

GREENING CROWN HILL IMPROVEMENT AND ART MASTER PLAN

PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

The Crown Hill Improvement and Art Master Plan describes a strategic approach, criteria, design concepts, and art and landscape opportunities throughout the Crown Hill neighborhood.

The rationale for a master plan came from a desire to improve the neighborhood's identity and encourage business prominence. The two-lane truck route that follows 15th Ave NW and Holman Road bisects the heart of Crown Hill, making the neighborhood appear as a pass-through space, rather than a destination. In an effort to mitigate this reputation, local businesses and neighborhood groups are interested in creating art and landscape works that establish a greater sense of place and make the area more inviting.

The purpose of this Master Plan is to establish a strategic approach with clear design values and themes to guide future neighborhood improvements, so that new interventions form a unified and interconnected whole. It seeks to ensure cohesive art and landscape works which reflect an understanding of the site, rather than a series of isolated improvements and art pieces that do not relate to one another. dia ima the opp Thi of t ins Ass

This booklet is intended to be a source of reference that provides guidance and inspiration to the Crown Hill Business Association, community groups, local businesses and future artists involved in art, landscape, and development projects. Its intention is to stimulate not dictate. Its purpose is to focus energies and encourage the implementation of projects that lead to a greater connective whole.

The Master Plan includes a variety of diagrams, illustrations and precedent images intended to inform the reader about the neighborhood, the possibilities, and art opportunities.



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< Ueda Landform, a land art installation by Charles Jencks at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh, Scotland, illustrates how simple land forms, such as this sculpted "hill", can be works of art.

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Crown Hill Snapshot

The Crown Hill neighborhood sits just north of Ballard and west of Greenwood in the Northwest corner of Seattle. Like much of Seattle, Crown Hill was originally blanketed in a forest of Western Red Cedar, Douglas Fir and low-growing Salal on a thick layer of glacial till (densely compacted sand and gravel). Streams, such as Piper's Creek, and water seeps have, over time, worn away areas of hardpan soil to form deep ravines where ferns, vine maple trees, salmonberry, and conifer trees predominate. These ravines interrupt the flow of streets, sidewalks, and houses that spread like a carpet across northwest Seattle today, bearing witness to the native vegetation that once covered the area.

By 1890, most of the land between Ballard town center and Schooner Street (now NW 80th Street) had been logged and platted. As streetcars pushed north along 15th

History of development



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< **1910:** Crown Hill's towering stands of Western Cedar and Douglas Fir were logged to supply Ballard's shingle mills. Crown Hill's ravines today exist as remnant pieces of this lost landscape.

< 1916: Crown Hill's early development followed the streetcar routes established along 15th Ave NW and NW 85th Street. Streetcars dominated Seattle's transportation network well into the 1930s, when they were dismantled in favor of individually owned automobiles.

> 1920s: This image of a gasoline station at the corner of 15th Ave NW & NW 85th Street provides an early snapshot of Crown Hill's emerging commercial district and evidence of changes to come as Seattle enters the automobile age.

Avenue NW, houses followed. In 1909, the Crown Hill Cemetery was established as a final resting place for Ballard residents. This name proved versatile enough for local businesses to use, and the neighborhood became known as "Crown Hill".

During the 1940s, the region's economy boomed as Boeing began building aircraft and bombers to supply American military forces entering World War II. North Seattle's population increased dramatically, and classrooms at both Crown Hill and Whittier schools suffered from overcrowding in the 1940s. As World War II ended, a housing boom began. An unprecedented number of home buyers, many of them returning service men who qualified for low-interest, zero-down home loans through the G.I. Bill, drove up demand for new homes. The population of north Seattle increased dramatically. In Crown Hill, a new retail core



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< **1942:** Crown Hill Elementary's crowded classrooms bear witness to the neighborhood's explosive growth as an increased number of families move to the area drawn by Boeing jobs.

> 1948: Crown Hill Clinic, designed by architects James Chiarelli and Paul Rayden Park in 1947, exemplifies the modern style typical of during the late 1940s and early 1950s.

> 1956: Olympic Manor, formerly Olympic Golf Course, is developed according to a new suburban model that advocates curving drives over the urban street grid. The houses—with their low-sloped roofs, sweeping overhangs, plate glass windows, and brick facades—are decidedly modern in style.

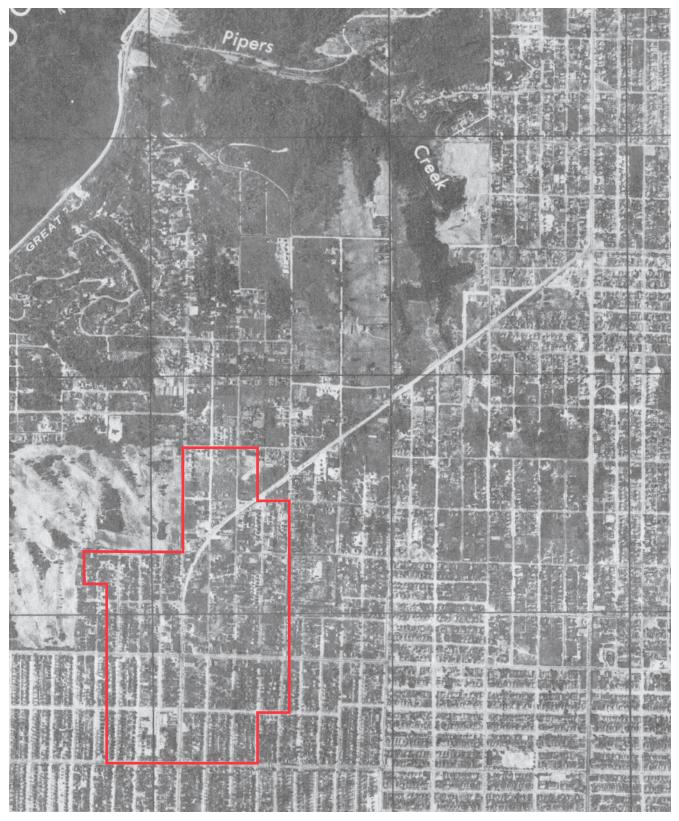


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Photo courtesy of Seattle Municipal Archives (53276)



^ The spread of development and Crown Hill's remnant natural areas are clearly visible in this aerial photo taken in 1944. The red line shows the area identified as a "residential urban village" in Seattle's present-day Comprehensive Plan. (Aerial photo by U. S. Army Map Service, 1944)

emerged along the truck route to provide key services and shops for new residents.

Today, Crown Hill's commercial core is largely defined by the four lanes of traffic that rush through its center where 15th Ave NW curves into Holman Road, forming one of the busiest truck routes in North Seattle. Not far from the noise and rush of the truck route are three large green spaces: Crown Hill Cemetery, Sound View Playfields, and the grounds of Crown Hill Elementary. Though these green spaces are all within easy walking distance of the commercial core, they remain largely hidden from view and no sidewalks connect them.

The lack of sidewalks along the residential streets is a legacy of Crown Hill's history. When the city of Seattle annexed properties north of 85th Street and south of 145th Street, sidewalks were promised; however, the expense of adding sidewalks has left many residents still waiting. This lack of sidewalks, combined with the larger than average lot sizes (typically 5000 to 7500 square feet) in the area, give the residential side streets a more rural character that many residents prefer.

The ravines of Carkeek Park, Crown Hill Glen and North Beach reinforce this rural character and bear witness to the natural history of the area. These remnant pieces of the pre-development landscape give visitors a glimpse of the forests that

once dominated the area. In Piper's Creek, less than a mile from the Holman Road truck route, salmon still spawn. An emerging environmental consciousness in the neighborhood has led to the establishment of an Environmental Education Center at Carkeek Park and the rise of various community groups, such as the Carkeek Watershed Community Action Project, that are devoted to

protecting and enhancing the natural environment in this largely urban neighborhood.

Crown Hill's vibrant commercial core, the proximity of this core to a variety of unique green spaces and natural areas, and the many examples of modern architecture together form an identity that distinguishes Crown Hill from Ballard, Fremont, and Greenwood, which developed during a different era.

Today, Crown Hill is one of several "residential urban villages" identified in the city of Seattle's Comprehensive Plan. As such, the city seeks to increase housing density along the transit corridor / truck route while enhancing public open space and improving streets for pedestrians and cyclists. Seattle's Comprehensive Plan seeks to provide a network of "green links" that enhance and connect existing open spaces throughout Crown Hill and Ballard. This master plan identifies opportunities and themes to facilitate these goals.

























Greening Crown Hill | page 7



© Martha Schwartz



Photo by Barbara Swift





Photo from Landscape Architecture, March 2003





Master Plan Approach

This Master Plan will be a source of reference for the Crown Hill Business Association, community groups and future artists. This plan is predicated on the idea of establishing a character for the neighborhood that is identifiable in the greater area of Northwest Seattle.

In response to the existing physical attributes, site history and social habits of the Crown Hill neighborhood, this document proposes that all art and landscape projects respond to a set of design values and reflect one or more design themes. The design values function as an overlay to increase the sense of neighborhood presence, whereas the conceptual themes are intended to establish the qualities that make Crown Hill different from other neighborhoods in North Seattle.

Themes

To establish a character for the neighborhood that is identifiable in the greater area of Northwest Seattle this document advocates for art and landscape projects of varying size and intensity born out of three site-specific themes:

- Greening the Crown
- Revealing the Wild Side
- Highlighting Neighborhood Classics

Each of these themes reveals something unique about Crown Hill as it exists today. This approach, grounded in the reality of the neighborhood itself, is designed to enhance Crown Hill's identity and keep it authentic.

These three themes are intended to be used in concert. None by itself completely captures the qualities that make Crown Hill different from other neighborhoods in Seattle. Taken together, however, these three threads help to weave a distinct identity for Crown Hill that sets it apart from surrounding neighborhood and celebrates its unique qualities. They encourage individual projects that complement and operate on a whole as a connective system.

Design Values

Underlying the three themes are three design values, which are intended to run through all art and landscape works. The three design values are as follows:

Transparency – Increase the connection of commercial and civic buildings to the surrounding neighborhoods by playfully revealing their contents or functions through art or landscape works.

Experiential – Create inviting experiences that focus public attention and engage people on a multi-sensory level. In particular, look for ways to enhance the pedestrian and vehicular experience of entering, enjoying, and leaving Crown Hill.

Revelatory – Reveal the environmental and cultural fabric of Crown Hill by illuminating natural processes and highlighting distinctive cultural elements to encourage viewer contemplation.

Together, these design values encourage a dynamic and active relationship between the viewer and the environment or art being viewed. This relationship, in turn, connects people to the Crown Hill neighborhood.

Greening the Crown

The first theme, "Greening the Crown", seeks to turn Crown Hill into a "green eddy" along the truck route—a place where traffic slows, pedestrians feel welcome, and the urban edge softens. Unnecessary asphalt areas (UNAs) are transformed into pocket parks with benches that invite pedestrians to linger. Blank walls on existing buildings are "greened" with vines or art to soften them. Along residential streets, paths wind through street-side gardens that separate people from cars.

"Greening the Crown" responds to the genuine need to carve out spaces for people in a landscape that is dominated by the presence of cars and trucks. It taps into the emerging environmental consciousness of the neighborhood and seeks opportunities to reclaim Crown Hill's many unused asphalt areas and gravel street edges as civic space. Doing so through "greening" gives these spaces a unified appearance and solidifies the neighborhood's identity as a "green eddy" that is distinct from the more urban neighborhoods of Ballard, Greenwood, and Fremont.

From... Spaces for cars



Corner plaza for cars (Holman Road)



Unnecessary asphalt area along Holman Road



Commercial building with blank wall facing the Crown Hill neighborhood

To... Spaces for people



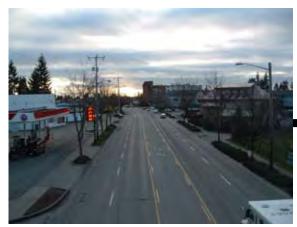
Corner plaza for people (Phinney Ridge, Seattle)



Planted slope in Phinney Ridge, Seattle



Commercial building with green wall at University Village, Seattle



Road (15th Ave NW / Holman Road)



Parkway with planted median (Lake City Way)



Narrow sidewalk with ivy and grass along Holman Road



Meandering path with plants at the University of Washington

Strategies

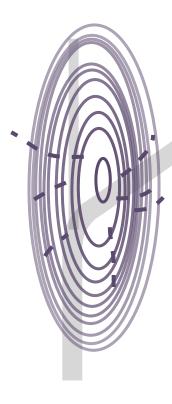
- "Green" bare walls with climbing vines on wires or artful trellises to deter graffiti and soften the appearance of commercial buildings in particular.
- Remove unnecessary asphalt areas and transform them into pocket parks or planted walkways for people.
- Connect pocket parks and green spaces with defined paths; look for opportunities to create artful paths that meander, rather than typical sidewalks.
- Consider creative ways to "green" the neighborhood, such as mounting planter boxes along the edges of flat-roofed buildings to create a green "fringe" or faux green roof.
- Extend the SEA (Street Edge Alternatives) model to Crown Hill to provide walking paths for people and planted rain gardens for collecting water from the street.



Gravel street edge typical along residential side streets in Crown Hill



SEA (Street Edge Alternative) example at NW 117th & 2nd Ave NW



Revealing the Wild Side

The second theme, "Revealing the Wild Side", focuses on one of Crown Hill's key attributes: the topography of the hill. The "crown" or top of Crown Hill is located on the grounds of Crown Hill Elementary, which the city of Seattle plans to convert to a park. In addition, because it's a hill, Crown Hill straddles three different watersheds: Piper's Creek, Salmon Bay, and Puget Sound. The boundaries of these three watersheds converge at the site of Crown Hill Elementary.

In revealing the "wild side", this thread also celebrates the palette of native plants found in Crown Hill's ravines. The proximity of Crown Hill's commercial core to an active salmon stream makes the neighborhood unique. Extending the vegetation of the ravines to the civic and commercial spaces helps to make visitors more aware of Crown Hill's incredible natural assets.

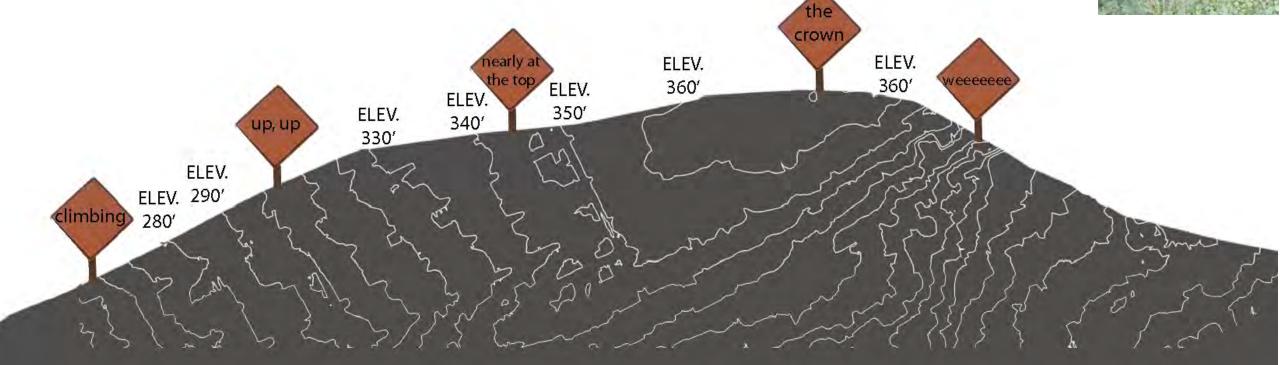








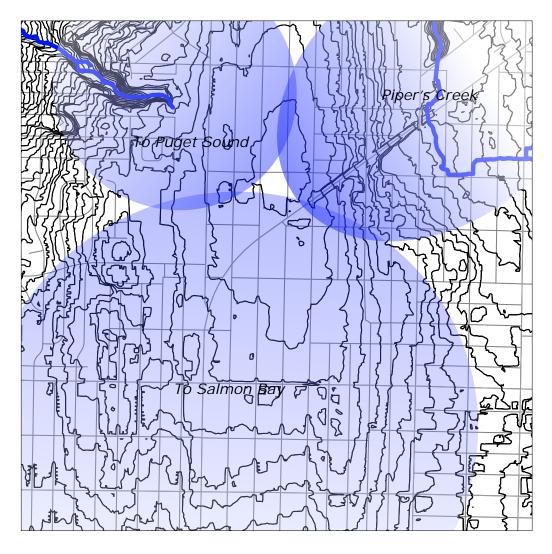
> Just one block off Holman Road lies a deep ravine filled with native (and invasive) plants and a portion of Piper's Creek, which then dives into a culvert to cross under Holman Road.











^ At the top or "crown" of Crown Hill, three watersheds converge. Water heading down the east side of the hill drains into Piper's Creek, where salmon spawn each fall. Water heading west drains to a creek behind Swanson's Nursery, and then to Puget Sound. Water heading south sheds to Salmon Bay.

Strategies

- Mark the top of Crown Hill with art at the site of Crown Hill Elementary
- Mark major contour elevations through art or paving details to reveal the topography of the hill
- Reveal the flow of water and the convergence of three watersheds in Crown Hill
- Use native plants in civic areas as a way of extending the ravines into Crown Hill's core to make visitors aware of the wild beauty nearby

v The flow of water can be playful, artful, or calming. Crown Hill's gentle slopes are ideal places to capture rain water and direct it artfully to enhance civic spaces.



First and second photos from Waterscapes by Dreiseitl, Grau & Ludwig. Third image from Inside Outside by Berrizebeitia & Pollak.





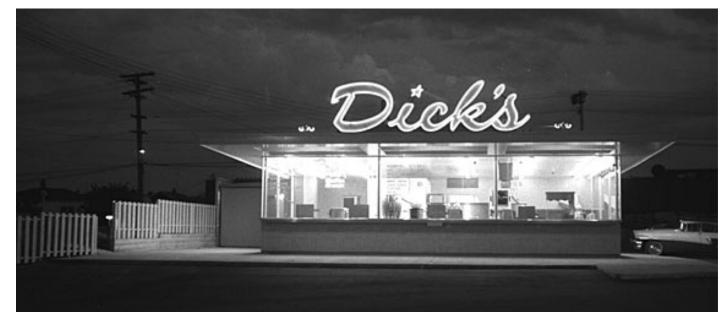
Highlighting Neighborhood Classics

The third theme, "Highlighting Neighborhood Classics", showcases Crown Hill's unique style and neighborhood landmarks.

The architectural style of businesses and homes in the Crown Hill neighborhood reflects the styles prevalent during the 1920s and the 1940s and '50s. Though the architectural styles of both eras are mixed throughout the neighborhood, houses north of NW 85th Street tend to reflect the more modern aesthetic popular during the 1940s and '50s, while those south of NW 85th Street reflect the "Craftsman" style popular in the 1920s.

This Master Plan advocates celebrating the many examples of "classic modern" style in Crown Hill through updated examples in street furnishings, signs, and artworks. This modern style distinguishes Crown Hill from the Ballard and Greenwood neighborhoods nearby, which developed earlier and have fewer examples of 1940s and 50s "modern" style.

This theme also encourages art that frames oddities or landmarks unique to Crown Hill. Items to be "framed" might include the rotating ball at the Holman Road QFC,



^ Dick's Drive-In on Holman Road has been continuously serving up burgers, fries, and classic modern style since it first opened in 1960. The first Dick's Drive-In opened on N. 45th Street in 1954. (Photo courtesy of Dick's Drive-In Restaurants)

the Crown Hill cemetery, the former location of "Lucky's" (a game arcade that closed in the 1970s due to neighborhood pressure), the former Crown Hill Clinic (now Chadwick & Winters land surveying), or other cultural icons or sites with historical significance that help to form Crown Hill's identity and reveal it to visitors.

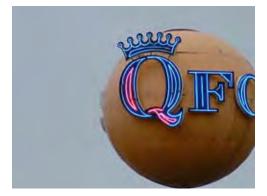
v Examples of classic modern style in Crown Hill include distinctive signage, brick and rock facades on buildings, plate glass windows, and strong horizontal roof lines.











Strategies

- Install modern street furniture, such as benches, planters, bird houses, bollards, and trash receptacles in Crown Hill's public spaces.
- Add plaques to buildings or sidewalks with information about when buildings were built and what they were originally intended for.
- Protect existing examples of Crown Hill's "classic modern" style.
- Highlight neighborhood oddities & landmarks with framing devices and signage.











Photo by Dan & Catherine Weatbrook

v Street furniture available in an updated version of Crown Hill's "classic modern" style provide amenities for visitors while creating a cohesive style that enhances Crown Hill's visual character and builds upon its unique style.



< "Framing" oddities and landmarks might mean a poem inscribed in the sidewalk, a literal "frame" around a key building, or a mirror reflecting a view.

Zones: Places of Focus

In addition to creating art and landscape works that reflect the design values and three conceptual threads, this document also advocates for a strategy of implementation that focuses on three zones.

The success of improving the identity of the area lies in the scale, the extent and the location of projects. Random works of art will merely appear isolated points of interest rather than impacting the overall neighborhood.

Corridor Zone:

Intensify the experience of moving along this corridor; make it more inviting and create a sense of center; slow traffic to increase safety and comfort for pedestrians.

Core Zone:

Establish linear connections perpendicular to the truck route; link the existing green spaces with pedestrian connections.

Thresholds:

Set up a rhythm of entry that welcomes visitors to Crown Hill. Emphasize the pedestrian bridge over Holman as a "gateway" to the commercial core.

In each of these zones opportunities exist for art works reflecting the three conceptual threads and design values. The following pages illustrate a few ideas and are intended to provide inspiration to both artists and the local community.

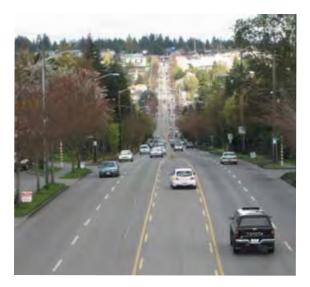
> Top The central corridor should be a focus of projects that make the neighborhood more inviting.

> *Middle* Use art and landscape projects to provide a network of connected paths.

> Bottom Set up the approach to Crown Hill with art works of a repetitive nature.







Corridor Zone

- Remove unnecessary asphalt and add native plant gardens.
- Add street furniture, such as benches, bus shelters, and trash cans, that celebrate Crown Hill's modern style.
- Create a series of connected outdoor rooms that invite pedestrians to linger and shop.
- Improve the attractiveness of the truck route with a planted central median.

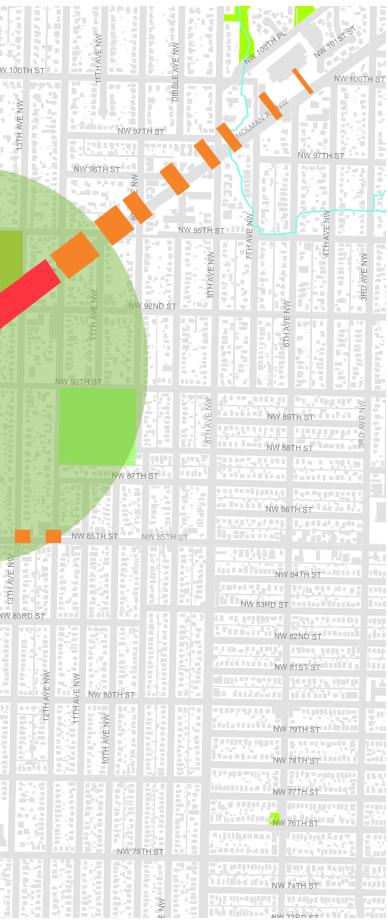
Core Zone

- Develop paths and trails for pedestrians and bicycles to connect the neighborhood with the commercial core and existing green spaces.
- Celebrate the flow of water and the convergence of three watersheds on Crown Hill.
- Crown the top of the hill with art and civic space at the site of Crown Hill Elementary.

Thresholds

- Add repetitive elements, such as banners or bollards, to create a rhythmic pattern of entry that welcomes visitors.
- Advertise the connection between the topography of Crown Hill and its name through playful art or signage that reveals elevation changes.

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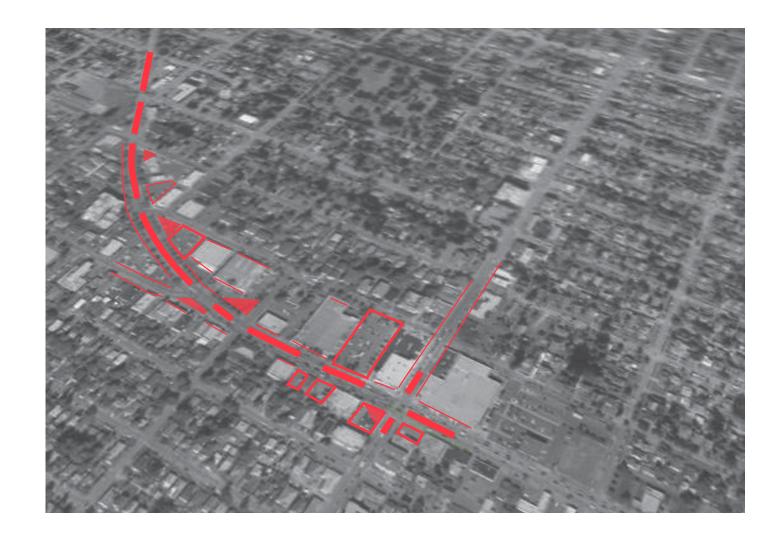
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Corridor Zone

The Crown Hill Improvement and Art Master Plan envisions the Corridor Zone as a vibrant commercial district with a series of inviting outdoor rooms and sidewalks that enliven the commercial district and give it a greater sense of place. Vehicular traffic along the truck route slows in response to increased planting in the median and along both sides of the roadway.

Along the sidewalk, neighborhood residents, shoppers, and students from Whitman Middle School walk between stores and linger in the many small pocket parks that define a green edge between the truck route and neighborhood stores. The Corridor Zone includes art and landscape works at a larger scale that motorists can appreciate, as well as small details, such as paving designs, modern street furniture, and "framed" cultural icons, that are best viewed on foot.

> Red overlays show opportunities for future pocket parks, planted medians, and rooftop gardens that together transform the Corridor Zone into a "green eddy" along the truck route.









Photos at left and above by Kevin Perry, City of Portland.



^ **Revealing the Wild Side -** Paving details revealing the flow of water in Crown Hill helps to highlight the convergence of three watersheds at its "crown". They turn sidewalks into places and can direct water into rain gardens with native plants.

^ Greening the Crown - Greening the Corridor Zone strengthens the presence of the commercial district and shows the communities cares. Benches, even alongside busy intersections, help to create space for people along the truck route.

Vignettes

The sketches below show how the ideas presented in this plan might take form along the Corridor Zone. Planted medians along the truck route help to slow traffic and welcome visitors to the commercial district, while pocket parks with benches create spaces for people. Whimsical murals or topiary sculptures on the back sides of commercial buildings make their functions and contents more transparent to the surrounding neighborhood.





Framing Neighborhood Classics

< Humor can be used to reveal and frame neighborhood oddities and landmarks. For example, this hypothetical twist on Fremont's "Waiting for the Interurban" sculpture pokes fun at the failed attempt to extend the Seattle Monorail to stations in Crown Hill.

> At Cape Disappointment, artist Maya Lin inscribed excerpts from the journals of Lewis and Clark on the planks of a concrete boardwalk. Similarly, markers in the sidewalks of Crown Hill might announce elevation changes as visitors ascend and descend the "hill".

>> The "Garden Car" by Laura Haddad and Tom Drugan at the terminus of Route 66 in West Hollywood is a unique expression of modern style with "greening" built in!

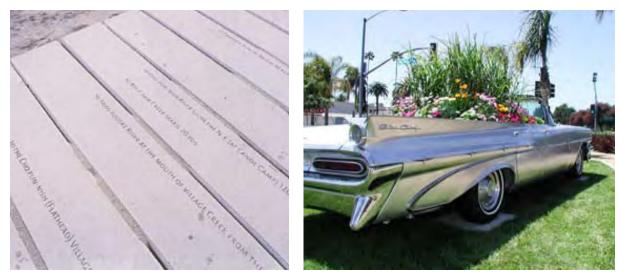


Photo by John Clark, Sunset Magazine

Photo courtesy of City of West Hollywood

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Core Zone

The Core Zone loosely coincides with the boundaries of the Crown Hill "residential urban village" as defined in Seattle's Comprehensive Plan. The Crown Hill Improvement and Art Master Plan envisions this zone as a network of pedestrianfriendly "green streets" that connect the commercial neighborhood of the Core Zone with three key green spaces nearby: Soundview playfields, the park at Crown Hill Elementary, and the Crown Hill Cemetery, from which Crown Hill takes its name. In addition, this zone extends along a portion of NW 85th Street and across NW 85th Street to Baker Park just east of Safeway.

Currently, no sidewalks connect these four key green spaces and few sidewalks

exist in the neighborhood as a whole. This plan suggests that paths and sidewalks be added in an artful manner that preserves the more rural character of the residential neighborhoods and celebrates Crown Hill's rich natural environment.

> Green overlays highlight existing green spaces and propose a network of pedestrian- and bike-friendly "green streets" that will better connect these green spaces to the commercial core.





Photo courtesy of Seattle Public Utilities



Photo by Bruce Ferguson



Photo from **Gardens**Illustrated magazine

Linear elements along street edges help to create a sense of connectivity and identify streets where pedestrians are welcome.

< **Greening the Crown -** Paths wind through rain gardens full of lush native plants. Broken pavement and pervious paving with grass illustrate a softer, more rural edge. A fractured concrete band offers an urban approach. All three solutions allow stormwater to infiltrate into the soil.

> **Revealing the Wild Side -** The Embarcadero Ribbon symbolizes the juncture between the city of San Francisco and its bay. A continuous line of glass block could create a trail that marks the watershed boundaries of Crown Hill, while connecting areas of open space.



Photo courtesy of San Francisco Arts Commission

Vignettes

The sketches below show how the ideas presented in this plan might take form along the Core Zone. In the sketch below, a sculptural grass mound at the site of Crown Hill Elementary whimsically emphasizes its location at the top or "crown" of the hill, creating an icon that complements and strengthens the neighborhood's identity.

In addition, this plan proposes that residential side streets in the Core Zone be transformed into "green streets" that provide safe, well-defined places for pedestrians and cyclists. Instead of the formal curb-and-gutter sidewalk model found elsewhere in the city, however, this plan recommends that paths in the Core Zone retain the more rural feel of the neighborhood by following a model similar to the SEA (Street Edge Alternatives) pilot program in nearby Broadview.





Photo by Barbara Swift

< A grassy mound at the site of Crown Hill Elementary celebrates the park's position at the "crown" of Crown Hill.

^ A "weave" pattern painted on asphalt is an easy way to mark a neighborhood trail. A green painted path could weave throughout the Crown Hill neighborhood.

> Whimsical salmon at the edge of the street define a path for pedestrians and bicycles as they "swim" down the hill towards Piper's Creek.









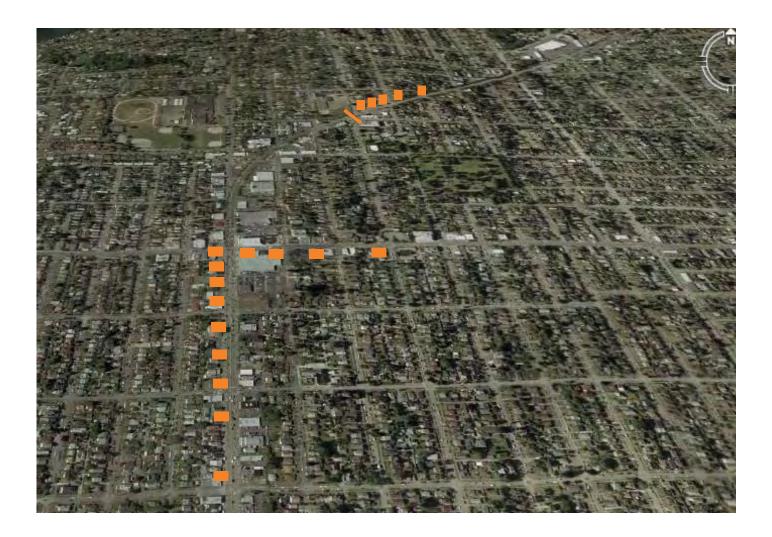
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Thresholds

There is some dispute about where the boundaries of the Crown Hill neighborhood begin and end. Some maps show the southern boundary at NW 70th Street; others show it as far north as NW 85th Street. In reality, visitors approach Crown Hill via three main thoroughfares: 15th Ave NW, Holman Road, and NW 85th Street.

Rather than establishing a single gatewaytype entrance into the Crown Hill neighborhood, this plan recommends setting up a rhythm of entry that welcomes visitors to Crown Hill and builds in strength as visitors approach the top of the hill and the heart of the Crown Hill "residential urban village".

> Orange overlays illustrate how a repetitive pattern of similar elements might create an intriguing sense of arrival in Crown Hill's "threshold" areas along 15th Ave NW, Holman Road, and NW 85th Street.







< Orange bollards mark elevation changes to emphasize the topography of Crown Hill. Each bollard might contain a fragment of a poem that can only be read in its entirety as viewers continue to move up or down the hill.

< & > Rooftops are "greened" with planter boxes along their edges, setting the stage for the network of pocket parks and green streets discussed in the previous zones.





^ Heading west along Holman Road, vehicles along the truck route experience Crown Hill as a "green eddy" thanks to a planted median and street edges. Banners set in 1950s typography emphasize the elevation gain culminating at the pedestrian bridge, which marks the arrival at the top or "crown" of the hill.

> These images illustrate how simple elements arranged in a repetitive fashion add drama and heighten fascination, encouraging viewers to discern the significance of the pattern. The Burma Shave ads, which appeared along roadways in the 1950s, are a famous example.



Photo by Bill and Barbara Windsor



Photo from Landscape Architecture magazine, June 2007

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Last revised June 2007

RESOURCES

Toward a Sustainable Seattle: Seattle's Comprehensive Plan, City of Seattle, January 2005.

Create a Thriving Business District: A Guide to City and Neighborhood Business District Resources, City of Seattle, January 2005.

For grant and matching fund opportunities, visit the Department of Neighborhoods web site at http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/nmf/

To learn more about opportunities through the Office of Economic Development, visit http://www.seattle.gov/economicdevelopment/support_funding.htm

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Landscape Architecture magazine is published by the American Society of Landscape Architects. (Visit www.asla.org for additional information.)

Gardens Illustrated magazine is published by BBC Magazines Bristol Ltd. (Visit www.gardensillustrated.com for additional information or to request back issues.)