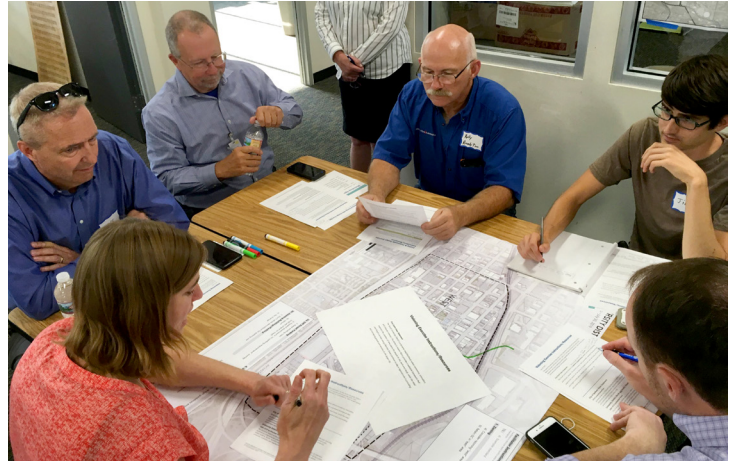
Initial Draft Vision Statement

“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 Sprague Avenue continues to play a regional role in providing and conveying goods and services to the larger city”

Vision Statement Input

- Incorporate residential/mixed use component of neighborhood in the opening sentence.
- Emphasize diversity.
- Add importance of north-south connections between to hospitals and universities and continuity of service between them.
- Keep the language simple.
- Emphasize the district’s unique identity.
- Emphasize learning rather than studying.

A revised Vision Statement will incorporate this feedback.



Small group map showing potential area for change in zoning.



Small group map illustrating ideas for pedestrian-friendly street standards.

Workshop small group summaries

ZONING

- Most groups were in favor of exploring the application of Downtown General zoning to parts of the South University District.
- The southeastern portion of the area should remain General Commercial.

BLOCK FRONTAGES

- Broad support for pedestrian-friendly building frontages on Sherman and Sprague and prohibition of ground-floor residential on some block fronts.
- Support for pedestrian-friendly design on some side streets, especially near the intersection of Sprague and Sherman.

PARKING

- No broad consensus about parking standards, but some support for extending the downtown “no minimum parking” overlay to the district.

BUILDING DESIGN

- Design guidelines emphasizing a particular design character were not widely supported.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

Property Owners and Developers

- Some property owners bought into the area in anticipation of pedestrian bridge opening.
- Bedrock presents construction challenges to development, notably for parking and utilities.
- Owners generally favorable towards prohibiting ground-floor residential on key blocks of Sprague Avenue and Sherman Street.

Business Owners

- Free parking is part of the area's competitive advantage.
- Overabundance of low-barrier subsidized housing may discourage market-rate developers.
- Zoning non-conformance affects the resale value of property with light industrial buildings because it limits the future ability to change use.
- Few objections to pedestrian friendly street front design on Sprague.
- Skepticism about likelihood of change in this part of the city.
- Periodic email updates on project progress would be appreciated and helpful.

Education and Medical Institutions

- This district is important because of the connectivity it provides between hospitals to the south and universities to the north.
- Universities will likely expand presence in the district.
- Life sciences industries and continuing education are potential partnerships between hospitals and universities here.
- Universities may not want to build where there are storefront standards along streets.
- Students parking in the district may become an issue with the recent opening of the Gateway Bridge.

Non-profit Organization and Neighborhood Groups

- More housing is needed.
- District does not have a strong identity today. It could with more residents and retail amenities.
- Don't reduce allowed building heights from current standard.

