

West Central Neighborhood Infrastructure Project

NOVEMBER 2024

*A Community-led Process To Identify
Multimodal Transportation Safety Projects*



Acknowledgments

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Photo source: Kittelson & Associates, Inc.

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Photo source: Kittelson & Associates, Inc.

01

Coming Together for West Central

Community-Led Street Improvements

This project—the West Central Neighborhood Infrastructure Project—is a community-led effort to identify ways to improve transportation safety and connection throughout West Central. Together, residents, the West Central Neighborhood Council, REACH West Central, the City of Spokane, and other community and nonprofit leaders have designed projects to address local transportation challenges and revitalize the neighborhood.

Through community-led design process, we developed concepts for traffic calming (slowing speeds), streetscape, and public space improvements that have the potential to make walking, biking, rolling, and driving on local streets safer and more convenient. Each project concept addresses selected intersections and corridor segments within the public right-of-way and focuses on improvements like crosswalk treatments, sidewalk enhancements, traffic circles, bump-outs and curb extensions, landscaping, and bicycle infrastructure.

We conducted extensive community outreach to identify what improvements are needed most to address transportation issues, what improvements have community support, and what improvements have the potential to support the neighborhood's economic development.

The recommended improvements offer West Central a bright future, one with improved transportation safety, improved connections to key destinations, and stronger economic activity.

Project Area

The part of West Central covered by this project stretches from the Spokane River east to North Monroe Street and north to West Boone Avenue and Nora Street (Figure 1).

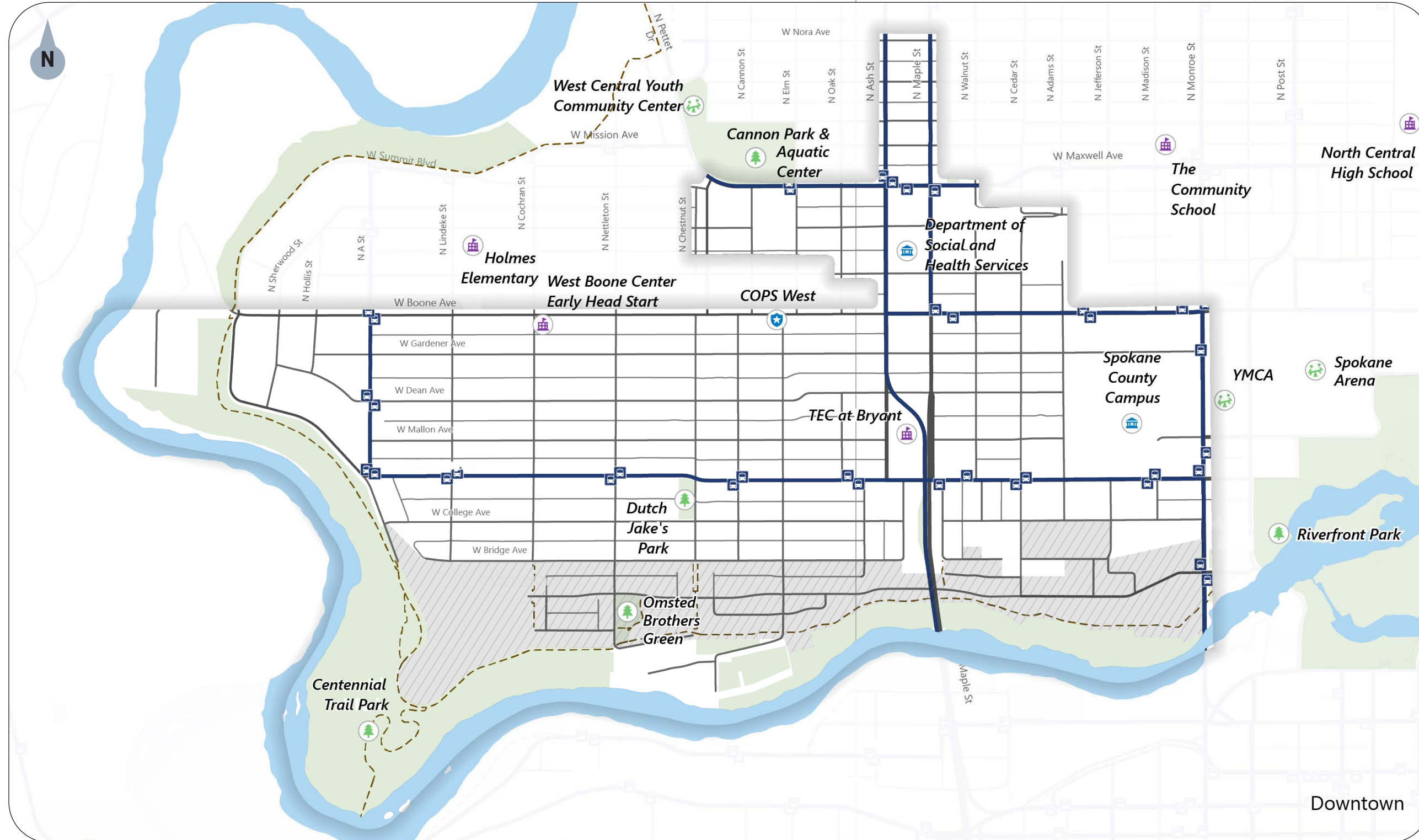
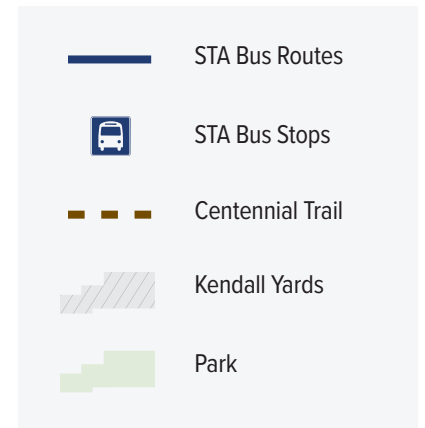
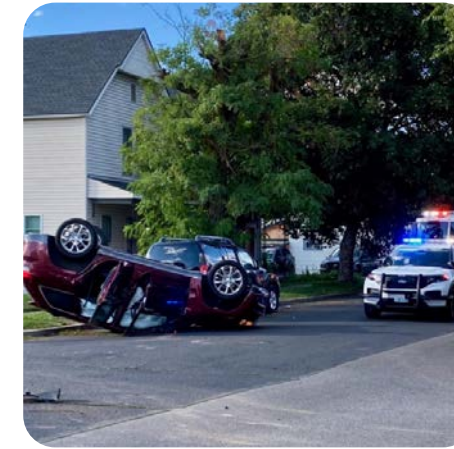


Figure 1. Project Area Map



West Central's Transportation Challenges



West Central has numerous transportation challenges, including speeding, cracked and broken sidewalks, and uncontrolled intersections, which create potential conflict points between drivers, bicyclists, and people crossing the street.

Photo source: Kittelson & Associates, Inc.

Streetcar tracks can still be seen along West Central's streets.

Photo source: Kittelson & Associates, Inc.



02

A Historic Neighborhood in Transition

West Central's Storied Past

Platted in 1887, West Central is one of the oldest neighborhoods in Spokane.

More than 75 percent of the neighborhood's homes were built between 1900 and 1912, when this area north of the Spokane River was a thriving, streetcar-connected suburb for the city's middle class. In the early twentieth century, this neighborhood was full of local shops, restaurants, and parks that were just a short walk or streetcar ride away.

West Central residents could hop on a streetcar to reach neighborhood destinations, downtown Spokane, or the thrills of Natatorium Park. (right)

Photo source: "Spokane -- Street railways (#14)," Spokane Public Library, accessed October 23, 2024, <https://lange.spokanepubliclibrary.org/items/show/2515>.



In the late 1880s, West Central began transforming into one of Spokane's earliest residential havens. By the early twentieth century, West Central was in its heyday. Middle- and working-class homes filled neighborhood streets with an exciting array of architectural styles. Local shops and businesses—like Doyle's Ice Cream Parlor—popped up throughout the neighborhood. Residents used the neighborhood streetcar lines to access downtown and the famous Natatorium Park, which boasted manicured leisure grounds, an indoor swimming pool, a carousel, rollercoasters, a baseball diamond, and even a log-flume-like ride called The Chutes.



Doyle's has been scooping ice cream for nearly 100 years!

Photo source: Doyle's Ice Cream Parlor, Will Maupin, 2022, Wikimedia Commons.



Kendall Yards is designed so that everything you need is a short walk or bike ride away.

Photo source: Kittelson & Associates, Inc.

As far back as 1915, the north river bank area was used as a switching yard and siding for the Union Pacific Railroad. When the area was cleared of rails in the 1970s, 77 acres of land were left vacant and contaminated from 30 years of railroad use. Today this area is Kendall Yards, a vibrant, mixed-use planned community.

**With public investment,
West Central can once again become
a connected, thriving community.**

Community Revitalization

With the Kendall Yards transformation on the north river bank, the West Central neighborhood has transformed considerably over the passing decades. Today, residents and visitors enjoy the Centennial Trail, which snakes along the bluff of the Spokane River, and the annual Bloomsday race, which brings thousands of enthusiastic runners from across the region and nation right through the neighborhood. But, after years of disinvestment, the heart of West Central still remains one of the most impoverished communities in Spokane and the State of Washington.

Events like the annual Bloomsday race, which runs through the heart of West Central along Broadway Avenue, to the finish line on Monroe Street, bring residents and visitors together and benefit the whole community.

Photo source: Bloomsday Run Finish Line, Matthew Staben, 2010, Wikimedia Commons.



THE WEST QUADRANT TAX INCREMENT FINANCE DISTRICT

To help transform the Kendall Yards railyard and revitalize the neighborhood, the City of Spokane recognized the need for public investment and created the West Quadrant Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District in 2007. TIF district revenue is not “new money.” It does not increase the rate at which property taxes are charged in the district. Instead, the TIF district reserves a portion of property tax dollars to be spent in the district and not elsewhere in the city or county. According to State law, TIF district funds can only be spent on public improvements and permanent affordable housing.

Here are some key things to know about the West Quadrant TIF District:

- TIF district revenue is generated only by increases in property values since 2007.
- The TIF district is split in two parts: the Kendall Yards subarea and the West Central Neighborhood Improvements area.
- Project funding for the Neighborhood Improvements area is recommended by the Neighborhood Project Advisory Committee and approved by the City Council.
- 100 percent of TIF district revenue for the Kendall Yards subarea is issued to the City for public improvements in Kendall Yards.
- Revenue generated in the Neighborhood Improvements area is split:
 - 70 percent of the TIF district revenue for the Neighborhoods Improvements area is issued to the City for public improvements in the West Central neighborhood.
 - 30 percent of the TIF district revenue for the Neighborhoods Improvements area is issued to the County for public improvements around the County courthouse campus.

It has been challenging to decide when and where to spend TIF funds to bring the most benefit to the neighborhood. In 2019, the City approved the use of TIF district funds for renovations of Dutch Jake’s Park. Hundreds of residents in West Central came together to reimagine what was possible for their neighborhood park and what was needed to make their neighborhood healthier and more livable for everyone. Some TIF funds were directed to projects that did not directly benefit the local neighborhood, and some residents have been unhappy that funding has not been allocated equitably to infrastructure issues most important to the community.

TIF district revenue is not “new money.” It does not increase the rate at which property taxes are charged in the district. Instead, the TIF district reserves a portion of property tax dollars to be spent in the district and not elsewhere in the city or county.



Photo source: Kittelson & Associates, Inc.

03

A Brighter Future for West Central

Real Community Planning

Funded by the West Quadrant TIF District, this project took a community-guided co-design approach. To help the right projects get funded and built—and to make sure they will be used by those who depend on them most—we turned to the West Central experts: the people who live, work, and recreate in the neighborhood. Our project managers were West Central residents who worked with support from City staff to develop the recommendations and designs featured in this plan.

Our project team was made up of three groups:



The Project Management Team

which included representatives from the City Planning and Economic Development Department, REACH West Central, the West Central Neighborhood Council, and the West Quadrant Tax Increment Finance District Neighborhood Project Advisory Committee.



The Public Advisory Committee

which included, City Council representatives, developers, business owners, property owners, neighborhood agencies, and nonprofit organizations.



The Technical Advisory Committee

which included representatives from the City Integrated Capital Management Department, Parks and Recreation, Planning Services, Streets Department, and Development Services Center, and the Spokane Transit Authority, and Spokane Regional Transportation Council.

A team united around 4 goals



Improve connectivity and safety for people walking, biking, and driving



Support economic development



Provide the community with meaningful opportunities to identify and prioritize improvements



Leverage West Quadrant TIF district funds and other funding sources to build improvements

for a safer, connected neighborhood.

The transportation improvements outlined in this plan—measures to slow drivers down, sidewalk and accessibility enhancements, crosswalk treatments, bicycle facilities, and landscaping opportunities—can help residents get to their jobs, schools, transit stops, grocery stores, and other key destinations safely and efficiently. These improvements offer our community improved safety for all roadway users, smoother traffic flow, more connected pedestrian and bicycle networks, and a stronger foundation for economic development. Together, these improvements offer West Central a promising future.



Photo source: Kittelson & Associates, Inc.

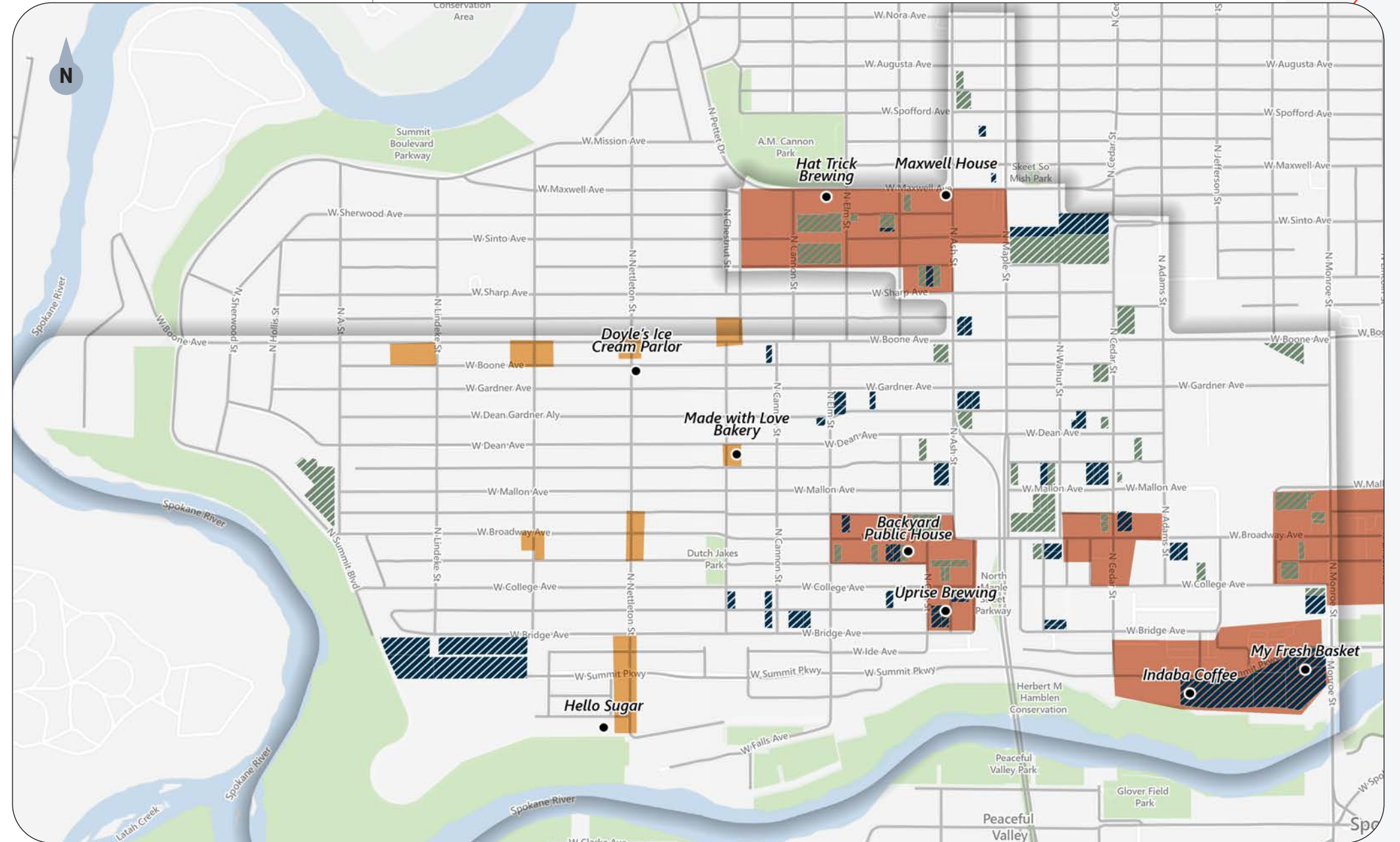
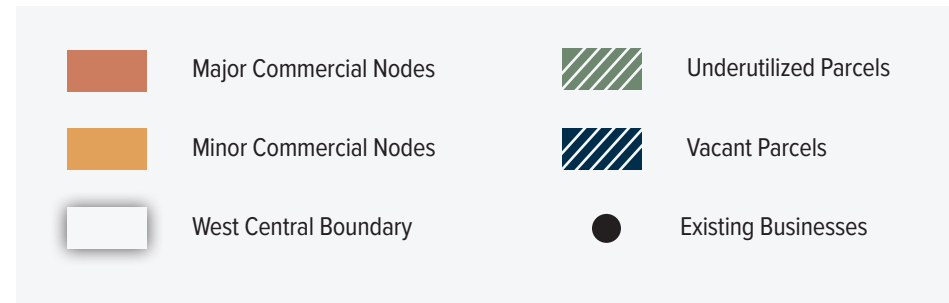
Infrastructure That Encourages Private Investment

Multimodal infrastructure is good for business. Compared to drivers, people who walk, bike, or take transit, spend more on average at restaurants, bars, and convenience stores each month. Multimodal infrastructure investments also can signal to large private investors that a city is prioritizing the area and that the area is worth investing in.

West Central has several underdeveloped areas with the potential to attract the right businesses: small-scale ones that serve local residents.

Figure 2 maps out vacant and underused areas and their relationship to areas with major and minor commercial activity. Multimodal improvements that support the neighborhood's existing businesses, commercial nodes, and these areas of opportunity could help jumpstart bigger private investments into the local economy.

Figure 2. West Central's Opportunity Sites



Development Without Displacement

The socioeconomic makeup of West Central is already changing. In 2012, the median income in our neighborhood was about 30% below the city average. By 2022, just ten years later, the median income was 50% above the city average, largely due to Kendall Yards.

According to the City's Housing Action Plan, the West Central neighborhood is at moderate to high risk of displacement. To help prevent displacement in our community, intentional strategies need to be put in place to produce more affordable housing and commercial space and to preserve existing affordable housing and small businesses (Figure 1).

Strategies that can help mitigate displacement include:



RESIDENTIAL

- Incentives for affordable housing
- Public investments in infrastructure to support development
- Zoning and building code reforms
- Right-to-purchase programs
- Preserving low-cost rental housing
- Community land trusts



COMMERCIAL

- Incentives for commercial investments
- Small developer technical assistance
- Storefront improvement programs
- Small business alliances
- Local vendor collectives

Figure 3. An Anti-Displacement Framework

	PRODUCE	PRESERVE
RESIDENTIAL	Produce more housing at a range of price points to lower housing costs.	Preserve existing affordable housing stock and protect against displacement of vulnerable residents.
COMMERCIAL	Encourage the creation of small businesses and create broadly affordable commercial space.	Support and retain existing small and home-based businesses.

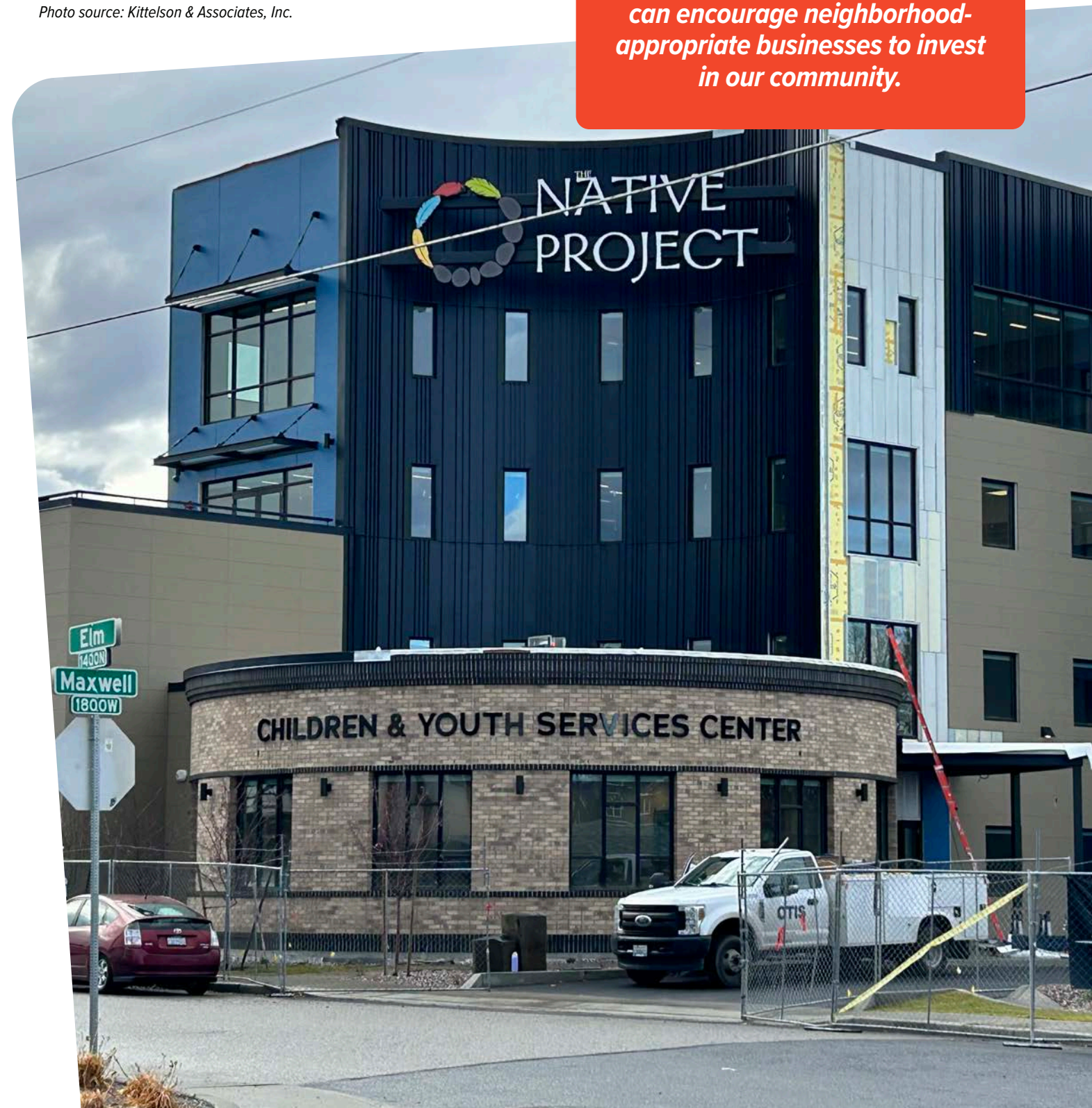
The new Native Project youth center on Maxwell Avenue is part of a larger integrated care campus serving the Spokane community. TIF funding helped fund public infrastructure including sidewalks and streetscape.

Photo source: Kittelson & Associates, Inc.



WEST CENTRAL'S PROBLEMS CAN'T BE FIXED OVERNIGHT.

But with public investment, we can encourage neighborhood-appropriate businesses to invest in our community.





Community members and the project team used sidewalk chalk to envision potential infrastructure improvements. (above)

Photo source: Kittelson & Associates, Inc.

More than 75 community members shared their traffic safety concerns with the project team at Clean Up Day. (left)

Photo source: Kittelson & Associates, Inc.

04

Design by Community

Neighborhood Engagement

A good neighborhood plan comes from the neighborhood. To really understand what West Central and its residents need and to share information about this project, we attended community events like Clean Up Day and Porchfest, we hosted meetings with the West Central Neighborhood Council and the Neighborhood Advisory Council, and we met with local journalists.

We also conducted multiple public surveys to understand what projects and project types were most important.

Public Survey Highlights

119 RESPONSES	80% OF RESPONDENTS LIVE IN WEST CENTRAL
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WEST CENTRAL'S TOP 5 PROJECTS

1. Boone Avenue traffic calming
2. Nettleton traffic calming
3. Dean traffic calming and Broadway Avenue bike lanes
4. Chestnut greenway
5. Sidewalk infill and repair

COMMUNITY PROJECT TYPES

- Sidewalk infill and repair
- ADA curb ramps
- Enhanced crossings at parks, schools, and key destinations
- Bicycle greenways
- New bike lanes
- Focused traffic calming



Photo source: Kittelson & Associates, Inc.

05 Project Selection

We identified a range of street treatments to promote safer crossings, safer speeds, and safer streets for all users. Some treatments—like retrofits, pavement markings, and signage—can be quickly and inexpensively implemented. Other treatments require further study, coordination, and funding.

When deployed across a network, improvements that complete gaps, provide alternative routes, or establish new multimodal facilities can shift users to nonmotorized travel over time and help prevent roadway safety conflicts. For a list of potential treatments, see Appendix C.



Community support—Does the neighborhood support the project? Does it believe the project will address a need?



Safety—Can this project reduce vehicle speeding? Can it reduce crashes? Are there pedestrian crossings or bike facilities involved?



Connectivity and access—Will this project help link people to transit and other vital community assets? Can parking be maintained?



Constructability and maintenance—Can this project be constructed in the public right-of-way? Are there minimal impacts to utilities? Are large trees impacted? Who will be responsible for landscape maintenance?



Maximizing community investment—What is the anticipated return on investment? Are there opportunities for funding collaboration?

Figure 4 and Table 1 present the projects selected by West Central residents and our West Central project team. While they have been ranked in order of importance, new funding and other information may change priorities.

Table 1. West Central Priority Project List

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	FUNDING PRIORITY
Broadway Avenue Bike Lanes	Parking-protected bike lanes from Chestnut to Walnut with floating bus islands and striped crossings	1
Boone Avenue Traffic Calming	Curb extensions at Cochran, Chestnut, and Elm; intersection crossing improvements at Summit	2
Chestnut Street Greenway	Conversion to a northbound one-way street from Bridge to Boone that allows two-way bicycle traffic; curb extensions at Boone and Bridge; intersection traffic diverters at College and Broadway; traffic circle at Dean	3
Sidewalk Infill and Repair	Install sidewalks where missing; repair sidewalk segments with highest need and importance	4
Nettleton Street Traffic Calming	Curb extensions at Broadway and Bridge; traffic circle at Dean	5 (tie)
Boone Avenue & Summit Boulevard Intersection	Intersection crossing improvements	5 (tie)
Elm Street Greenway	Traffic circles at Bridge and Dean; intersection traffic diverter at Broadway; curb extensions at Boone	7 (tie)
Broadway Avenue and Summit Boulevard Intersection	Curb extensions and intersection crossing improvements	7 (tie)
Ash Street to Maple Street Accessible Pathway	Replace existing stairwell with accessible pathway	9
Dean Avenue Traffic Calming	Traffic circles at Nettleton, Chestnut, and Elm; curb extensions at Dean	10

Figure 4. West Central Priority Project Map



DETERMINING ECONOMIC IMPACT

To understand how a particular project might impact local economic activity, we asked a series of key questions.

For more on how we evaluated economic impact, see Appendix B.



Does current research tell us that this project type could attract private investment?



Does this project support existing businesses in West Central? What about small or large commercial areas?



Is the project close to sites larger than one acre? What about empty land?



Does the site have reusable buildings?



Does current zoning allow mixed use?

Projects with many YES answers have greater potential to benefit West Central's economy.

- 1. Broadway Ave. Bike Lanes
- 2. Chestnut St. Greenway
- 3. Elm St. Greenway
- 4. Nettleton St. Traffic Calming
- 5. Boone Ave. Traffic Calming
- 6. Dean Ave. Traffic Calming
- 9. Sidewalk Infill & Repair
- Maxwell/Pettet Bike Lanes (in-progress)
- Traffic Circle
- Curb Extensions
- Diverter
- Accessible Pathway
- Crossing Improvements
- Curb Extensions (in-progress)



Photo source: Kittelson & Associates, Inc.

06 Concept Designs

We developed eight concept designs for the priority projects to facilitate future funding and construction.

Concepts were not developed for two projects:

- **The sidewalk infill and repair project**, which prioritizes sidewalk segments for new sidewalks or repair. Because the City uses standard details for sidewalks, concept drawings are not necessary at this phase.
- **The Ash to Maple accessible pathway project**, which was designed as part of the 2023 Safe Streets for Spokane grant application package. The concept developed from this grant application can already be carried forward to future design phases. These future phases may require topographic survey and geotechnical evaluation ahead of design refinements.

For more information on these design concepts, see Appendix E.



West Central Neighborhood Infrastructure Project