



Shoreline Town Center Subarea Plan

Introduction

Located on the middle mile of the City’s three mile long Aurora corridor (State Route 99), Town Center is the geographic center of the City of Shoreline. It is at the crossroads of three of the City’s most heavily traveled roads, N. 175th St, N. 185th St., and Aurora/SR 99, and serves as the civic and symbolic center of the community. See Fig. 1. Early in the life of the new City of Shoreline, a citizen survey identified this area as the “Heart of Shoreline.”

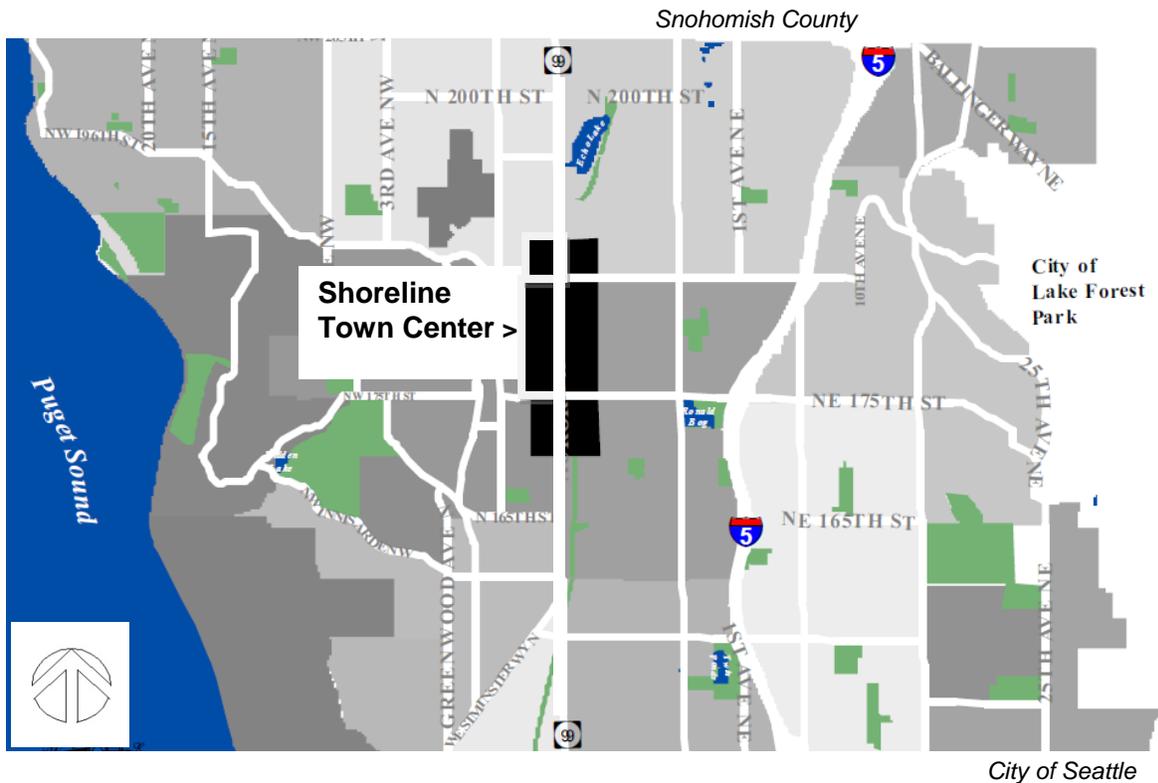


Fig.1 *Town Center is the Heart of Shoreline*

Shoreline’s settlement began in the early 20th century in this area around Judge Ronald’s original homestead and the Ronald schoolhouse. In the early 1900’s, the North Trunk (red brick) Road and Interurban electric railway traversed this area, linking it to Seattle and Everett. The “Ronald Station” was located in the vicinity of the proposed Park at Town Center.



Fig.2 Town Center boundaries and gateways

Growing dramatically after World War II, Shoreline became an auto-oriented suburb characterized by large areas of relatively low residential density, which lacked urban amenities and services such as parks and sidewalks. During the post-war decades, the Aurora/SR 99 corridor developed as a strip commercial highway, with a tremendous diversity of businesses. While these businesses largely met local and regional needs, the highway itself became congested, chaotic, unattractive and unsafe.

Several of the civic facilities typically found in traditional downtowns began to locate in and around the Town Center area in the 1960's. These include the Shorewood High School, the Shoreline Fire Department Headquarters, and the Ronald Sewer District Office and Yard. Commercial and apartment uses also began to locate in this area, including grocery, drug store and other retail stores and personal services. Some of these uses still co-exist with businesses serving a larger market area, such as auto dealerships.

The emergence of regional shopping malls at Alderwood and Northgate in the 1970's began to erode Shoreline's primary market for certain retail goods and services. With the City's incorporation in 1995, additional civic pieces of an emerging Town Center came into being. The Interurban Trail through Town Center was completed in 2005 and the new City Hall opened in 2009. In 2011, Aurora Avenue North through Town Center was rebuilt as a Boulevard, design work began on a new park at Town Center and construction began on a new Shorewood High School with buildings located immediately adjacent to the Town Center.

In 2009, the City adopted a city-wide Vision Statement which articulated the community's preferred future for the year 2030. The Vision integrated many of the policy objectives of the City's adopted strategies for Economic Development, Housing, and Environmental Sustainability. The Vision identifies Town Center as a focal point for much of the City's future growth accommodation, and many of the framework goals provide a broad outline for much most of the content of the Town Center Subarea Plan.

Achieving the City's Vision and the objectives of the Town Center Subarea Plan will be influenced by regional market factors, individual investment decisions, and state and regional growth management policies. High capacity transit service will arrive in Shoreline on Aurora by 2013 in the form of bus rapid transit service, while regional light rail service is scheduled for 2023, linking Shoreline the City to the broader region.

The growth management development strategy for the Central Puget Sound region, Vision 2040, forecasts adding 1.7 million people and 1.4 million jobs with only a negligible increase in the size of the region's urban growth area. See Fig. 3. Combined with state climate change targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled, there will be strong market and regional public policy pressures on close-in cities such as Shoreline to accommodate growth.

Shoreline's ability to accommodate these pressures while maintaining the community's reputation as one of America's best places to live, will be a major challenge. Implementation of a clearly articulated Town Center Subarea Plan will be one important strategy to help Shoreline meet that challenge.

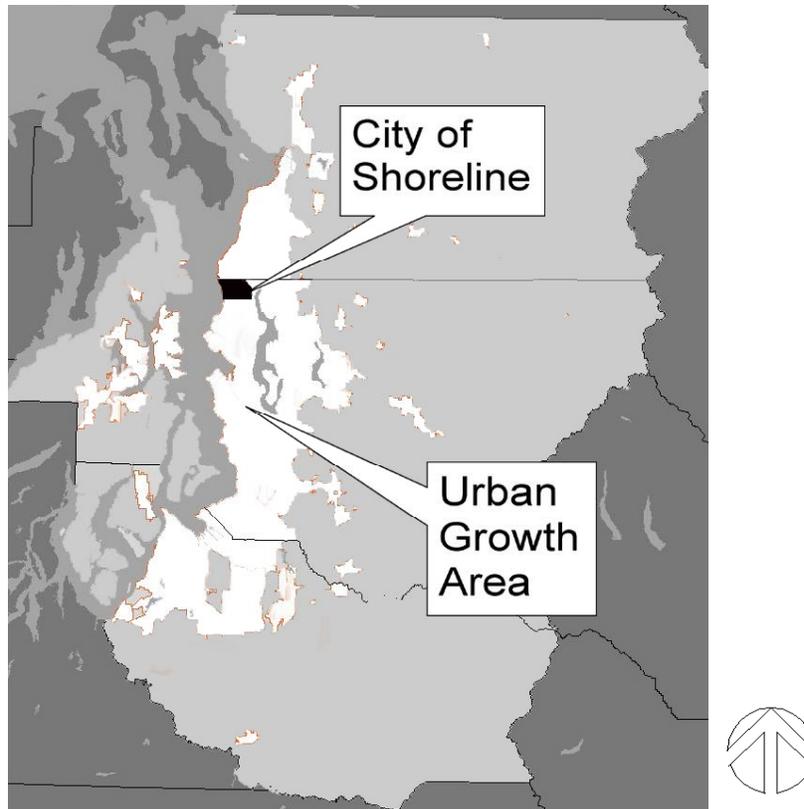


Fig. 3 Shoreline's place within the Vision 2040 Urban Growth Area

Town Center Vision Statement

Shoreline Town Center in 2030 is the vibrant cultural and civic heart of the City with a rich mix of housing and shopping options, thriving businesses, and public spaces for gatherings and events. People of diverse cultures, ages, and incomes enjoy living, working, and interacting in this safe, healthy, and walkable urban place.

Once a crossroads on the Interurban electric railway that connected Seattle and Everett, Shoreline's Town Center has evolved into a signature part of the City. The Center stands out as a unique and inviting regional destination while gracefully fitting in with its surrounding landscape and neighborhoods. Connections to neighborhoods and the region are convenient and accessible through a system of paths, roads, and public transit. Citizens, business owners, and city officials are justifiably proud of the many years of effort to create a special and livable place that exemplifies the best of Shoreline past, present, and future.

Town Center is anchored along N. 175th St. by the City Hall complex, Shorewood High School, the Shoreline Fire Department Headquarters, and the Ronald Sewer Offices and Yard. The linear park at Town Center between Aurora Boulevard and Midvale Avenue North provides a green thread through the center of the area. City Hall serves not only **is-as** the seat of government, but also provides an active venue for many other civic functions. The north end of Town Center includes the revitalized historic five-point interchange at Firlands **Way**.

Town Center is a physically and visually attractive, inviting, and interesting place where form and function come together to promote a thriving environment for residents, businesses, and visitors. Notable features include a number of green open spaces both large and intimate, enclosed plazas, storefronts opening onto parks and wide sidewalks, underground and rear parking, numerous ground-floor and corner retail options within mixed-use buildings, and internal streets within large blocks **and with** other pathways that provide safe, walkable **and bicycle** connections throughout the Center area east, west, north, and south.

Building heights range from one to three stories within transition areas adjacent to single-family residential areas along Linden and Stone avenues, up to six stories in mixed-use buildings along sections of Aurora Boulevard, while buildings in the Midvale and Firlands areas are generally four to five-story mixed-use structures. Building materials, facades, designs, landscaped setbacks, as well as public art and green infrastructure features represent a wide variety of styles and functions while maintaining a harmonious look and feel.

The City of Shoreline has long been committed to the realization of the three E's of sustainability -- environmental quality, economic vitality and social equity -- and Town Center has successfully integrated these values to achieve sustainable development.



Fig. 4 Principles of Sustainable Development

Environmental Quality

While respecting elements of its historic character, Town Center has become a model of environmentally sound building and development practices. The buildings themselves are state-of-the-art energy efficient and sustainable structures with zero carbon impacts. Town Center's tree canopy and native vegetation are all part of a strategic system for capturing and treating stormwater on site and protecting and enhancing overall environmental quality. Major transit stops along the mature Aurora Boulevard provide quick and convenient connections to major centers elsewhere in the region. Civic spaces and parks have been designed for daily use and special events.

Economic Vitality

*Town Center attracts a robust mix of office, service, and retail development. The boulevard boasts an exciting choice of shops, restaurants, entertainment, and nightlife. The Center is a model of green industry and economic sustainability that generates the financial resources **that to** help support excellent city services, with the highest health and living standards. As a result, Town Center's success helps to make Shoreline one of the most fiscally sound and efficiently run cities on the West Coast.*

Social Equity:

Town Center offers a broad range of job opportunities and housing choices that attract a diversity of household types, ages, and incomes. Attention to design allows the public gathering places to be accessible to all. People feel safe here day and night. Festivals, exhibits, and performances attract people of all ages and cultural backgrounds.

Summary:

Town Center is thoughtfully planned and built, yet all the choices feel organic and natural, as if each feature and building is meant to be here. Town Center is a place people want to be in Shoreline in 2030, and is positioned to continue to grow gracefully and sustainably for decades.

Town Center Goals

Goal TC-1 Create a Town Center that embodies the sustainability values of environmental quality, economic vitality, and social equity.

Goal TC-2 Create a Town Center that is complete, compact, and connected to its neighborhoods and the region.

Goal TC-3 Create a "sense of place" in Town Center that provides a focal point for Shoreline's civic life and community-wide identity.

Goal TC-4 Create an economically and culturally thriving Town Center through the coordinated efforts of the City, the School District, business organizations, community non-profits, and neighborhood associations.

Town Center Policies

Policy TC-1 Promote a blend of civic, commercial, and residential uses in Town Center.

Policy TC-2 Create a safe, attractive, and walkable Town Center that links mixed use, mid-rise buildings, a broad range of housing choices, major civic amenities, public gathering places, and bus rapid transit service.



Fig. 5 *Mid-rise, mixed use buildings provide pedestrian scale and access at the street level while accommodating housing and business opportunities above*

Potential
Revision
“A”

Policy TC-3 Increase the variety of housing choices in Town Center and increase opportunities for moderate cost housing. Reduce new housing construction costs and incentivize affordable housing in Town Center by reducing parking requirements and pursuing an aggressive program of Property Tax Exemptions.

Policy TC-4 Publicize innovative “green infrastructure” including City Hall, Shorewood High School, and Aurora boulevard as models for private projects in Town Center.



Fig. 6 The LEED GOLD City Hall, LEED Silver Shorewood High School, and low-impact drainage facilities in the Aurora project set a high bar for sustainability in new projects

Potential Revision “B”

Policy TC-5 Encourage additional retail, service, grocery, and restaurant uses to serve both a broader regional market as well as people who live or work in Town Center or within walking distance of Rapid Ride bus service that will provide walk-on access to Town Center from the entire length of Aurora by 2013.

Potential Revision “C”



Fig. 7 The Interurban Trail and Bus Rapid Transit service coming to Aurora

Policy TC-6 Connect Town Center to other parts of Shoreline and the region by promoting multi-modal transportation choices including high capacity transit on Aurora, frequent local bus service, bicycle paths, and improved pedestrian walkways.

Policy TC-7 Leverage federal, state and other investments investment sources and market Town Center as a high value location for private investment and business starts.

Policy TC-8 Enhance the sustainability of adjacent residential neighborhoods through targeted investments in green street links to Town Center, and focused programs to enhance energy conservation and carbon neutrality.



Fig. 8 *Examples of private investments in alternative energy and public investments in low impact drainage facilities in the right-of-way*

Potential Revision "D"

Policy TC-9 Create a seamless network of safe, convenient, and attractive walkway improvements within Town Center that also connects to all streets, the Interurban Trail, high capacity transit on Aurora, and adjacent neighborhoods.

Policy TC-10 Create safe and attractive pedestrian crossings of Aurora, walkways to better link uses within Town Center, and more direct and attractive walkways from adjacent neighborhoods.

Policy TC-11 Reduce the noise, visual, and safety impacts of traffic on Aurora Avenue as it passes through the Town Center.

Policy TC-12 Give clear visual indication of Town Center's boundaries with gateway treatments, such as signs and landscaping. (See Fig. 2 for location of gateways).



Potential Revision "E"

Fig. 9 *Example of a potential town center entry gateway sign*

Potential Revision "F"

Policy TC-13 Create a hierarchy of Boulevard, Storefront, and Greenlink streets to serve different mobility and access roles within Town Center.

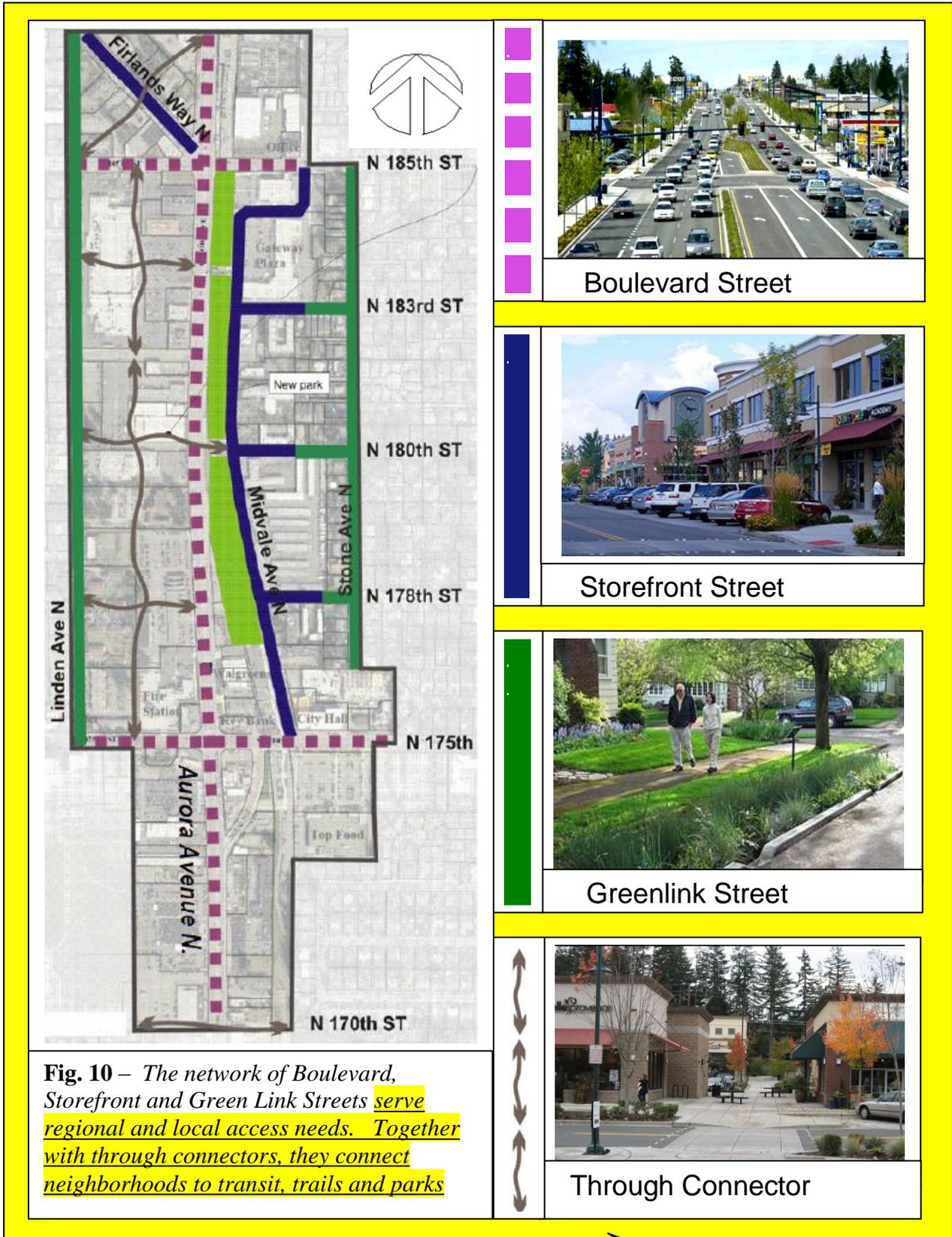


Fig. 10 – *The network of Boulevard, Storefront and Green Link Streets serve regional and local access needs. Together with through connectors, they connect neighborhoods to transit, trails and parks*

Potential Revision "G"

Policy TC-14 Post public “wayfinding” signs to direct motorists and bicyclists to public destinations within and near Town Center.



Fig 11. Wayfinding signs can be located in medians, behind sidewalks, or on poles

Policy TC- 15 Encourage the removal of the western leg of the intersection at N. 182th and Aurora if re-development of lands at N. 180th and Aurora enables the installation of a fully signalized mid-block intersection at that location.

Policy TC-16 Consider the creation of new ~~rights-~~rights-of- way or the vacation of other rights of way in order to facilitate better vehicular and pedestrian circulation. Encourage parcel aggregation and more comprehensive site development designs in order to create a more pedestrian friendly environment and promote mixed use development.

Policy TC-17 Protect adjacent residential areas from impacts generated by developments in Town Center. Create a medium density buffer between the commercial uses in Town Center and the single family neighborhoods east of Midvale and that limit lighting, signage, and noise impacts. Orient commercial uses west of Aurora so that they have primary access and impacts oriented toward Aurora, rather than to the neighborhood west of Linden.



Fig 12. Townhouses are an effective buffer backing on retail and facing onto residential

Potential Revision “H”

Policy TC-18 Reconfigure Midvale Avenue N. between N. 175th St. and N. 182nd St. as a low speed, pedestrian-friendly lane with back-in angle parking to support mixed use development on the east side and public uses in the Town Center Park.



Fig. 13 Midvale Ave N. concept with landscaping, crosswalks, and back-in angle parking

Policy TC-19 Recognize the environmental and aesthetic value of existing stands of prominent trees, promote a green built environment by adopting the U.S. Green Building Code, and launch a recognition program for innovative private projects that exemplify the sustainability vision for Town Center.

Policy TC-20 Develop the park at Town Center as a memorable, green, open space and link it to the City Hall Civic Center. Program both of these spaces for celebrations, public gatherings, and informal “third places.”



Fig. 14 Farmers’ markets and community events parades, lawn sports, and wi-fi access are several possible park uses

Policy TC-21 Celebrate the heritage of the community through preservation, education, and interpretation of artifacts and places in or near Town Center. Work with the Shoreline Historical Museum to explore the possibilities for a “Town Center Heritage Walk” and programs to help activate the Park at Town Center.

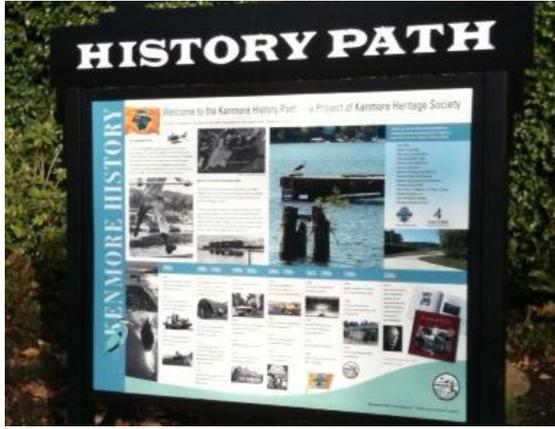


Fig. 15 Town Center history: the Interurban Railway, Ronald School House, and Red Brick Road

Policy TC -22 Call attention to the unique diagonal orientation of Firlands Way, as well as its history, with such place-making methods as interpretive signage, murals, street furniture and exposing the red bricks still beneath the road surface.

Potential Revision
“I”

Policy TC-23 Encourage structured parking for commercial, multifamily, and mixed use developments, and reduce parking requirements in recognition of the availability of transit, on-street parking, walkability, and housing types.

Policy TC-24 Where feasible, minimize surface parking lots and locate them in rear or side yards and screen them with landscaping, low walls or fences, arbors, and other treatments to soften visual impacts.

Policy TC-25 Abate the remaining billboards, or re-locate them out of the Town Center, and craft a form-based sign code that orients and sizes commercial

signage based on the function and speed of ~~servicing~~ streets and walkways **served**.

Policy TC-26 Create a form-based development code and streamlined permit process that consolidates environmental review and design review into a single expedited administrative permit review. Adopt illustrated and clear design standards with a menu of options and opportunities for design flexibility.

Policy TC-27 Adopt Town Center design standards and a design review process so that new projects respect existing architectural patterns (e.g., building forms, roof shapes, fenestration, materials, etc.) that provide context and human scale.



Fig. 16 *Town Center roof shapes of various pitches, materials, colors*