Piloting Neighborhood Conservation Districts in Seattle: A Case Study in Wallingford

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Abstract

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This thesis considers Neighborhood Conservation Districts (NCDs) as a viable tool to address the lack of framework to preserve the character of Seattle neighborhoods. NCDs are widely used across the United States as a method of managing bulk, scale, and form in historic neighborhoods. A review of Neighborhood Conservation Districts as a preservation tool and the various types and implementations of these districts across the United States directed a proposal for a new conservation district in the Wallingford neighborhood of Seattle. Wallingford is well known for its concentration of craftsman bungalows and early twentieth-century vernacular houses. Demolitions have been rising over the last decade in Wallingford and following an upzone, certain areas of the neighborhood are facing rapid redevelopment. This proposal seeks to create a moderate approach to preservation in Wallingford that would preserve historic character while allowing for growth and increased density in the neighborhood. The proposal discusses the replicability of the process throughout Seattle and the adaptability and potential benefits of a NCD to different neighborhoods and contexts.

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PREFACE

This thesis grows from my interests in architecture and historic preservation as they collide with the needs for housing and densification in Seattle. I have long been interested in the historic vernacular fabric of the city and I was excited to hear that in 2016, a group in the Wallingford neighborhood had formed to recognize the architectural character and history of the neighborhood. Around the same time, I discovered that a study had recently been completed for the city that explored a new, city-wide conservation district program that would allow for an alternative, moderate approach to landmark preservation, but it was never acted upon. With the momentum in Wallingford, this presented a timely opportunity for a conservation district case study and how it could address and integrate a denser community, while maintaining the character of the neighborhood for years to come.

Figure 1.1. Typical Wallingford block.

Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

The City of Seattle's historic preservation program is among the oldest program in the country and claims to be one of the strongest (Historic Preservation, n.d.). Their claim is based on the code-based regulatory framework found in the Landmark Preservation ordinance for creating and maintaining individual landmarks and in the zoning overlays for the city's eight historic districts. Once a historical resource has been designated it is generally protected by a rigorous set of regulations, though in the past five years this protection has been appealed in an alarming number of cases. The City of Seattle may allow the preservation controls on a property to be overturned in cases of demonstrated economic hardship; if a protected Landmark is not viable economically, it

can be destroyed. The sharp increase in property values and development interest following the recession has made this scenario much more likely to occur.

Seattle has eight historic districts: with one exception, all were approved between the 1970s and 80s following protests against major redevelopment in the city, but a neighborhood historic district has not been enacted for nearly 40 years (Historic Districts, n.d.) A common issue with district designation of any kind is the unwillingness of property owners to voluntarily surrender control of aspects of their property (Phelps, 2013) . The creation of a new historic district in Seattle would need to obtain consent and approval from a majority of the district property owners, an unlikely hurdle in today's political climate; the problem would be especially acute for a larger historic district. In many Seattle neighborhoods, this problem is magnified due to the high-stakes real estate market driven by the growth of local technology companies.

Development in Seattle has increased dramatically since the historic districts of the 1970s and 1980s were approved and many historic neighborhoods are at risk of losing their continuity and integrity with no system of protection in place. Despite historic districts being considered the most effective preservation tool for planners, it is widely expected that there will not be another historic district created in any Seattle neighborhood.

Meanwhile, neighborhoods have increasingly expressed opposition to development that is out of scale with the existing urban fabric (On The Brink, 2019; Historic Wallingford, personal communication, 2019). Several Seattle neighborhood groups have recently pursued National Register of Historic Places Historic District (NRHD) status as a way to promote the recognition of the character of their communities, a move that may popularize the idea of preservation but would not provide any legal protection for the neighborhood. As a potential solution, in 2012,

former Seattle City Council Member Tom Rasmussen (who served from 2004 to 2015) proposed consideration of a neighborhood conservation district (NCD) program (Neighborhood Conservation Districts, n.d.). The city contracted with a private consultant, Lund Consulting, to prepare a study for a potential program with the idea that such a program could conserve the aesthetic character of residential neighborhoods. Although the report was produced, the initiative was never able to gain political traction and was abandoned in 2015 when Tom Rasmussen stepped down from City Council. As a result, although the problem of diminishing neighborhood character is widely recognized, solutions have yet to be addressed. In fact, the current state of planning in Seattle appears to be moving in the opposite direction.

In this context, this thesis reconsiders neighborhood conservation districts as a viable strategy for Seattle. The thesis provides background on historic preservation in Seattle, and on the theory and practice of conservation districts. With this background, this thesis looks at the Wallingford neighborhood and considers how a conservation district could be applied. Thus, the thesis brings together two primary methods: first, research in available source materials on Seattle and Wallingford history, Seattle preservation, and conservation districts; second, a case study approach using Wallingford as a neighborhood for which a conservation district proposal has been developed.

The research portion of this thesis draws on the conservation district study developed by Lund Consulting for the City of Seattle in 2014 (Lund, 2014). From the Lund report and a selection of literature published on NCDs, it was possible to extract multiple ordinances from jurisdictions across the country, different types of design guidelines, and studies that might be relevant to Seattle. Reviews of roughly ten neighborhood conservation district ordinances in other cities revealed differences in

NCD types, district scale, review procedures, and enforcement. Several reports by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and recent theses at other universities served as an overview of NCDs to complement the study of individual ordinances. Notably, most of the research reviewed had been published within the last decade, pointing to the finding that NCDs have become more popular in recent years.

The neighborhood conservation district case study that this thesis proposes for Wallingford is based both on the general study of conservation districts in other cities and the specific study of the Wallingford neighborhood. Research regarding Wallingford drew primarily on three types of sources, available historical publications, recent consultant studies generated by the neighborhood, and field work consisting of neighborhood explorations and documentation as well as attendance at public meetings and interaction with a neighborhood group.

The organization of this thesis builds on these methods. Following this Introduction, Chapter 2 addresses the history and use of historic districts and conservation districts. Next, Chapter 3 addresses conservation districts in Seattle and the various elements that led to their eventual failure in 2015. In Chapter 4, the thesis will reexamine the use and benefits of conservation districts in Seattle based on their implementation elsewhere. Chapter 5 describes the history of the Wallingford neighborhood and the basis for implementing a preservation strategy, as well as the case study methodology used in Wallingford to provide a foundation to evaluate test scenarios explored in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 presents the preferred approach for a conservation district as shaped by the research and development of this thesis. Finally, in Chapter 8, concluding remarks are made on Wallingford, the conservation district proposal, and the replicability of this method in other Seattle neighborhoods.

Chapter 2. HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

2.1 HISTORIC DISTRICTS

To understand a conservation district, one must first understand a historic district. Historic districts are a universal planning tool among preservationists, dating back to 1931 when the first historic district was created in Charleston, South Carolina (Murtagh, 2010). In *Keeping Time*, William Murtagh documents the history of preservation through the early twentieth century. He notes that preservation had been steadily increasing in government following the passage of the Antiquities Act in 1906 and the National Park Service in 1916. In 1933, the Historic American Buildings Survey program was created as a part of the New Deal under the National Park Service, which recognized and established a federal interest in historic privately-owned properties. In 1935, the Historic Sites Act guaranteed this connection, as it enabled legislation for the planning and preservation of documented historic sites (Murtagh, 2010).

Though it was not until 1966, through the National Historic Preservation Act, that historic districts became recognized as a preservation planning tool on the national level, citizen groups had begun to understand much earlier that there was not a regulatory framework available to protect areas of historic buildings. In Charleston, citizens and city officials realized the importance of district preservation as gas stations began to be built in a prominent residential neighborhood. To address this, in 1931, the "Battery" neighborhood was then zoned to become the nation's first historic district. With this legislation, Charleston provided an avenue for the preservation of vernacular buildings of "less than National significance" and the preservation tool quickly spread to other jurisdictions (Murtagh, 2010 pp.44-45).

Historic districts today are concerned with protecting the authenticity of the historic fabric from its period of significance, which includes maintaining original materials, configurations, and setting of all designated (or "contributing") structures within a district. Designating historic districts in Seattle, much like individual landmarks, requires a meeting before the Landmarks Preservation Board, a nomination vote, a designation vote, and the consent of a majority of residents. Making changes to designated structures in historic districts require a Certificate of Approval (COA) with meetings before the Board (Seattle Landmark Designation, n.d.). Considering the review process and the approval requirements to proceed with changes from ranging new development to new signage, in some areas historic districts have become unpopular among the public for being too restrictive (Phelps, 2013).

2.2 Neighborhood Conservation Districts Literature Review

Due to increasing opposition across the United States from city residents and property owners to what has been perceived as overly restrictive individual historic resource designation and historic district designations, alternate preservation methods have become more popular for implementation (Phelps, 2013). Several approaches have been introduced to solve this issue, such as conservation district designations, financial incentives, zoning incentives, zoning overlays, and community land trusts, and others.

Conservation districts, which are sometimes referred to as historic districts "light", typically focus on preserving the scale and overall character of an area and place less emphasis on design restrictions and certificates of approval [Figure 2.1] (McClurg, 2011). While historic districts have been defined in research and practice for

decades, conservation districts have not and can vary widely between jurisdictions. A notable benefit with conservation districts is that an area that might not qualify for local historic district status may be able to be granted protection through this typology. Due to their focus on context, character, and ability to cover broad geographic areas, this research will focus on this preservation strategy.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT	HISTORIC DISTRICT
REGULATORY - NEW CONSTRUCTION, NEW ADDITIONS TO EXISTING BUILDINGS VISIBLE FROM THE STREET - DEMOLITION OF ANY BUILDING OR PART OF BUILDING VISIBLE FROM THE STREET **ADVISORY** - SIDING, WINDOW, ROOFING REPAIR & REPLACEMENT	**REGULATORY** - ALL NEW CONSTRUCTION, ADDITIONS, AND REMODELS - DEMOLITION OF ANY BUILDING OR STRUCTURE - ANY CHANGE TO THE OUTSIDE OF ANY BUILDING OR STRUCTURE. - ANY CHANGE TO AN INTERIOR THAT AFFECTS THE EXTERIOR. - INSTALLATION OF NEW EXTERIOR FACADE ELEMENTS SUCH AS A CANOPY OR ROOF OVERHANG - MAJOR LANDSCAPING, FENCES & SITE ELEMENTS - SIGN REVIEW (COMMERCIAL/MULTI-FAMILY) - EXTERIOR PAINT COLORS - ANY CHANGE IN THE RIGHT-OF-WAY OR OTHER PUBLIC SPACE, INCLUDING SIDEWALKS AND PLANTING STRIPS. - ALL CHARACTER-DEFINING ELEMENTS MUST BE PRESERVED - ALL FEATURES MUST BE REPAIRED RATHER THAN REPLACED - ALL DETERIORATED MATERIALS MUST BE REPLACED IN-KIND

Figure 2.1. Comparison of typical elements required for reviews in Neighborhood Conservation Districts and Historic Districts.

In "Conservation Districts as an Alternative to Historic Districts: Viable Planning tools for Maintaining the Character of Older Neighborhoods" (1993) an online publication by the Preservation Leadership Forum for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, authors Deborah Marquis Kelly and Jennifer Goodman describe conservation districts as a new tool for preservationists to use, but with less regulation than in a historic district. The authors present a case study of conservation district application in Philadelphia in the late 1990s. The city had discovered that many of their older, distinctive neighborhoods were ineligible for historic district status due to lack of integrity and change over time, and the city did not have a regulatory framework to address the preservation of these areas. The authors describe the case study process undertaken by the city of Philadelphia: beginning with a survey of ordinances from other cities, the city used relevant findings to develop their own framework for a pilot NCD program. The pilot study ran for over a decade while Philadelphia determined if it was an appropriate solution for the city (Kelly & Goodman, 1993). When Kelly and Goodman authored their publication in 1993, Philadelphia had not yet enacted any CDs, but at present in 2020, the city has six established conservation districts. At the time, Kelly and Goodman wrote they were confident that conservation districts could help protect communities unable to qualify as historic districts and Philadelphia's experience since has validated their position.

Kelly and Goodman also examined the conservation district approach in general by analyzing conservation ordinances in other cities, including controls and incentives and the ways these ordinances are administered. They noted that most ordinances managed by a city's planning department had fewer references to preservation, with primary focus on incentives for retaining character and property values. In comparison, they found that ordinances managed by a historic preservation office tended to include

language similar to historic districts addressing the establishment of districts and their administration. In general, the ordinances they discussed included categories such as activities regulated, design guidelines, date of enactment and criteria for property evaluation (Kelly & Goodman, 1993).

Rebecca Lubens and Julia Miller, in "Protecting Older Neighborhoods through Conservation District Programs" (2002-2003), reach similar conclusions to Kelly and Goodman. Lubens and Miller identify two types of conservation district programs, a preservation-based model and a neighborhood planning model. In a typical preservation-based approach, review processes tend to mimic historic district design review with a volunteer advisory review board supported by a city staff member. In a planning approach, the conservation ordinance is part of the zoning regulations that determine the rules for the conservation district. Lubens and Miller note the relative success of the planning model due to the explicit rules found in the code that are less subjective and unpredictable than the design review approach. Lubens and Miller also discuss different implementation methods for districts: "Conservation districts have been established to stabilize existing neighborhoods, as in Nashville, to increase or preserve the supply of affordable housing, as in Phoenix, and to revitalize close-in neighborhoods, such as Davis, CA" (Lubens and Miller, 2002-03).

Due to the wide variation in approaches to conservation districts as reflected in the implementation, administration, enforcement, and the like, Lubens and Miller suggest it is difficult to ascertain the success and failures of conservation districts as a typology. In addition to the districts themselves, they also consider the enabling legislation that must be in place for a district to be nominated, indicating the issues that might be encountered when seeking to develop a citywide policy. They also stress the importance of neighborhood participation in creating residential area conservation

districts: "In contrast to historic preservation programs, most communities require that the process for initiating conservation district status include a significant level of neighborhood involvement… neighborhood-initiated designation is in practice the only politically feasible route in residential areas, since ordinances like Dallas's are meant to be 'tailor-made to the neighborhood and what it collectively wants to conserve'" (Lubens & Miller, 2002-03).

Lubens and Miller argue that if an applicant cannot provide evidence of wide community support, the enactment of the proposed district will be difficult. They quote Knoxville Preservation Officer Ann Bennett who states that for many of her conservation district proposals, there is no local opposition. By keeping the community informed and participating from the beginning of the process, she is able to essentially eliminate any concerns by the time the district is considered for designation (Lubens and Miller, 2002-03).

Lubens and Miller also discuss the lack of progress in applying historic districts in Dallas, Texas. While it is not clear if they are referring to a lack of public support or rather a lack of an eligible area, they state that, at the time they wrote, Dallas had ten conservation districts waiting to be designated, and twelve more neighborhoods exploring the program within their community. The popularity of the conservation district program in Dallas is indisputable, but Lubens and Miller state that meaningful studies had yet to be published on the effectiveness of many of these districts; nonetheless, they regarded the results as promising (Lubens and Miller, 2002-03).

With the recent surge in interest in NCDs, there has been significant discussion in the past two decades on the implementation of NCDs. The article by Lubens and Miller appears to serve as a "best practices" guide for creating a CD from its initial planning through managing reviews. Yet, these authors stressed that the guidelines of

each district must be tailored to the individual needs of the community in which it is located to be effective. This allows for the greatest flexibility, but it offers the least replicability, posing a challenge for each attempt to create a new conservation district.

In one of the few, in-depth evaluations of existing NCDs, Max Yeston's Columbia University Master of Urban Planning Thesis presents a survey of districts in three cities that seeks to answer the question of effectiveness and address who is benefiting most from the legislation (Yeston, 2014). Yeston interviewed both residents and administrators in this study. He found that the greatest variable in the effectiveness of a district was the preservation agency behind it. He also found that the district is typically favored more by the administrators than by property owners, although in less restrictive districts, owners often wished for greater protections (Yeston 2014).

In Yeston's case studies, the three districts were chosen for analysis based on their structure and review methods: Avon Hill in Cambridge for its "historic district light" method with a neighborhood review board; Queens Village in Philadelphia for the zoning overlay approach; and Cameron Park in Raleigh. The application of conservation districts in Raleigh is the most interesting portion of his thesis. At the time of writing in 2014, Yeston noted that Raleigh had recently transferred its regulations from an individual neighborhood plan review to a zoning code enforcement which had taken the personal review out of the process. Yeston discussed how this came with benefits and drawbacks. Cameron Park guidelines follow a "75% rule" when determining guidelines, which is a distinct difference from the other neighborhoods that use community input to determine regulations. In Cameron Park, a resident can request a staff review of a condition such as building height, setbacks, or driveway placement and if 75% or more properties in the district meet a certain condition, such as a 25-foot height limit, the limit becomes the predominant case and is written into the

code. In 2014 Raleigh had also recently instituted a new type of Historic District called the Streetside Historic Overlay District which only regulates the front facade and 15 feet from the facade into the building. (Yeston, 2014)

In reviews of existing NCDs, it is critical to understand the district's goals for preservation in order to discern how effective the policies have actually been. The challenge of publications on conservation districts remains the wide variability of such districts. With differing political, economic, and development contexts in each city (and sometimes within a city), it is difficult to ascertain whether one city's district has been more effective than another. It is also difficult to determine whether a district would have been more or less effective with different guidelines or different review procedures. Thus, the evaluation of existing conservation districts remains complex. Any attempt to propose a new conservation district must include review at several scales including the individual property scale, district administration, political climate of the city, and the broader context of the city and its current issues.

2.3 Critiques of Conservation Districts

Few critiques have been published relative to conservation districts or neighborhood conservation districts. Nonetheless, this thesis addresses the most significant comments, particularly those offered by a 2015 essay by Yale Law professor Anika Singh Lemar. In "Zoning as Taxidermy: Neighborhood Conservation Districts and the Regulation of Aesthetics" (2015), Lemar takes up the critique of inaccessibility and inequity that has been raised by several critics and progressive groups. They have argued that district-based approaches to preservation based in zoning continue exclusionary practices. These critics often claim that district-level preservation is elitist

as it frequently occurs in more affluent (and sometimes, previously redlined) neighborhoods thereby preserving only upper-class architecture and raising home values to inaccessible prices (Lemar, 2015).

Lemar contends that the conservation district approach suspends a neighborhood's ability to change with time and serves as a method for a community to resist development pressure in their neighborhood. She suggests that this growth curtailment, such as restricting new development, infill, and rebuilding, limits supply and invariably increases housing prices, leading to conservation districts being exclusionary. Lemar argues redevelopment and infill development have historically provided valuable growth within desirable areas of a city and that the restrictions of district preservation make this infeasible (Lemar, 2015).

Elizabeth Tisher counters in "Historic Housing For All: Historic Preservation As The New Inclusionary Zoning" (2017) that there is not necessarily a rule or regulation against adaptive reuse or increased density in historic districts, and conservation districts are even less regulated. Tisher's essay serves as a call for new and existing conservation district ordinances to address how they integrate density to begin to break down the common notion that they are density-adverse. As many older districts occupy fringe areas of city centers, they are poised to accommodate growth and in many cases are earmarked as growth areas by city planners. Perhaps inadvertently, Lemar confirms Tisher's point that infill development can be one of the best methods to integrate preservation with density (Tisher, 2017).

Notably, Lemar's critique does not recommend the dismissal of conservation districts as typology, but rather stresses that they be implemented in a way that allows for change and prevents a rise in housing prices, a goal which many residents and preservationists would likely share. She states, "They should not only permit but also

promote investment and redevelopment, particularly redevelopment of neighborhoods that, because they are close to public amenities, are well suited to dense development" (Lemar, 2015).

Instead, she makes several points to amend conservation districts to work in a more equitable fashion, all of which relate to residents who are not the property owners. The majority of existing ordinances and incentives apply only to property owners within a district. In a preservation-model district, the volunteer advisory board is almost unanimously made up of property owners without another stakeholder opinion. In a case where a new multifamily building meeting the guidelines would introduce significant density to the neighborhood, it could still face opposition from an owner-controlled board. Lemar suggests incorporating more stakeholder voices into the recommendation for such a project, including interested parties outside the area as well as existing renters in the district (Lemar, 2015).

In regard to style, while many NCDs may contain a predominant style, most recommend new construction be contemporary, but complementary to adjacent historic buildings. Data that shows that conservation districts can be more than an aesthetic freeze frame. Literature by both Kelly and Goodman (1993) and Lubens and Miller (2002-03) discuss methods of districting that are less focused on aesthetics, and despite its drawbacks, the PPCOD in Seattle also provides this evidence in that it requires a strong relationship to the cultural aspects of the auto-industry to be considered a contributing building in the district.

This thesis proposal seeks to challenge the common notion that density within an NCD is unachievable and quantify potential density within an NCD beyond single-family base zoning. Moreover, NCDs vary significantly in their regulations as well as their location relative to city centers and transit hubs that would necessitate more

housing. A blanket statement cannot be made that NCDs prohibit density; the housing needs of a close-in district are not nearly the same as compared to a suburban district, let alone comparing districts from two different cities. Location, zoning, population size, housing typology, and transit options, among many other factors, all influence the district guidelines and what may be allowed or not. The goal for most NCDs is to manage growth to be contextual with its surroundings rather than curtail it altogether.

The literature studied for this research offers little discussion of equity and diversity within the field of preservation. It is apparent that preservation efforts in the future will need to address these issues in order to substantiate their position as a priority in the urban agenda. As espoused by numerous papers, public participation is critical for neighborhood conservation districts to be effective, and that includes all stakeholder voices beyond the district homeowners. Little research has been carried out to date that is critical of the conservation district approach, and there is a lack of knowledge as to how this preservation strategy will affect these and other issues. Further research into the impacts of this approach on preservation and the urban fabric will be of great importance to future proposals.

Chapter 3. PRESERVATION IN SEATTLE

3.1 BACKGROUND

The Seattle historic preservation program began in the early 1970s with the creation of the Pioneer Square Preservation District (1970) and the Pike Place Market Historic District (1971). In the next ten to twelve years preservation grew rapidly; new legislation allowed for individual landmarks to be designated, the Office of Urban Conservation (today the city's Historic Preservation Program) was created, five more historic districts were added. Beginning in 1999, the city pursued an organized plan to engage neighborhoods in planning, particularly with individual neighborhood preservation initiatives. In the early years, Seattle was considered a "preservation leader" in the western U.S (Sirianni, 2007).

By the late 1990s, Seattle was also considered a model city for public participation in planning (Sirianni, 2007). In the early 2000s, the Historic Preservation Program initiated a neighborhood-by-neighborhood update of the 1970s era Historic Resources Survey, and by 2006 the city had begun plans to study a neighborhood conservation district program. In 2009, based on community advocacy, the Pike/Pine Conservation Overlay District was created. The first of its kind in Seattle, its purpose is to attempt to preserve neighborhood character while allowing for increased density and development (Chalana, 2016). The Pike/Pine District primarily offers development incentives, listing regulatory relief and financial and land use incentives as the primary tools for preserving historical elements. (Seattle, C. of, 2009).

In the same time period, however, attitudes towards preservation had begun to change. New political leaders dismantled the neighborhood-driven planning program

in favor of a more streamlined approach. Funding for the Historic Resources Survey had been exhausted in 2008, with only 8 of 37 neighborhoods having been surveyed and several more stalled in various stages of development (Historic Resources Survey, n.d.). In 2012, preliminary studies for a city-wide Neighborhood Conservation District strategy had been completed by Lund Consulting and were being interpreted by Council Member Rasmussen's team. By 2015, however, despite public meetings, council committee input, and further investigations by Lund Consulting, the project was abandoned after Rasmussen left City Council that spring. A definitive basis for ending the exploration of conservation districts has not been given; however, several factors contributed to its demise: the lack of political support among other members of the council, the Planning Commission had drafted a letter in opposition to the proposal (City Clerk, personal communications, Dec. 4 2019), and most significantly, the Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA) was just weeks away from being unveiled (published July 14th, 2015) with specific language opposing the Lund conservation district proposal (HALA, 2015).

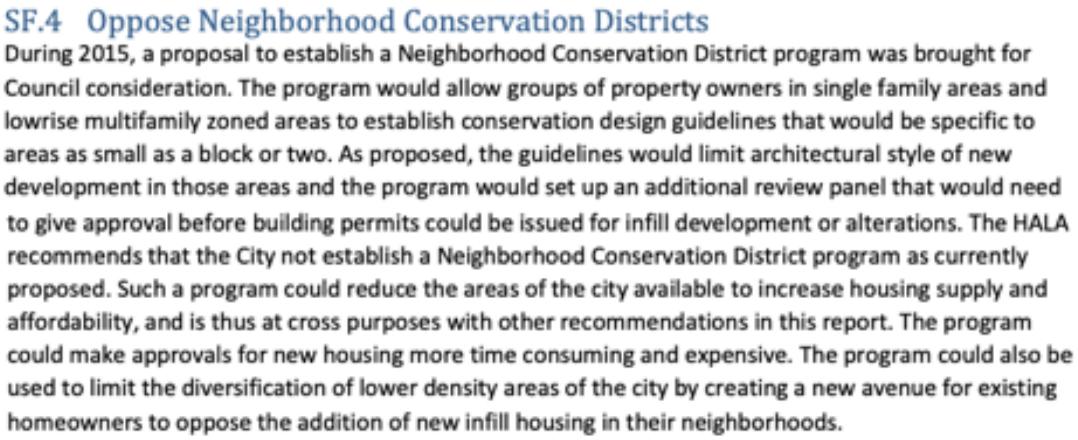
3.2 HOUSING AFFORDABILITY LIVABILITY AGENDA (HALA)

HALA consists of 64 recommendations made by a committee to the City of Seattle to address Seattle's need for housing, especially affordable housing (HALA, 2015). The recommendations were developed through a series of closed-door discussions between selected committee members representing nonprofits, developers, lawyers, and politicians, as well as four city offices, but only a single neighborhood representative. None of the 47 committee members included any city staff, local practitioners, or volunteers in any field related to historic resource planning,

preservation, or local landmarks. To support their effort, the HALA committee did create seven Strategy Work Groups of which one addressed Preservation, but that group included not a single member who worked in historic preservation. (The "Preservation" group consisted of a housing authority, a project management group, three affordable housing developers, a low-income housing advocate, a real estate investor, a community member, and one commercial architect). The HALA report deemed preservation a hindrance to the immediate need for housing and argued that historic review should be streamlined in all cases and eliminated where affordable housing was concerned. Further, the report proposed that volunteer members of historic districts boards and the Landmarks board should be indoctrinated in the economics of development. As a result, several of the recommendations oppose preservation regulations or even propose dismantling them (HALA, 2015).

A significant aspect of the recommendations involved upzoning selected areas throughout the city, regardless of historic fabric. Once the city accepted the HALA report, city staff began identifying new overlay areas to be upzoned to prioritize denser housing options near transit corridors and existing urban villages and urban hubs, including allowing for new types of multi-family structures within the urban village boundary to address the "missing middle" of housing (HALA, 2015). As noted elsewhere in this thesis, the city's surveys of historic resources have not been completed, so information about existing historic resources is incomplete and was unavailable to the HALA committee. The results of the HALA recommendations as adopted by the city appear to exhibit opposition to preservation.

The following passage in Figure 3.1 lists the HALA recommendation regarding conservation districts published in 2015:



SF.4 Oppose Neighborhood Conservation Districts

During 2015, a proposal to establish a Neighborhood Conservation District program was brought for Council consideration. The program would allow groups of property owners in single family areas and lowrise multifamily zoned areas to establish conservation design guidelines that would be specific to areas as small as a block or two. As proposed, the guidelines would limit architectural style of new development in those areas and the program would set up an additional review panel that would need to give approval before building permits could be issued for infill development or alterations. The HALA recommends that the City not establish a Neighborhood Conservation District program as currently proposed. Such a program could reduce the areas of the city available to increase housing supply and affordability, and is thus at cross purposes with other recommendations in this report. The program could make approvals for new housing more time consuming and expensive. The program could also be used to limit the diversification of lower density areas of the city by creating a new avenue for existing homeowners to oppose the addition of new infill housing in their neighborhoods.

Figure 3.1. Excerpt from HALA Final Advisory Committee Recommendations, recommendation SF.4

Although the HALA critique is directed primarily towards the conservation district proposal that had been prepared for the city, the negative claims stated in this recommendation are speculative or even false. As this thesis shows, it is possible to write conservation district regulations that allow an increase in housing while protecting neighborhood character. This thesis includes a set of scenarios showing the potential for density in conservation districts and multiple methods of incorporating it in a way that can complement a district. Additionally, following the design guidelines proposed in Chapter 7 of this thesis would be no different from following standard design guidelines for a Design Review board. As this thesis will describe, limiting the style of new construction is not necessary nor is it recommended, as form, scale, and building location are arguably the necessary elements in maintaining compatibility in context. The HALA report suggests the long review time for historic landmark consideration would be the same for conservation districts but provides no evidence to support this claim; NCDs can have standards that are less stringent than historic districts (as in the proposal in this thesis). Proposed projects in an NCD in Seattle would be reviewed as changes to the district, rather than going through a determination

of historic landmark status as many buildings are required to do during historic review. Evidence shows that designated Landmarks only undergoing review for changes (prior to issuance of a Certificate of Approval) in many cases face nominal review times. In the case of an NCD, fewer changes would require review and reviews would be significantly easier depending on the guidelines. The guidelines recommended in the Wallingford case study in this thesis would not require an onerous review.

The HALA recommendations as a whole suggest that achieving neighborhood preservation and denser, affordable neighborhoods would be incompatible; as this thesis shows this is simply untrue. Further, in "Older, Smaller, Better: Measuring how the character of buildings and blocks influences urban vitality" (2016), a National Trust publication by the Preservation Leadership Forum, the adaptive reuse of older buildings is shown to be a factor in producing more successful, diverse, and inclusive communities. Older, Smaller, Better focuses on Seattle as one of three case studies; the study documented the building age and character for Seattle on a 200m grid, and the Wallingford neighborhood was shown to be one of the most consistent parts of the city in both age and character score, suggesting high character value worth retention (Preservation Leadership Forum, 2016).

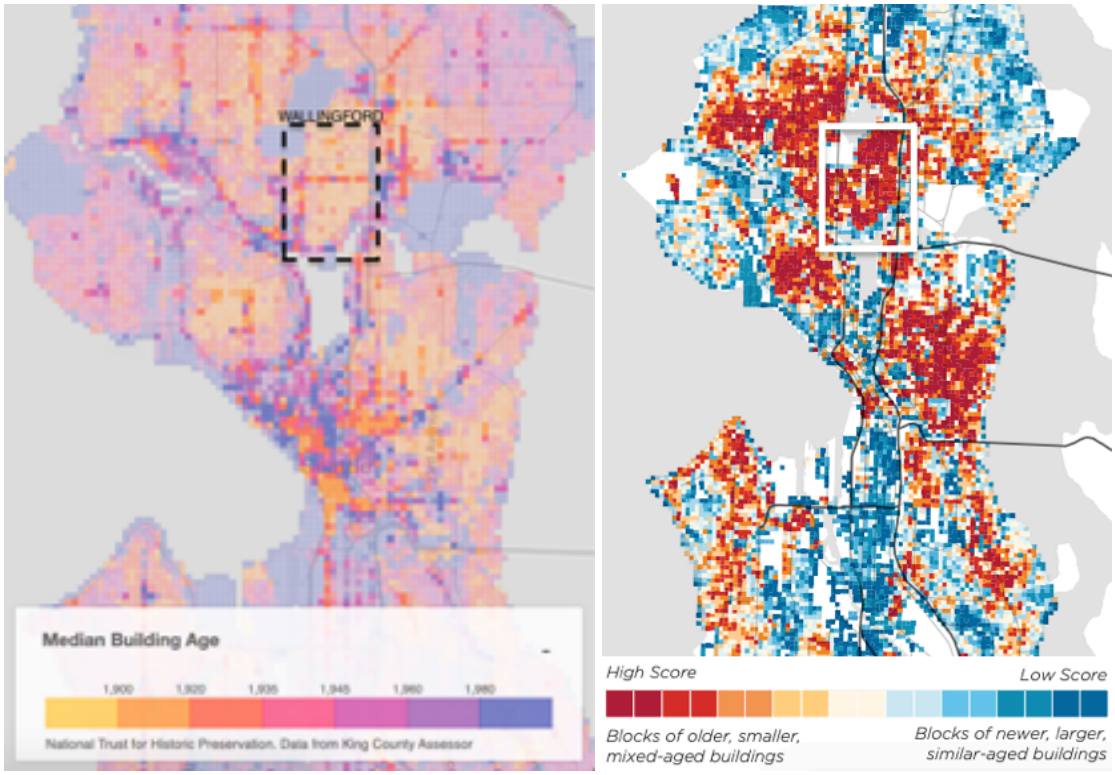


Figure 3.2. Seattle Median Building Age map developed for *Older, Smaller, Better*.

Figure 3.3. Seattle Character Score map developed by the Atlas of Reurbanism.

In 2017, the City of Seattle released a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) to the HALA Mandatory Housing Affordability legislation as required by the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). The FEIS addressed impacts from the legislation on topics ranging from housing and the environment to aesthetics and historic resources, based on four proposals: "no action", "Alternative 2", "Alternative 3", and "Preferred Alternative" (OPCD, 2017). The report suggests thirteen mitigation measures to address adverse impacts to historic resources, among which are the following:

- Funding continuation of the City-initiated comprehensive historic survey and inventory work that began in 2000 to prepare neighborhood historic context statements and identify historic-aged buildings and potential historic districts.

- Funding City-initiated proactive landmark nominations for properties and potential historic districts identified in new neighborhood surveys.
- Establishing new historic districts to preserve the historic fabric of a neighborhood.
- Establishing new conservation districts in order to encourage preservation of older structures (referred to in SMC as "character structures").
- Establishing Transfer of Development Rights (TDR programs within new conservation districts to provide incentives for property owners to keep existing character structures.
(OPCD, 2017, pp. 3.311-3.313)

Several Seattle neighborhoods appealed the FEIS after it was released, specifically claiming that the work did not adequately address impacts to neighborhoods (OPCD, 2019). In 2018, the City Hearing Examiner determined that the report was adequate with the exception of the analysis of historic resources. The Hearing Examiner required an addendum study be completed to map and further investigate the historic resources that would be impacted. The FEIS Historical Resources Addendum study released in 2019 analyzed the current status of city-designated landmarks, city-designated historic districts, National Register historic districts, National Register of Historic Places Determined Eligible Resources, and the City of Seattle Historic Resources Sites Survey Database to determine the adverse impacts to them based on the four proposals. The study found that all development proposals had significant adverse impacts to the existing, identified historic resources and to those which have not yet been identified (OPCD, 2019). In addition to the mitigation measures provided in the 2017 FEIS and based on a significantly greater analysis of the historic resources in the city, the addendum recommends five new mitigation measures, including:

- Reduce urban village expansions, reduce the intensity of zone changes or do not apply MHA zoning changes in National Register Historic Districts.
- Increase funding for a comprehensive and systematic Historic Resources Survey and Inventory program followed by proactive city-initiated Landmark and district nominations
(OPCD, 2019, pp. 34-36)

The HALA legislation passed unanimously in a City Council vote in March of 2019 following the addendum release. The current status of the implementation of mitigation measures is unclear, though no effort has been made to either fund the historic preservation program in Seattle or to create new historic districts. Neither report comments on the clear issue of future historic districts or conservation districts that may overlap with one of the new upzones. As the city has not been fully evaluated for historic districts or other preservation tools, there is a high likelihood of this scenario. As the addendum shows, significant adverse impacts would potentially arise in the Ravenna-Cowen historic district had the upzone encroached into the neighborhood, thus the area was left out entirely (OPCD, 2019). Would the upzone also be redrawn when new districts are established, or would MHA no longer apply to any overlapping areas? Further research should follow the impacts of HALA as it relates to historic resources to determine if the legislation is adversely impacting historic resources or satisfying the requirement for mitigation.

3.3 LUND PROPOSAL FOR NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

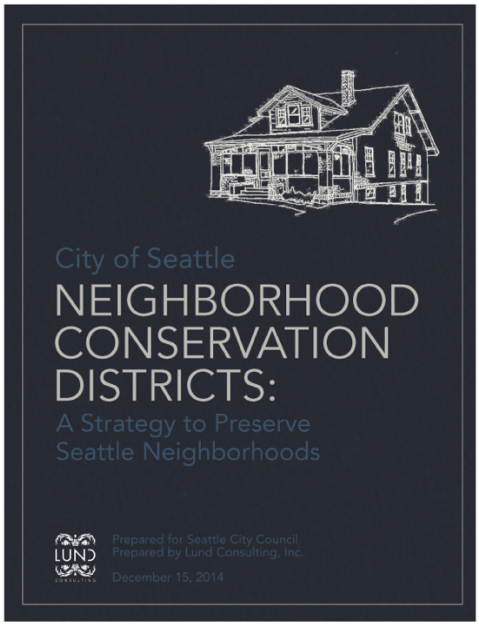


Figure 3.4. The Lund consulting report on Neighborhood Conservation Districts, published December 2019.

In an oft-cited memo to the Seattle City Council in 1999, a joint committee from the Department of Neighborhoods, Department of Design, Construction and Land Use (now Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections), and the Strategic Planning Office provided a progress report on their work on Community Character and Conservation Strategies. In this memo, they state:

> "At least 34 neighborhoods have included in their neighborhood plans at least some recommendations related to conserving or enhancing community character. As envisioned by some neighborhoods, a conservation district would provide guidelines, support and potential incentives for the conservation of important neighborhood buildings and design characteristics but would not be as prescriptive as the landmark and special review districts that the city currently uses. The city may want to explore new zoning techniques for some areas with

special characteristics that would incorporate incentives for maintaining existing buildings as well as disincentives for demolition" (Seattle City Council, 1999).

This memo and the momentum behind it became the basis for a slow, fifteen-year effort to attempt to enact a neighborhood conservation district program in Seattle. From 2002, conservation districts appeared on the city budgets to discuss and explore, but it was not until 2012 that a formal study on neighborhood conservation districts would begin, headed by Lund Consulting [Figure 3.4] (Lund, 2014). Lund Consulting is a private consulting firm headed by Kjistine Lund that has developed policy proposals and studies for a variety of public, non-profit, and private clients, particularly in the Northwest, since 1990. Between 2012 and 2014, Lund Consulting performed a literature review and developed a strategy for Seattle based on research from other jurisdictions. City Council Member Tom Rasmussen's office led the study and published the following timeline in 2014 for the adoption of the ordinance [Figure 3.5]. However, the ordinance never made it to City Council.

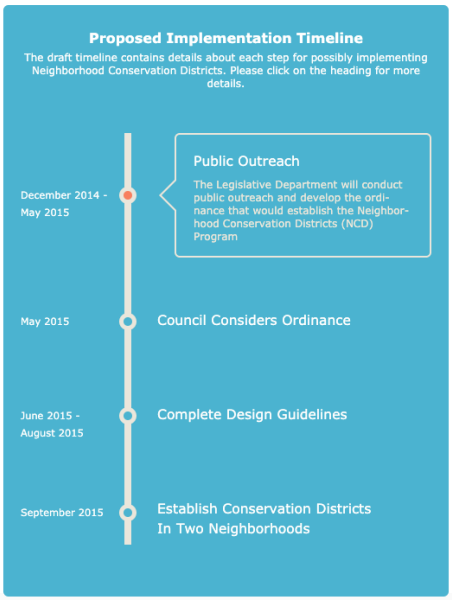


Figure 3.5. NCD program timeline presented by the office of Council Member Tom Rasmussen.

The Lund conservation district report, "City of Seattle Neighborhood Conservation District Strategy," published in December of 2014, provides an overview of conservation districts, a framework for a conservation district program, and goals and strategies by which to measure a program's success (Lund, 2014). Similarly to Philadelphia, Seattle city staff and consultants surveyed over 25 different ordinances addressing conservation district implementation. The framework Lund proposed employs many of the techniques found in both Lubens and Miller's and Kelly and Goodman's analyses of conservation districts and provides examples for guidelines and ordinances. The program is largely incentive-based, which became one of the largest critiques of the program and includes little suggestion for regulation and enforcement. A former City of Seattle employee argued that the proposal was "too watered down" and offered the potential for exploitation by savvy developers. The Department of Neighborhoods Historic Preservation Office thus chose not to become involved (anonymous former City of Seattle employee, personal communication, Dec. 4th, 2019).

Although it is likely that the neighborhood planning approach to conservation districts is the best suited for Seattle due to its explicit guidelines and Seattle's history of land use regulation through zoning codes, an incentive-based program appears problematic without an accompanying regulatory framework. If the proposal had passed, it is uncertain whether neighborhood groups would have mobilized to pursue the enactment of a district.

A better solution may have included further discussion on enforcement as well as tools to shape density and development to make it more attractive to developers, neighborhoods, and council members. In discussing the letter of dissent by the Planning Commission, which opined that the neighborhood conservation district proposal was inconsistent with the goals of the city including affordability, density, and social equity,

it is notable that there was not any recommendation for improvement to the proposal, only opposition (City Clerk, personal communication, Dec. 4th, 2019). A future proposal must address these concerns. Seattle may need to turn to other cities for examples of better integration of preservation with social issues.

3.4 PIKE/PINE CONSERVATION OVERLAY DISTRICT

Figure 3.6. Buildings in the PPCOD exhibiting the high development potential for historic resources in the district.

The Pike/Pine Conservation Overlay District (PPCOD) was adopted by the City of Seattle in 2009 (Chalana, 2016). It was Seattle's first attempt at creating a conservation district and it remains, more than ten years later, the only conservation district in the city. The PPCOD is relatively unusual for a conservation district in that it is located in a dense commercial area with very high redevelopment potential and has raised a number of challenging issues such as cases of facadism and new construction out of scale with the historic context (Chalana, 2016).

Historically, the Pike/Pine Corridor was a neighborhood commercial district with strong ties to the auto industry that grew around Pike and Pine Streets running east-west, and Broadway running north-south. The area had a large collection of one to

three, and occasionally four, story buildings constructed prior to 1940. When Seattle adopted their "urban villages" strategy to focus new growth in neighborhood commercial districts served by transit, the zoning was increased to 65 feet, a significant increase in scale. By the 2000s, as the neighborhood became attractive for development because of its convenience to downtown, residents and business owners sought a conservation district to protect the neighborhood's character. Given the zoning, larger scale development was inevitable, so the PPCOD used the incentive of additional height in return for preserving the visible character elements of pre-1940 buildings: the street-facing facades. The PPCOD also tried to protect small, local businesses by limiting the size of ground-floor retail and restaurants; the ordinance also offered incentives for arts and culture uses and affordable housing (Seattle, C. of, 2009).

Over the past ten years some have had a critical view of the PPCOD, noting that it has not done enough to curtail the effects of gentrification and the loss of character from the neighborhood. In most cases nationwide, conservation districts are used for neighborhoods and neighborhood-scale retail districts. In contrast to other cities, which typically seek to preserve the existing scale of the neighborhood, the PPCOD allows a significant scale change. Manish Chalana, UW professor of Urban Planning, has advised that future neighborhood conservation districts in Seattle should be aware of the challenges and weaknesses of the PPOCD and remain diligent in planning and executing their preservation goals (Chalana, 2016).

Both the PPCOD and the Lund proposal for a Conservation District program were initially intended to be under the purview of the Historic Preservation Program of the Department of Neighborhoods (anonymous former City of Seattle employee, personal communication, Dec. 4, 2019). However, as enacted, the PPCOD is part of the

zoning ordinance and operates under the newly created office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD)

3.5 EXISTING OVERLAY ZONING

Seattle has previous experience using zoning overlays for special districts. Overlay districts have been implemented by the city for certain large developments such as institutional overlays, and areas with unique properties like historic districts that require additional review or regulation. While individual requirements vary, some have review boards (either volunteer, elected, or appointed), and all have staff review and tailored design standards. Examples of several of these are the Shoreline Program overlay, Light Rail Station overlays, and Major Institution Overlays such as for the University of Washington. The PPCOD is one such overlay district and two of Seattle's historic districts are classified as special review district overlays. The Northgate Mall in North Seattle has an overlay district that is particularly relevant to this thesis proposal. Although the district is in place to manage the heavy transit use and large development occurring in the mall's superblocks, the mapped overlay extends far beyond the mall boundaries to cover the surrounding single-family residential areas. One of the Northgate Overlay District's (NOD) three primary goals is to "protect the residential character of the residential neighborhoods" that are adjacent to the development center (Northgate Design Guidelines, n.d.). To achieve this protection, the overlay zoning requires buffers between low-density and higher-zoned uses, maximum height modifications, modified setbacks and locations on a lot, as well as design standards. These code modifications manage new construction to make it compatible with its context. As evidenced by the NOD, the concepts brought forward by this thesis

proposal are not unusual in the city and if a zoning overlay is to be used for an NCD program, the enabling legislation already exists.

Chapter 4. RECONSIDERING CONSERVATION DISTRICTS IN SEATTLE

4.1 Neighborhood Character and the Case for Older Buildings

Neighborhood character is a phase used by urban planners and preservationists to denote a set of unique characteristics found in a specific area that gives it a distinct "personality" (NYC, 2014). What constitutes “character” in a neighborhood varies city by city, but it generally results from a combination of several aspects of the subject area, including construction methods, architectural details, land use, urban design, historic value, and elements of the natural environment (NYC, 2014). In Seattle, “character areas” have been mapped and delineated for several neighborhoods under the Neighborhood Design Guidelines program (Neighborhood Design Guidelines, n.d.). The guidelines seek to inform developers about the area and the individual elements that contribute to the area’s character, and as such are descriptive rather than regulatory designations (Seattle, C. of, 2018). Additionally, context statements have been written for 35 neighborhoods in Seattle that discuss scale, density, environment and aesthetics, among other elements which provides a similar statement to a character area assessment (Historic Resources Survey, n.d.). Seattle has also defined character structures in the PPCOD in the municipal code as buildings “that possess architectural features that establish the District's architectural character; generally, those structures that have been in existence prior to 1940 (‘character structures’) and are related to the area's early history as Seattle's original ‘auto row’.” (Ord. 123020, § 4, 2009).

As evidenced in the 2019 documentary on Seattle’s Central District, *On The Brink*, a loss in neighborhood character can have devastating impacts to a community

(Schulman & Fong, 2019). Jeff Schulman and Steven Fong's documentary tells the story of the once-thriving African American neighborhood that has steadily been losing small businesses and long-term residents to speculative development and gentrification over the past 40 years. The narrators provide an overview of the culture and architecture of the area as it changed from the 1970s to the present. They note that once the visual character had become unrecognizable to its residents, it no longer felt familiar and many relocated due to loss of mainstay neighborhood amenities and rising property values caused by "area improvements". Interviews in the film discuss how the community is beginning an effort to reclaim the neighborhood and the challenges they face in overcoming what has already been lost (*On The Brink* is available to view online and in select theaters)

Had a conservation district been in place in the Central Area over the last decade, one could speculate that the effects felt in the neighborhood may have been less severe. Though it is unlikely that the 2015 proposal would have arrived in time to prevent much of the change occurring in the area, the Central District should serve as a "call to action" for underrepresented communities that may still have the ability to prevent widespread displacement through a conservation approach.

4.2 Broadening Preservation in Other West coast Cities

Since the early 2000s, other major cities along the West Coast have begun to institute alternate preservation strategies, including conservation districts, finding that they better benefit and reflect the city's evolving needs. Tacoma, Portland, Los Angeles, and Vancouver BC have each recognized that heritage is an integral part of their future and each has revised their planning policies over the past 15 years to reflect future

preservation goals. Vancouver has instituted a "character home" program which includes zoning relaxations, zoning incentives, and overlay zoning in residential pockets around the city, along with heritage conservation areas. Vancouver is also in the process of developing a city-wide Heritage Action Plan that presents the city's goals and objectives for 2050 (Vancouver, C. of, 2013). Tacoma implemented a comprehensive plan in 2011 focusing on increasing historic districts, conservation districts, and financial and zoning incentives by 2020 (Tacoma, C. of, 2011). Since then, one historic district has been added, several incentive programs such as a transfer of development rights (TDR) program were created, and additional demolition and cultural reviews have been added for certain areas of the city (Reuben McKnight, personal communication, Sept. 3rd 2020). Each of these cities developed a strategic preservation plan outlining policy changes adapted to each goal based on public, stakeholder, and governmental input.

Seattle, by contrast, not only does not have a strategic preservation plan for the city, but preservation was left out of the discussion entirely when developing the extensive Housing and Affordability Livability Agenda Recommendations published in 2015 to guide the next fifteen years of city development (HALA, 2015). In Seattle's 2019 Comprehensive Plan, the focus of the Historic Resource agenda is minimal. Only two guidelines are included: 1) priority is placed on "maintaining and supporting" existing historic resources, and 2) potential consideration of additional conservation areas, historic districts, and special review districts such as the International/Chinatown Special Review District, but, notably, there are not any accompanying policies that direct how or when any consideration might occur (Seattle Comprehensive Plan, 2019). Additionally, communications in 2019 with a current Planning Commission member have shown that conservation districts are not only a low priority for Seattle,

but the Commission is actively steering the agenda away from preservation in general (Rick Mohler, personal communication, November 2019).

Finally, policies found in Seattle's Comprehensive Plan and zoning ordinance that pertain to the context of historic areas and/or neighborhoods should acknowledge that the number of identified existing historic neighborhoods and resources does not represent the total found within the city. A comprehensive survey has not been performed for the city and thus with many areas not surveyed, the total number of historic areas in Seattle has yet to be quantified; many more likely exist outside of the city's current purview.

Chapter 5. WALLINGFORD AS A CASE STUDY

5.1 CASE STUDY

It was determined early on that the focus of this thesis should be a case study area as opposed to producing a general, city-wide conservation district proposal. The Lund proposal had already created a city-wide strategy, but it remains vague and inapplicable to any neighborhood as it currently exists. In order to understand the complexities of creating a potential district in Seattle, it was important to test the process, evaluate its effectiveness, and gauge its replicability.

5.2 DESCRIPTION OF WALLINGFORD

The Wallingford neighborhood is located in north Seattle covering approximately 1.5 square miles. The neighborhood is bound by the I-5 freeway to the east, Lake Union to the south, and State Route 99 (also Aurora Avenue N) to the west. The northern border is generally agreed upon as N 56th Street along the small neighborhood commercial corridor referred to as Tangletown. Historic Seattle, an advocacy group and non-profit, funded a neighborhood inventory [Figure 5.1] in 1976 by Victor Steinbrueck and Folke Nyberg that illustrates and describes the boundaries and contents of the neighborhood in depth (Steinbrueck & Nyberg, 1976). Approximately 18,000-20,000 residents live in the neighborhood which is a majority of single-family residential houses (Population and demographics, n.d.). Two main commercial districts run the length of N 45th Street and Stone Way North, respectively, and three small retail areas are located on N 56th Street, Wallingford Ave N, and N 40th Street. The area is popular for all Seattle residents and visitors for its parks, views, and

casual shopping and dining. The main east-west streets also serve as the connection between neighborhoods and are continuously busy.

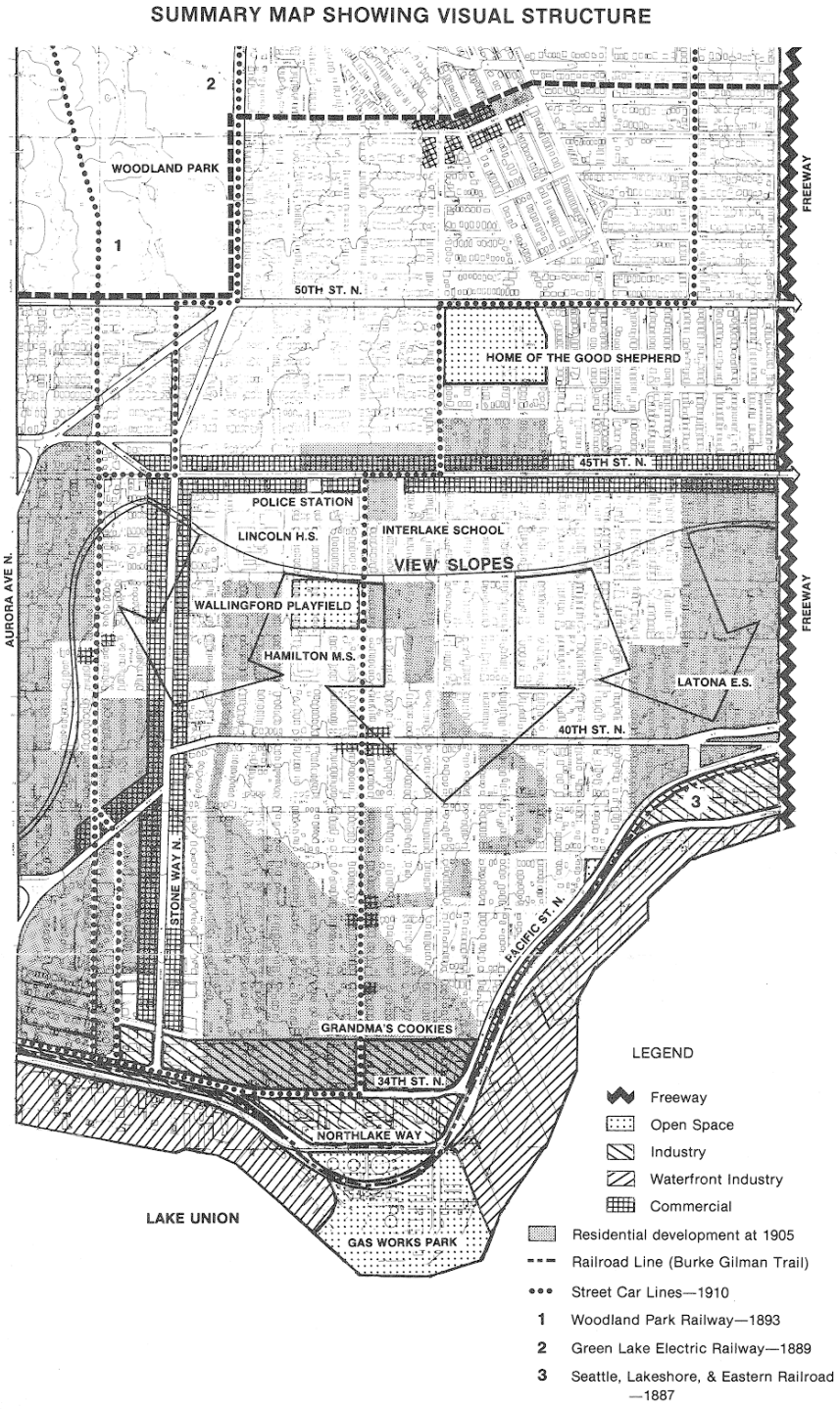


Figure 5.1. Wallingford Neighborhood Inventory map, 1976.

The Wallingford neighborhood has increasingly been impacted by the demolition and redevelopment of its residential fabric, predominantly craftsman-style houses and bungalows (Demolition Permits, 2020). In recent years, neighborhood groups, such as Historic Wallingford, have formed to address the issues of diminishing neighborhood character. These groups are actively exploring options for better recognition of, and possibly protection of, their neighborhood's historical value. The Wallingford neighborhood is one of several Seattle neighborhoods that have recently sought National Register designations for historic districts.

5.3 HISTORY OF WALLINGFORD

The area of present-day Wallingford, formerly the Wallingford, Latona, and Meridian neighborhoods, was annexed by the city in 1891 along with several other Seattle neighborhoods such as Fremont and Green Lake; this annexation effectively doubled the size of the city in a single year. Although additional annexations followed up to the mid-twentieth century, the 1891 neighborhoods received city utilities and transit first which inevitably led to their boom in population growth. Between 1900 and 1910, the city population grew from 80,000 to 240,000 people, and many flocked to the newly accessible communities fostered by the extension of the city's streetcar lines. Seattle was trailing a national trend of moving away from the center city, and the new streetcar lines allowed for "suburbs" to flourish with commercial development, industry, and housing (Doherty, 1997).

In the early twentieth century, many young couples and progressive families were looking for a more casual style of living. With the advent of electricity, indoor plumbing, and other modern conveniences such as preserved foods and ready-to-wear

clothing, ways of living changed significantly in just a few decades (Doherty, 1997). Older "Victorian" houses represented an older era and new housing provided an alternative. Outside of the city center, builders began introducing the modern house, particularly using the California bungalow form. These homes provided indoor plumbing, central heating, modern appliances, and simpler styles [Figure 5.2]. Previously separate entertaining rooms, hallways, and closed-off entryways were set aside for a sociable and open entry-living-dining area. Large work spaces for hand-washing laundry, cooking, and keeping livestock were eliminated as daily chores became more efficient. The "bungalow" form thus presented as an efficient house in plan, space and cost (King, 1995).

Figure 5.2. Wallingford houses as photographed by the King County assessor.

The demand for housing soared in the early twentieth century, and industry was growing along with the population. Developers and "spec" builders made a significant impact on the type of housing that was being built. While plan books and house kits had been in use since at least the 1880s, they proliferated during the 1900s building boom. In Seattle, one builder, the Craftsman Bungalow Company owned by Jud Yoho (1909-1918), was perhaps the most popular during these years and was responsible for dozens of houses built between Green Lake and Queen Anne, with a concentration in Wallingford (Doherty, 1997). Yoho founded *Bungalow Magazine* that showcased his

company's built houses along with those of his competitors in an effort to promote the bungalow type. Yoho did not always build houses that strictly conformed to the bungalow type, but he sometimes loosely used the term for marketing purposes, and toward the end of his career in Seattle, Yoho adjusted his house plans to reflect colonial revival styles as they began to become popular (Doherty, 1997). Pattern books from Sears and other kit companies frequently included craftsman-style houses, but several other styles as well such as Tudor revival and four-square houses. Many of these styles (whether from kits or from local builders) can still be found in Wallingford today, although a formal survey of such houses has not been completed.

In a survey of extant Yoho houses completed in 1997, Doherty discovered that despite the wide variation in Yoho house types, Wallingford and Fremont possessed remarkably consistent styles. She found that the neighborhood served as Yoho's "test area" where most of his model houses were constructed during his early period when he was focusing primarily on craftsman bungalows. Further, 83% of the Yoho houses identified in her survey were located in the Wallingford and Fremont areas (Doherty, 1997). As a significant influencer of the area's development, Yoho left a lasting impact on the history and appearance of the neighborhood.

Figure 5.3. Common Building Types, an excerpt from the Wallingford Neighborhood Inventory, 1976.

Note: The shaded images in the lower row depict less common multi-family and commercial structures that are also found in the neighborhood.

The Wallingford neighborhood is comprised of several types and styles of houses that reflect early twentieth-century buildings in Seattle [Figure 5.3]. These common building types found in the neighborhood represent typical Wallingford houses: late-19th century Queen Anne and Victorian styles, early 20th century vernacular, and pattern book craftsman styles and bungalows (Steinbrueck & Nyberg, 1976).

5.4 Historic Wallingford & the National Register Feasibility Study

Historic Wallingford is a neighborhood-based group that formed in 2016 to address the changing character of Wallingford (Historic Wallingford, 2020). The

neighborhood recently commissioned a National Register historic district feasibility study performed by Northwest Vernacular, a preservation consulting firm based in Port Orchard, funded in large part by the King County arts and culture organization, 4Culture (Northwest Vernacular, 2019). The report identified 1,828 parcels within the traditional bounds of the neighborhood that were considered to have integrity, and, therefore, eligibility for inclusion in one or more National Register districts. Northwest Vernacular proposed four potential historic district areas, A, B, C, and D. Their analysis looked at the neighborhood through the lens of the platting history, showing how the existing development patterns reflect the original land subdivision (Northwest Vernacular, 2019).

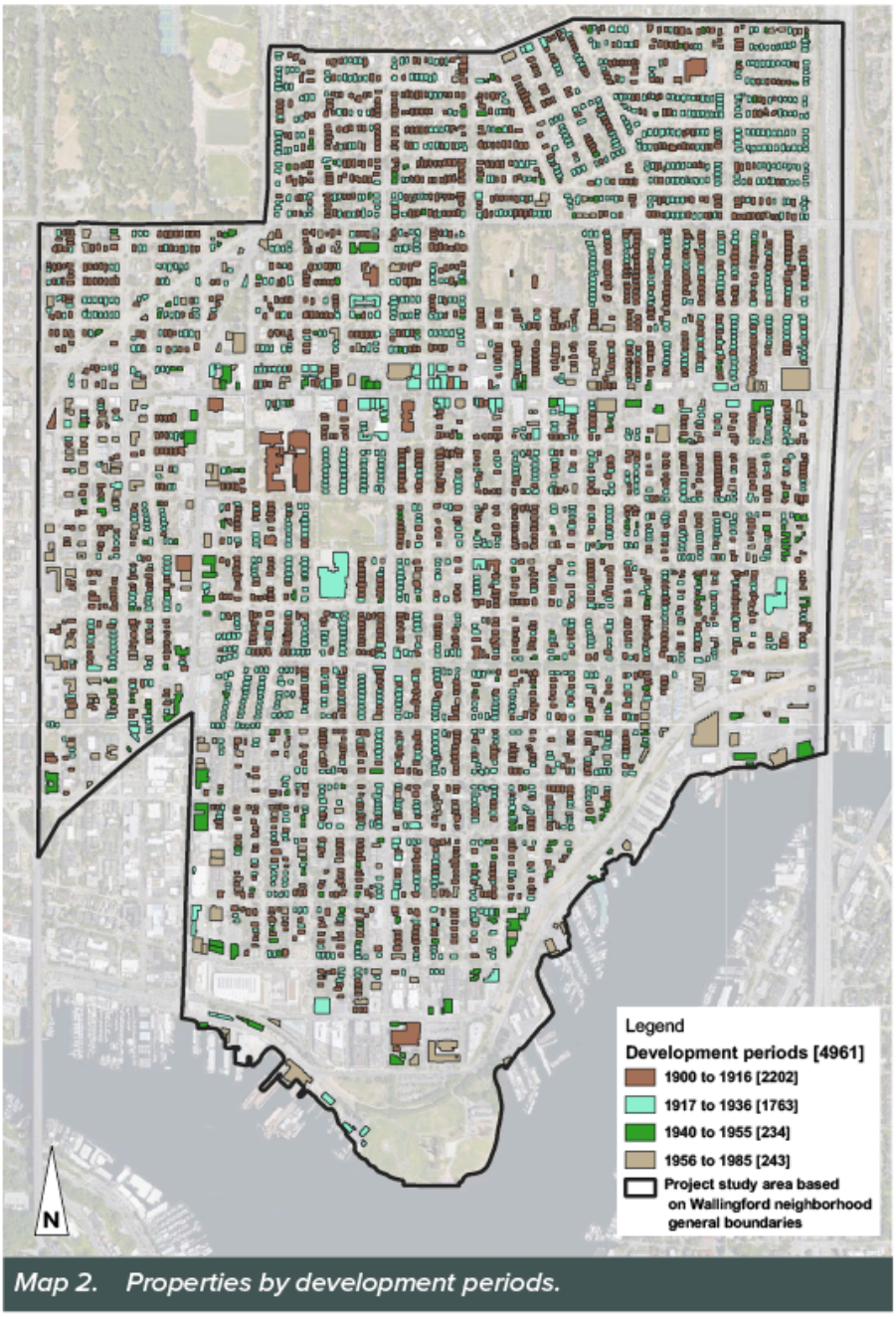


Figure 5.4. Map showing surveyed buildings by development period.

Note: 80% of 4,961 buildings surveyed were constructed before 1936. Nearly half were constructed prior to 1916.

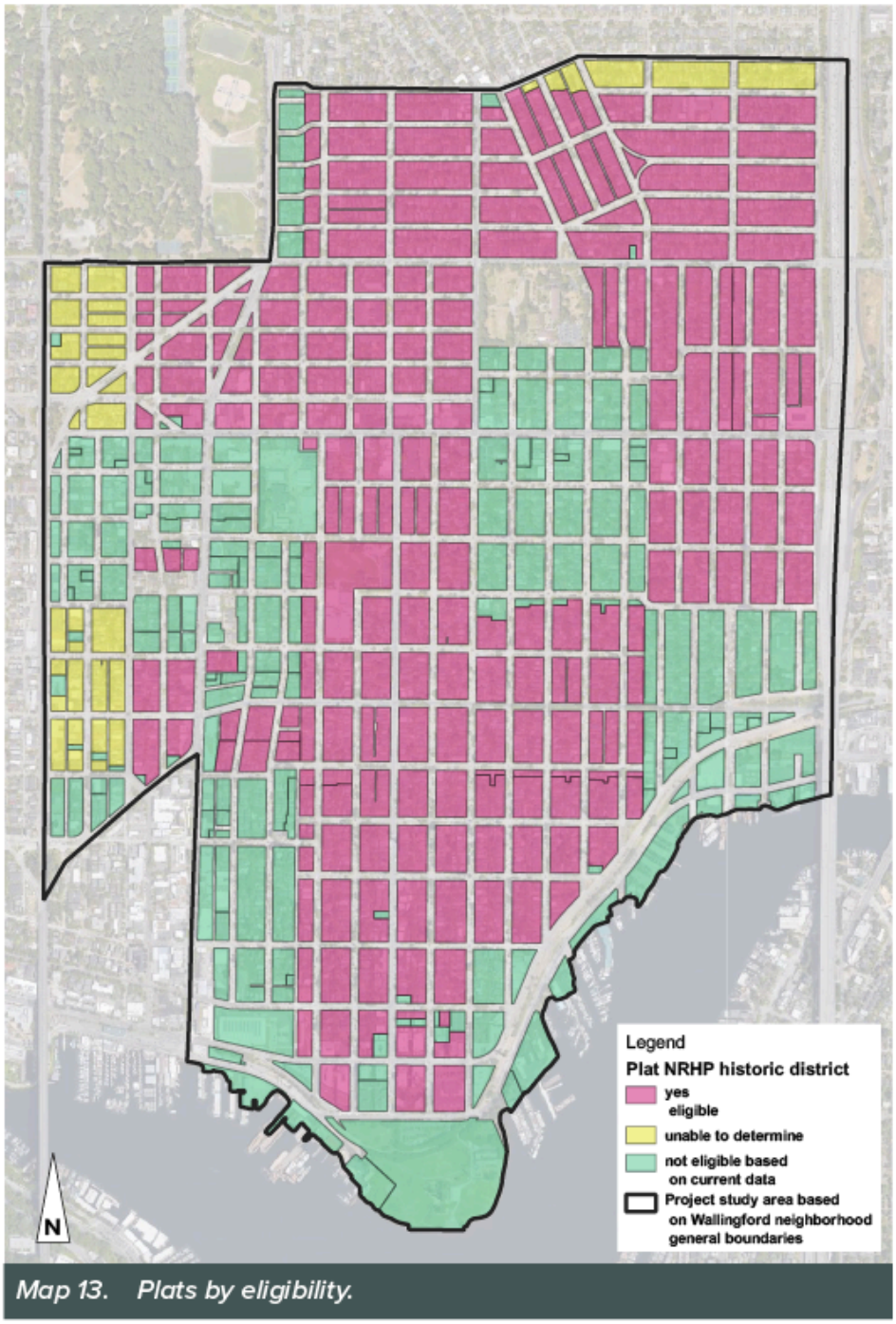
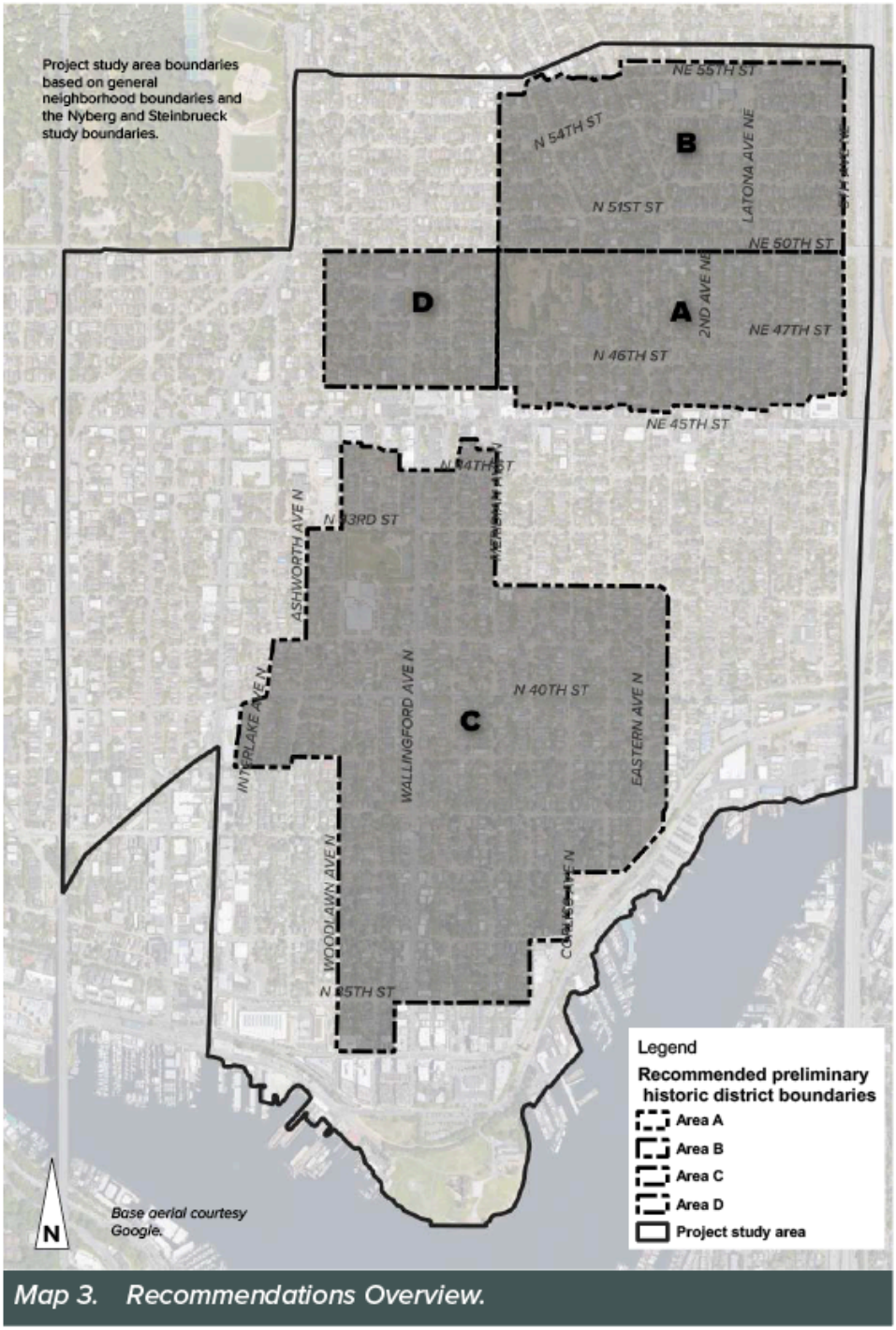


Figure 5.5. Map showing surveyed plats by "contributing" or "non-contributing" status.

Note: Over 3,100 properties were determined eligible for NRHP listing.



Map 3. Recommendations Overview.

WALLINGFORD HISTORIC DISTRICT FEASIBILITY STUDY

Northwest Vernacular

Figure 5.6. Map showing four separate NRHD districts recommended by Northwest Vernacular.

From their brief view into the neighborhood history, and a caveat that significantly more work would be necessary to prepare a district nomination, the Northwest Vernacular team identified three aspects in Wallingford's history that qualify it as significant for evaluation: transportation, community planning and development, and architecture (Northwest Vernacular, 2019). In the next part of the analysis, the Secretary of the Interior's seven aspects of integrity (Morton, et. al, 1992) were then applied to the blocks and plats as a whole, rather than individual parcels, within the boundaries. Volunteers completed a survey of all potentially eligible properties in the neighborhood, delineating the historic properties from structures built after 1970, and the consultants compiled the findings and produced a report that was released in August of 2019 (Northwest Vernacular, 2019). For the feasibility study, houses were briefly reviewed for major changes, such as complete siding or window replacement or an out of scale addition. Two or more major changes resulted in a non-contributing status. Out of a total of 4,961 properties surveyed over 85 plats and approximately 940 acres, 3,159 (63%) were determined to be contributing properties (Northwest Vernacular, 2019). While this number does not represent the full extent of properties that could be reviewed under potential NCD guidelines, it provides insight into the very large number of properties in Wallingford that are still intact per the National Register's strict standards.

Historic Wallingford intends for this study and subsequent National Register nomination to provide a way to celebrate the neighborhood's uniqueness in Seattle, recognize its history, and unite the community around a central, shared interest. Historic Wallingford public discussions, however, show that residents may still seek a method of preservation with a level of regulatory protection. Wallingford encompass a wide range of residents interested in this topic, ranging from long term renters and

owners, development advocates, casual preservationists, and even those wanting to prevent upzoning that would bring demolition and a loss of character. There are also opponents who argue that preservation in this neighborhood and others is an exclusionary measure and reinforces historical exclusionary zoning practices (Historic Wallingford, personal communication, 2018). While support for a conservation district may exist at some level, widespread public participation will likely be the most difficult hurdle due to the current polarized political climate.

5.5 HALA UPZONES

The Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA) developed in 2015, under the leadership of a committee appointed by Mayor Murray, proposed upzones throughout Seattle (HALA, 2015). Parts of Wallingford were included in the proposed upzones, generally close to existing neighborhood commercial areas. The upzoned area also coincides with large sections of highly intact historic areas based on the Northwest Vernacular NRHD feasibility study map (Northwest Vernacular, 2019). The result is a historic section of the neighborhood that is facing the possibility of rapid redevelopment.

Because the NRHD study and likely nomination does not involve the city, the city is not required to address the findings that the neighborhood can be a National Register district. However, in 2018, the nearby neighborhood of Ravenna-Cowen was successfully nominated to the National Register and because the city was in the process of studying the upzone boundaries at the time, the city redrew the upzone boundaries to exclude the new Ravenna-Cowen National Register district (OPCD, 2019). Although the legislation has already passed for Wallingford to benefit, the precedent that was set

in Ravenna-Cowen is noteworthy. What will happen next in Wallingford is unknown, but it would be appropriate for the city to reconsider the upzone areas based on the Northwest Vernacular proposed NRHDs in the feasibility study.

5.6 DEMOLITIONS

In addition to HALA, demolitions have been on the rise in Wallingford over the last decade, 2010-2020 (Demolition Permits, 2020). Since 2003, approximately 29 houses have been demolished per year, which equates to one and a half blocks. In 2017, however, over 60 demolitions occurred, which is just over three blocks in a single year. These numbers are not insignificant; altogether, over 500 properties or the equivalent of 26 city blocks have been demolished in Wallingford since 2003 (Demolition Permits, 2020). It is apparent that this is a quickly changing neighborhood and without a preservation incentive in place, unmanaged development will only increase. New development is notably more saturated around the periphery and along transit corridors where multi-family townhouses are being built, but demolitions within the neighborhood are replacing historic single-family houses with new, larger single-family houses. Despite these losses, Wallingford retains an impressive collection of intact houses per the Northwest Vernacular feasibility study, but it is highly recommended to disincentivize further destruction within the neighborhood.

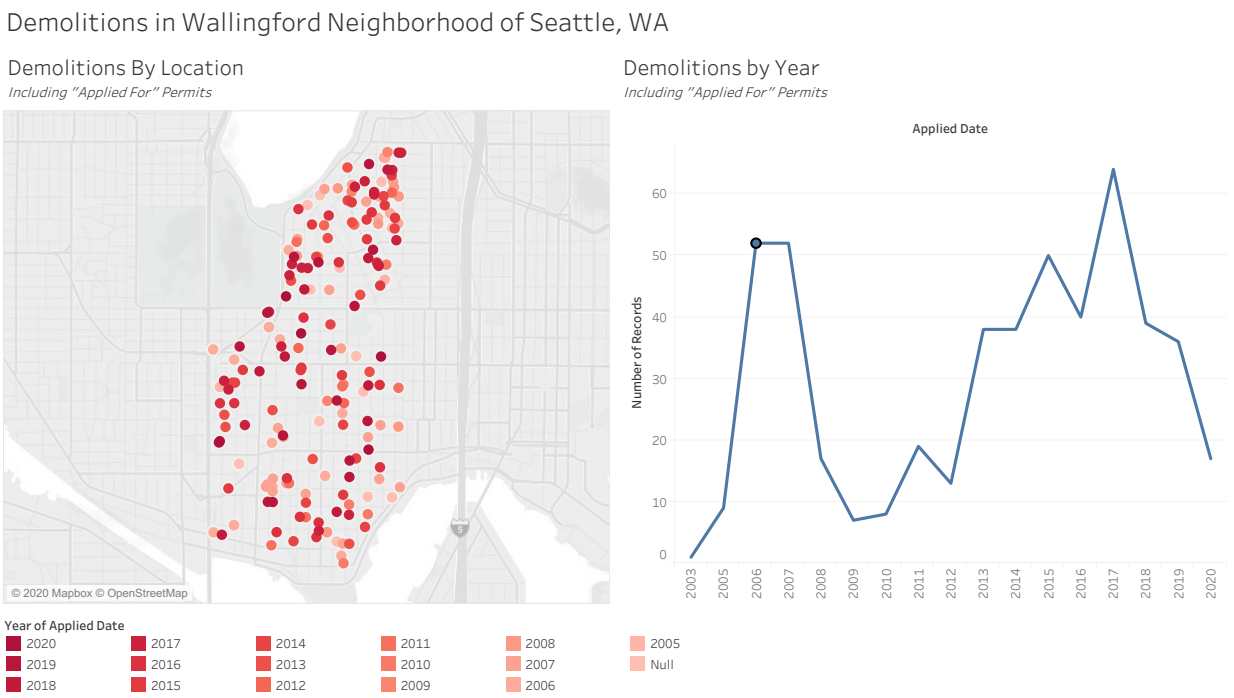


Figure 5.7. A visualization of demolition data for Wallingford. Data provided by the City of Seattle Open Source Data Portal.

5.7 Determining Wallingford Character

The fundamental idea of any conservation district is preservation of neighborhood character. To develop a conservation district proposal appropriate to a particular neighborhood requires a determination of those aspects that contribute to the character of that place. In other words, in Wallingford, what character-defining features are present that are worth protecting?

For this thesis, neighborhood character was primarily determined through field work carried out largely on foot followed by contextual analysis development patterns. The visual tour of the neighborhood proved more important than a quantitative study primarily because it revealed what the neighborhood residents are accustomed to

seeing day to day and also what changes and what kinds of changes would have the most perceived impact.

The National Park Service's Preservation Brief 17: Architectural Character: Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving their Character served as a guide for the analysis of the Wallingford neighborhood in this thesis (Nelson, 1988). Published in 1988, this Preservation Brief provides a standard to categorize the character features of a building in three steps: identifying the overall visual character, the close-up visual character such as material properties or mortar joint types, and the interior features and finishes. As a neighborhood conservation district is concerned only with the overall character, only the first step was used. Step 1 looks at the following features: overall shape, roof and roof features, openings such as rhythm or pattern modules, projections such as cornices or porches, trim and secondary features, and materials.

The shape and massing of the typical Wallingford house vary from a 1-story and 1 ½-story to 2-story and 2 ½-story. Most houses follow similar massing associated with small craftsman bungalow and traditional forms. While several forms and styles are present in the neighborhood, common houses have a rectangular footprint with a one-story covered porch with significant dimension and multiple planes breaking up the massing visible from the street. Building massing and style are highly consistent throughout the neighborhood, with the highest consistency in the inner areas (Northwest Vernacular, 2019). Building height appears to generally be within the limits of the Seattle zoning code limit of 30′ + 5′ for a pitched roof given the story levels of the structures. Building locations on the lot vary significantly from the front of the lot to the rear, the only standard being that the locations generally match adjacent houses. The

lots themselves are often heavily vegetated with personal gardens and landscaping, as well as significant and exceptional private and street trees.

Due to the topography and vegetation in Wallingford, through-lot views are rare. (This contrasts with some other examples such as the Avon Hill neighborhood in Cambridge studied by Yeston.) In Wallingford, the area of the highest potential impact from change as viewed from the street is the front facade, front yard, and the visible sections of side yards. The question of whether or not the internal block views from house to house are as important as views from the streets can also be considered. In a historic district, internal views may carry significant weight, but in an area with the goal of preserving character, scale and livability (as opposed to the specific historical elements, configurations, and materials that are often protected in a historic district), internal or house-to-house view were determined to be a lesser concern.

5.8 From Patterns to Guidelines

Based on the exploration on foot conducted street-by-street in Wallingford and reviewing photographs, repeating patterns began to emerge. These patterns could be sketched and understood as different layers through which this neighborhood is ordered. This analysis identified six patterns in the urban fabric: Block and lot, House position and massing, Open space, Porches/Eaves/Overhangs, Materials, and Feeling. Initially, Greenspace/Vegetation was identified as a pattern, but it was determined to be independent from the six patterns identified and inconsequential to the goals of the district. Once the patterns were identified, they could also be evaluated for significance in order to determine their priority for retention within the district. Building period emerged as a factor. Priorities need to be different for new construction and infill

compared to existing buildings. The process of proposing guidelines was iterative with each proposal written or sketched and reviewed as the basis for developing the district guidelines.

The development of specific regulations to implement the guidelines drew on an understanding of the neighborhood from the analysis, as well as the historical documents and the interaction with neighborhood residents. Based on a review of priorities for Wallingford, six goals were proposed to guide the framing of potential regulations in the proposed Wallingford conservation district. These were brought together with examples of different regulations used in jurisdictions from the previous research. Each was evaluated in terms of how it would affect Wallingford based on the primary goals and the guidelines. A series of "test scenarios" explored issues of adding density, allowing compatible development, and integrating with existing land use guidelines. All of these studies and proposals came together in a conservation district proposal for the Wallingford neighborhood that adequately addresses the need for preservation while also allowing for growth.

Chapter 6. TEST SCENARIOS

The following test scenarios investigate three categories of interest to the development of an NCD proposal: density, and the appropriate ways it can be incorporated; compatibility and authenticity, and what effect these principles have on an NCD, and design guideline development through sketch explorations.

6.1 DENSITY SCENARIOS

From the start of this thesis, the ability to increase density was a priority to ensure the neighborhood could grow to meet housing demand. These test explorations look at several options that could potentially increase housing capacity while retaining historic fabric. The following test scenarios use the Wallingford block located between north-south avenues Eastern Avenue N and Sunnyside Avenue N and east-west streets N 39th Street and N 40th Street and the adjacent block faces, as this area exhibits several important characteristics to study [Figures 6.1 & 6.2].

The block is located on a neighborhood arterial and is entirely inside a single-family zone, but the area borders a low-rise zone. It is also located on the neighborhood periphery where increased development is currently trending. From the street, the block appears similar to many in Wallingford: single-family houses of varying types, forms and styles with plentiful gardens, trees and vegetation. After researching this block, however, it was discovered that nine multifamily units (quadruplexes, triplexes and duplexes) already exist. This area is not located within the upzone, but, for exploratory purposes, these test scenarios use several of the housing types allowed only in the upzone.

Figure 6.1. Eastern Avenue, looking south from N 40th street. Map data © 2020 Google.

Figure 6.2. N 40th street, looking east from Eastern Avenue. Map data © 2020 Google.

Option 1: ADUs and DADUs

This option looked at increasing the AADUs and DADUs in the study area by approximately 50%, or 6 DADUs. This number was determined by assuming some houses will never build an ADU and some may use achieve density in other ways; 50% was determined to be a reasonable maximum. The Seattle code changes passed in August 2019 allows one ADU and one DADU on the same property, which could potentially double the number of units shown. Assuming 1-2 unrelated occupants or 2-4 related occupants may occupy an ADU, the option shown would increase the density per block by 6 units (6-24 people) to 12 units (12-48 people) [Figures 6.3 & 6.4]. (Note that AADUs are not shown as they are located inside existing houses, but they are included in calculations.)

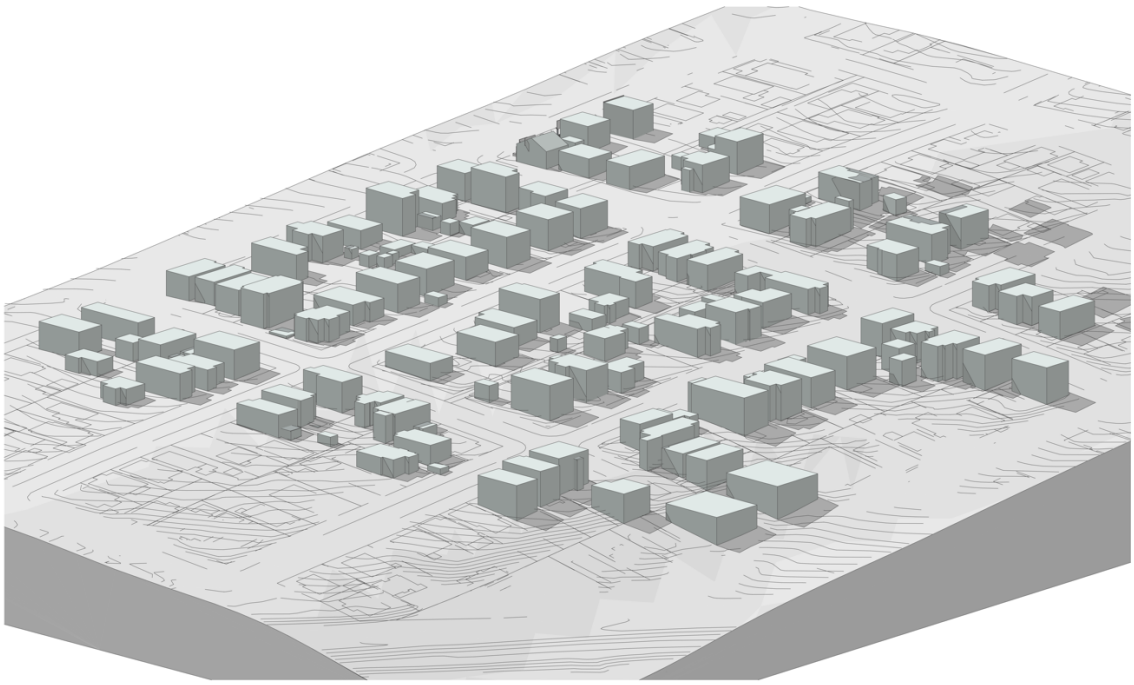


Figure 6.3. Base condition for the density test scenarios for the Wallingford neighborhood block.

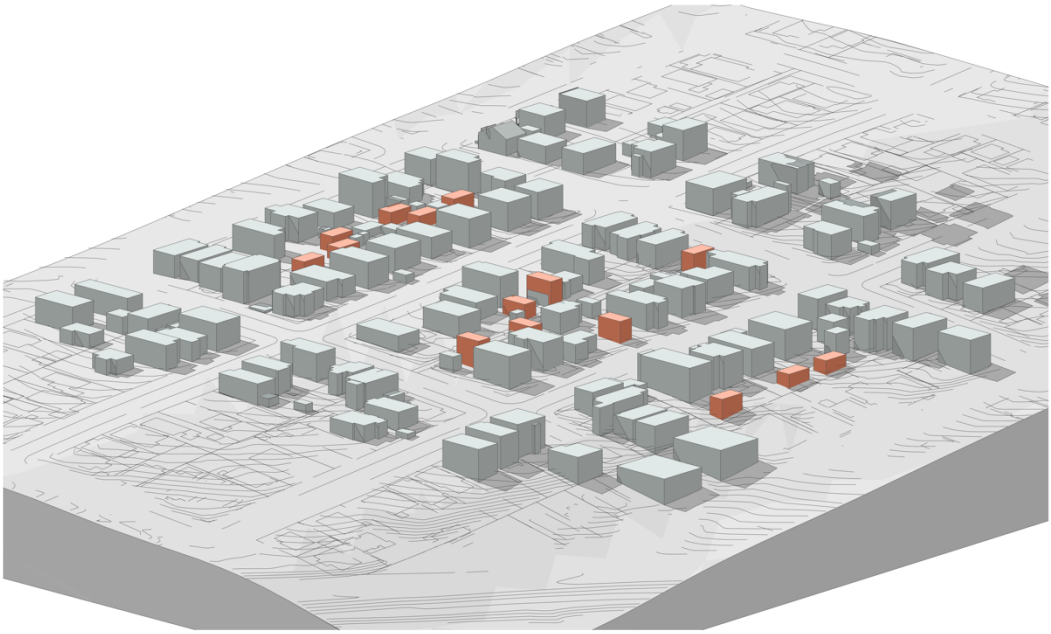


Figure 6.4. DADUs proposed at a density of 6 units per block.

Option 2: Multi-Family Houses

This scenario considered converting existing houses to multi-unit rentals, such as duplexes, triplexes, and quadruplexes. While functionally these units appear similar to ADUS, they tend to serve a different audience, can potentially house more occupants, and have different implications for the historic fabric. In this scenario, all units have their own entry into the principal building either from the exterior or a shared vestibule. Many extant examples of these multi-unit conversions retain the historic character of the house and are evidenced only from multiple entry doors that do not detract from the overall appearance. DADUs, on the other hand, offer a much greater visual presence in the neighborhood and take up a much larger footprint. For houses without the ability or lot size to construct a DADU, there would be a limit of only one ADU allowed; a sensitive house conversion may be a better solution.

The scenario study area already had approximately two multi-family houses per block. Based on the appearance of the existing buildings, many of these would go unnoticed, so this option doubled the existing units to 4 per block, but this could easily be increased. In a block without any multi-family houses, this scenario would add between 4 to 16+ units per block which equates to 8-64+ occupants [Figures 6.5 & 6.6].

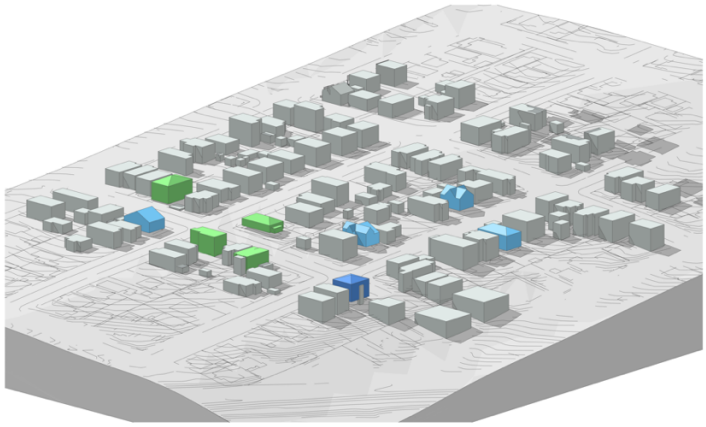


Figure 6.5. Existing multi-family units in the block study area at a density of approximately 2 multi-family units per block.

Note: Light blue units denote duplexes, green units denote triplexes, and the dark blue unit is a quadruplex.

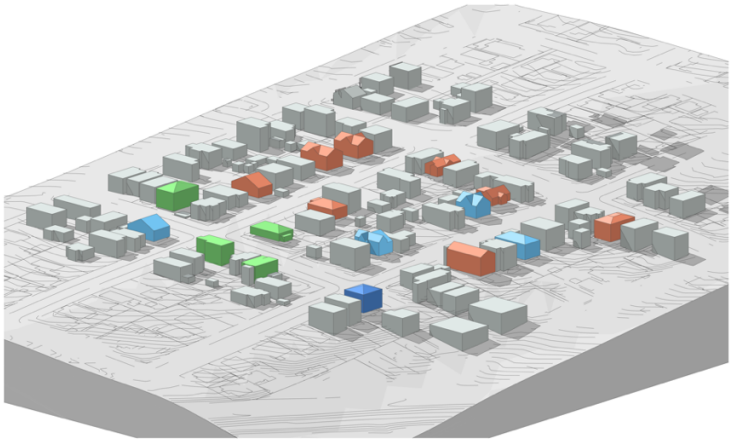


Figure 6.6. Proposed multifamily units in the block study area, at a proposed density of approximately 4 multi-family houses per block.

Option 3: Low-rise Apartments

Figure 6.7. Example of existing low-rise apartments in the neighborhood. Map data © 2020 Google.

Low-rise apartments existed in Wallingford since the area was developed and several examples still exist today [Figure 6.7]. Many of these historic apartment buildings are two-stories or less, setback from the street, and possess a welcoming appearance; the historic examples prove that low-rise apartments can be done in a way that does not overwhelm the surrounding areas. Modern apartment buildings tend to maximize allowed heights, unit counts, and lot coverage. While this would be discouraged in an NCD if it affected the feeling of its surroundings, it is currently allowed in the upzone area. In an NCD, setbacks and heights of low-rise buildings would be closely examined to determine the best way to integrate them with the historic context.

This scenario considers three-story, modern-style buildings built along the arterials. During testing, this style of building had a harsh effect on the context when placed inside the neighborhood's residential blocks and was therefore determined to

only be useful along commercial corridors or arterials. Even so, despite N 40th Street being a major connector between neighborhoods, it is a residential corridor and the effect of adding large-scale apartment buildings does appear rather severe. The result of allowing such buildings would be that those moving through the neighborhood would no longer experience the character of the area and the neighborhood would become divided. The benefit would be a tradeoff for the preservation of inner block houses, but it is questionable whether or not this would be a sufficient benefit given the impacts.

A three-story building built to the lot lines can vary depending on unit and lot size. With 10-20 units per building and two per block, these would house approximately 20-80 occupants per block. It is noted that many more units could be built along commercial corridors and in existing higher zones, and these would have less of a negative effect on the neighborhood character due to their location [Figure 6.8].

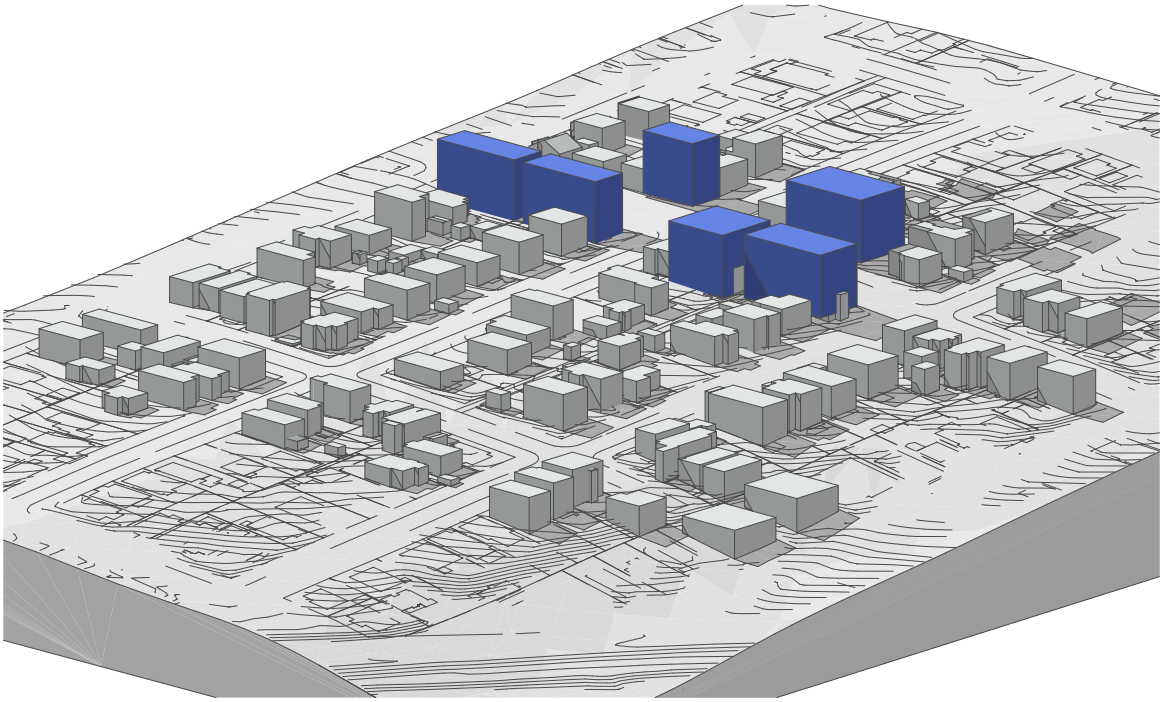


Figure 6.8. Exploration showing three-story low-rise apartment buildings along arterials.

Findings:

Based on these explorations, a combination of scenarios one and two on an inner neighborhood block would provide just as many occupants, if not more, than apartment-style housing at one or two buildings per block while preserving the historic fabric and scale of the neighborhood. This evidence suggests that higher character-retention methods can have a more favorable impact per block from a density and preservation perspective.

In a study completed for the city of Seattle in 2009, the Council of Residential Architects in Seattle were tasked with exploring how the multi-family low rise zoning code update can enable better housing design while also testing whether the code language was strong enough to prevent its exploitation (CORA, 2009). The study determined that aspects of the city's code and counter effective incentives, in certain cases, had pushed developers to an unintended and undesirable result, such as maximizing floor area ratio without providing amenity spaces for residents. The study then proposed revisions that would redirect designs to result in a stronger code and, ideally, more aesthetically-pleasing buildings (CORA, 2009). Similarly, house conversions to multi-family have the potential to become a more appealing building type if they had greater code flexibility, clearer guidelines, and were given incentives such as floor area, height bonuses, or permit expediting just as low-rise buildings and townhouses currently employ. A redistribution of developer funds towards the adaptive reuse of the existing historic fabric would provide a greener environment and demonstrable lower carbon footprint, retention and rehabilitation of historic fabric, a variety of housing options, potentially lower cost housing, and can contribute to greater density and diversity in neighborhoods (Preservation Leadership Forum, 2016).

6.2 COMPATIBILITY AND DIFFERENTIATION

Types of new construction within historic contexts varies widely, ranging from historical replications to contrasting styles. Questions regarding what kinds of new construction is appropriate are especially challenging with differing preferred approaches in preservation literature. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, a federal guide for the modification of historic federally-funded projects has become a primary guide for evaluating new construction (Morton, et. al, 1992). Although initially written to assist in the evaluation of projects seeking federal tax credits, the Standards for Rehabilitation have been applied to evaluation of new construction in historic districts and other historic contexts, and has been adopted by many jurisdictions. The most important of the Standards for Rehabilitation for new construction in historic contexts is Standard 9 that states, "The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment" (Morton, et. al, 1992). Although Standard 9 has been widely applied, the interpretation of "differentiated" and "compatible" varies quite widely. For example, in Dallas, one conservation district requires all new construction to be in the Tudor Revival style, prompting what some might call a false sense of historicism. In others, new construction must not be of the same style as the historic buildings and contemporary architecture is preferred (Yeston, 2014; Kelly & Goodman, 1993)

In an article in Forum Journal, Steven Semes proposes four ways of understanding "differentiated" and "compatible": Replication, Invention within a style, Abstract reference, and Intentional differentiation (Semes, 2007). Semes argued that while each might be appropriate in certain cases, "compatibility" should be given more

weight than "differentiation." In the same edition of *Forum Journal*, de Teel Patterson Tiller advocated contemporary design, not historical reference should be preferred (Tiller, 2007). In general, most would likely argue that the choice depends upon the context. Replication is generally frowned upon by the architectural community except in special circumstances such as the continuation of an architect's original plans or the construction of a missing element. Semes classifies "Invention within a style" as what has historically been most common; an architect will develop a design inspired by and generally compatible with the original style. Semes argues that "Abstract reference" is possible, but rarely done successfully, as it requires a masterful design that isolates and elevates the primary elements of an original style. Frequently, he asserts, this method results in something lacking any compatibility and should be avoided. Intentional differentiation is another common approach: it can be advisable in some cases as it addresses the contemporary history of the structure and can even be popular in historic districts. It tends to fail in contextual scenarios as it can also result in a string of different styles that, together, are no longer compatible with each other or the original (Semes, 2007). However, Tiller would likely disagree.

Given the above categories, photographs were taken of houses in Wallingford that appear to fit each of these approaches. It is easier to consider the implications of these different approaches as they apply to new houses within an NCD; new construction aiming to be contextual would likely be best suited to follow "Invention within a style," but contemporary architecture should not be ruled out. If all design guidelines are followed, a house may resemble the next in form and scale but could be entirely different in materials or style. With an addition to a house, it is more difficult to evaluate as not only are context and scale involved, but materials and character become more important. In a small addition out the side or rear of a building, it may be

acceptable to replicate the existing elements. However, a significant addition should be evaluated according to how well it responds to the context, including materials and character, of the neighborhood and to the building to which it is attached.

Figure 6.9. Houses found in the Wallingford neighborhood. Map data © 2020 Google.

The Wallingford houses pictured in Figure 6.9 roughly align with the categories that Semes puts forward. Clockwise from top left: Replication. The top left image is a single-family house that added a second story with identical stylings; Invention within

a style. This house is new construction and while it is close to replication, new materials, modern roof types and modern windows suggest it is building off of the original historic style; Abstract reference. This house attempts to draw from the stylings of craftsman houses, but unsuccessfully integrates contemporary references and would be incompatible to the district; Intentional differentiation. This new house is of a contemporary style and makes no references to the existing historic fabric.

6.3 SKETCH EXPLORATIONS

The literature review and research regarding various ordinances in other cities provided the foundation for proposing a series of individual regulations that could be refined to produce a relevant set of regulations for Wallingford. Several of the more impactful regulations, such as those controlling height, bulk, scale and visual appearance were of particular concern. Sketch explorations considered how these regulations might be modified to best address the Wallingford context. The explorations use a typical three-parcel block face with the center parcel exhibiting the various changes.

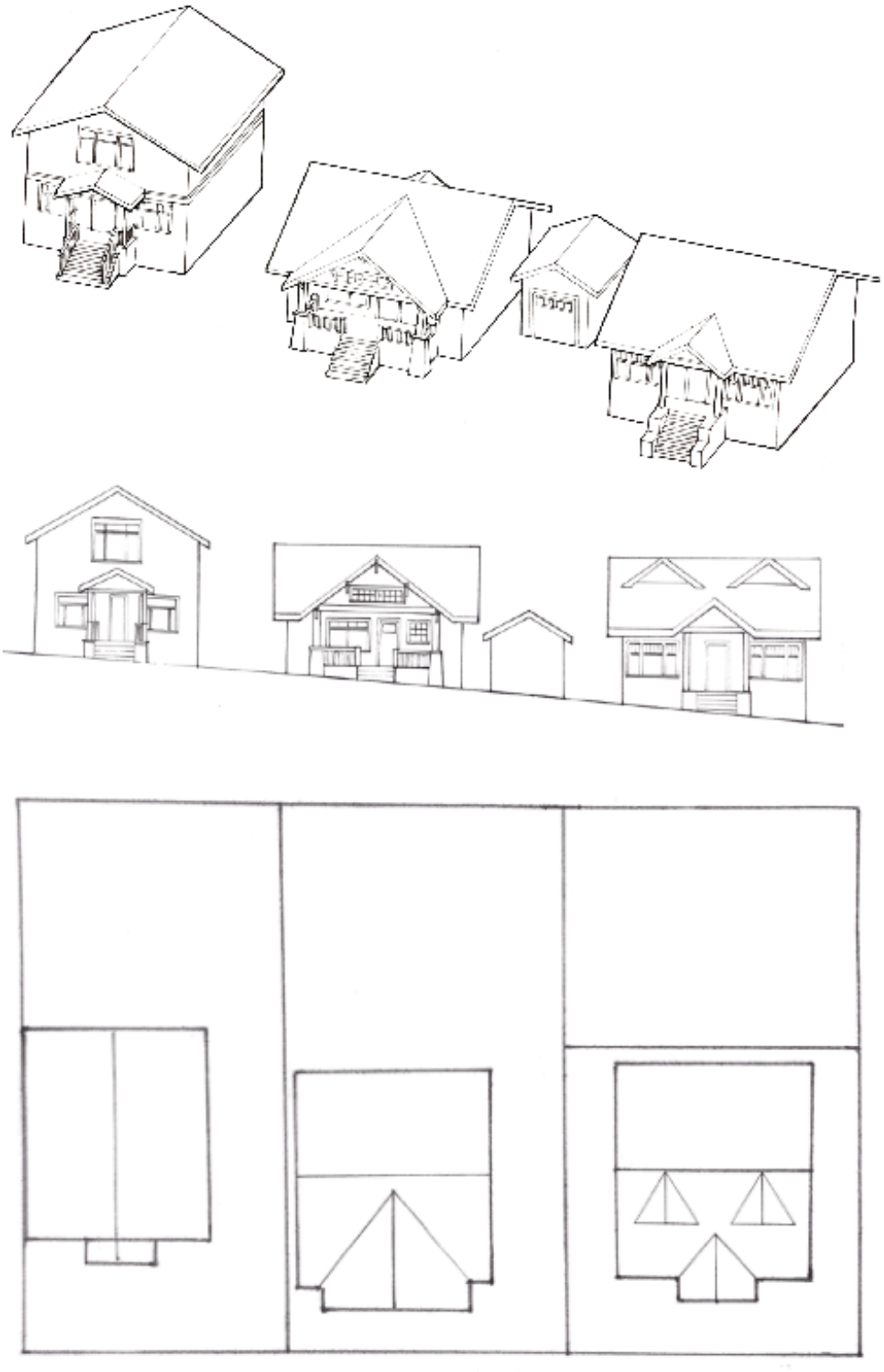


Figure 6.10. Base condition for the sketch explorations.

Each of the following sketches explores a condition in new construction (or additions) for which the specificity of the design guideline could make a significant impact on the neighborhood context. These sketches explore "appropriate" and "inappropriate" responses to the condition, with "appropriate" meaning the response, as drawn, would be considered a compatible solution.

1. **Placement on Lot**

   The existing house location on a lot varies block to block in the neighborhood, but the house locations on the lot are generally located in similar positions to one another and can often be found forward of the zoned front yard setback. The existing zoning code permits front yard averaging, a process which would allow the averaging the depths of the front yards on the properties to either side of the house in question with the goal of a lesser front yard setback. This sketch suggests that new house locations use the front yard averaging as the basis for the house location, rather than setting the house further back on the lot and disrupting the block pattern.

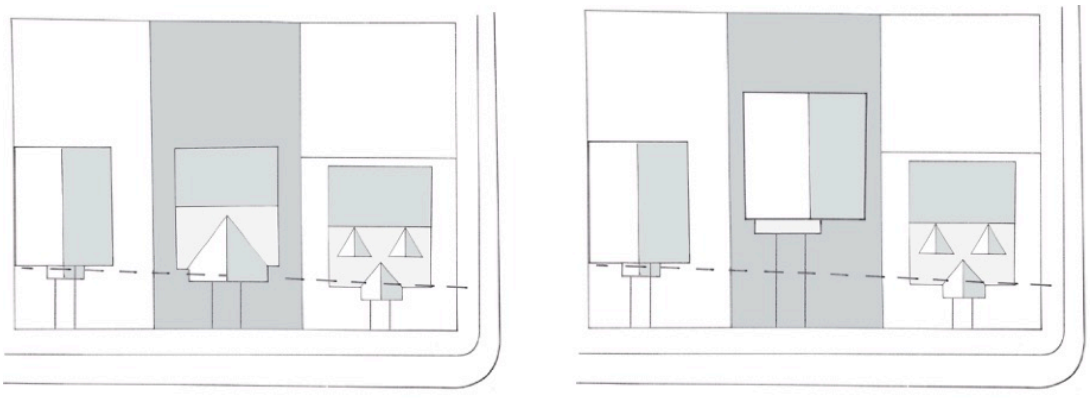


Figure 6.11. Placement on Lot.

New house location aligns with adjacent properties. Recommended.

New house location is setback from adjacent properties. Not recommended.

2. Bulk and Scale in New Construction

New construction in a conservation district should reflect the context of the neighborhood. The historic facades of houses typically exhibit several layers of massing that give the houses dimension and interest, such as bungalow porches, sloping roofs with deep overhangs, dormers, and projecting plan elements. This guideline looks at how the bulk of buildings should be considered and how large masses should be treated to achieve a similar affect.

The sketch exploration shows a house whose facade is significant wider, taller and flatter than the adjacent houses. As many houses in Wallingford are 1½ stories, they are far under the maximum height limit in the existing zoning. It would be impractical to suggest new construction match the average heights of its neighbors when the adjacent houses could likely be a much shorter structure. This led to the development of several guidelines. In cases where the new construction is out of scale in width and height with the adjacent properties, but still meets existing zoning code, the guideline would require offset planes in the floor plan or other techniques to break up the massing. It is recommended that new construction be no more than 50% taller (or one story in most cases) than its adjacencies, with standard exceptions for projections and sloped roofs. Figure 6.12 shows compatible and incompatible bulk and scale proposals.

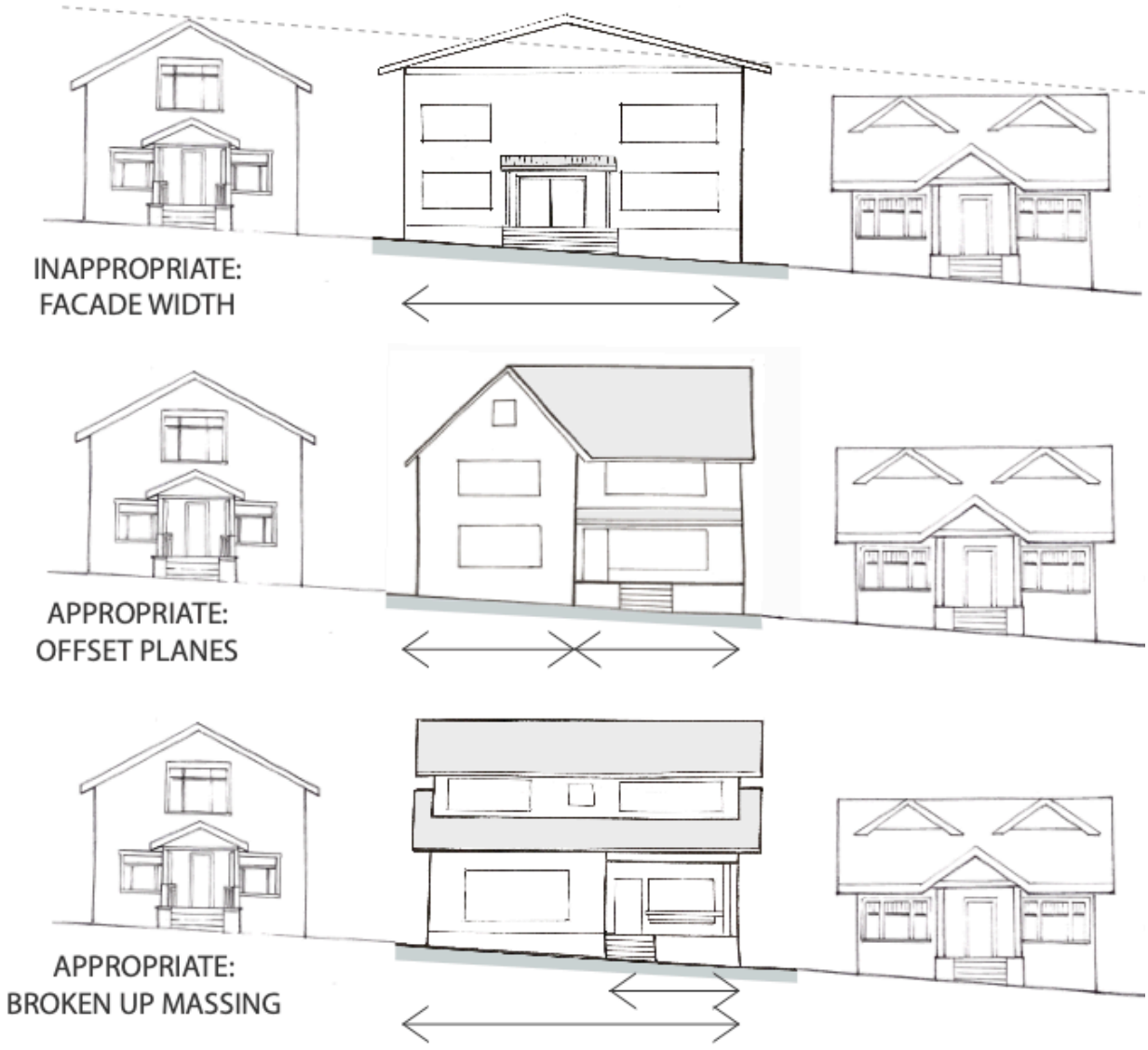


Figure 6.12. Bulk and Scale in New Construction.

3. Bulk and Scale in New Additions and Alterations

Bulk and scale guidelines are separated out for existing houses because their additions affect the character of the existing house as well as the neighborhood context. While this thesis determined that the retention of historic materials is advisable, but not required, the addition of a second story, front porch, or rear extension all affect the property in different ways.

Through these sketches, it was determined that new upper story additions should, at minimum, setback from the front wall of the house by 5'-10', to the extent possible. Reasonably-scaled additions facing the street should be determined to be compatible if they retain the existing facade and roof forms for the front of the house and/or porch. Prominent, out-of-scale additions that remove or obscure the original front facade would likely be incompatible with the context of the district and determined incompatible.

A preferred solution would extend the house towards the rear of the property and remain less visible from the street in order to maintain the authenticity of the house. Figure 6.13 shows incompatible, compatible, recommended additions to an existing house.

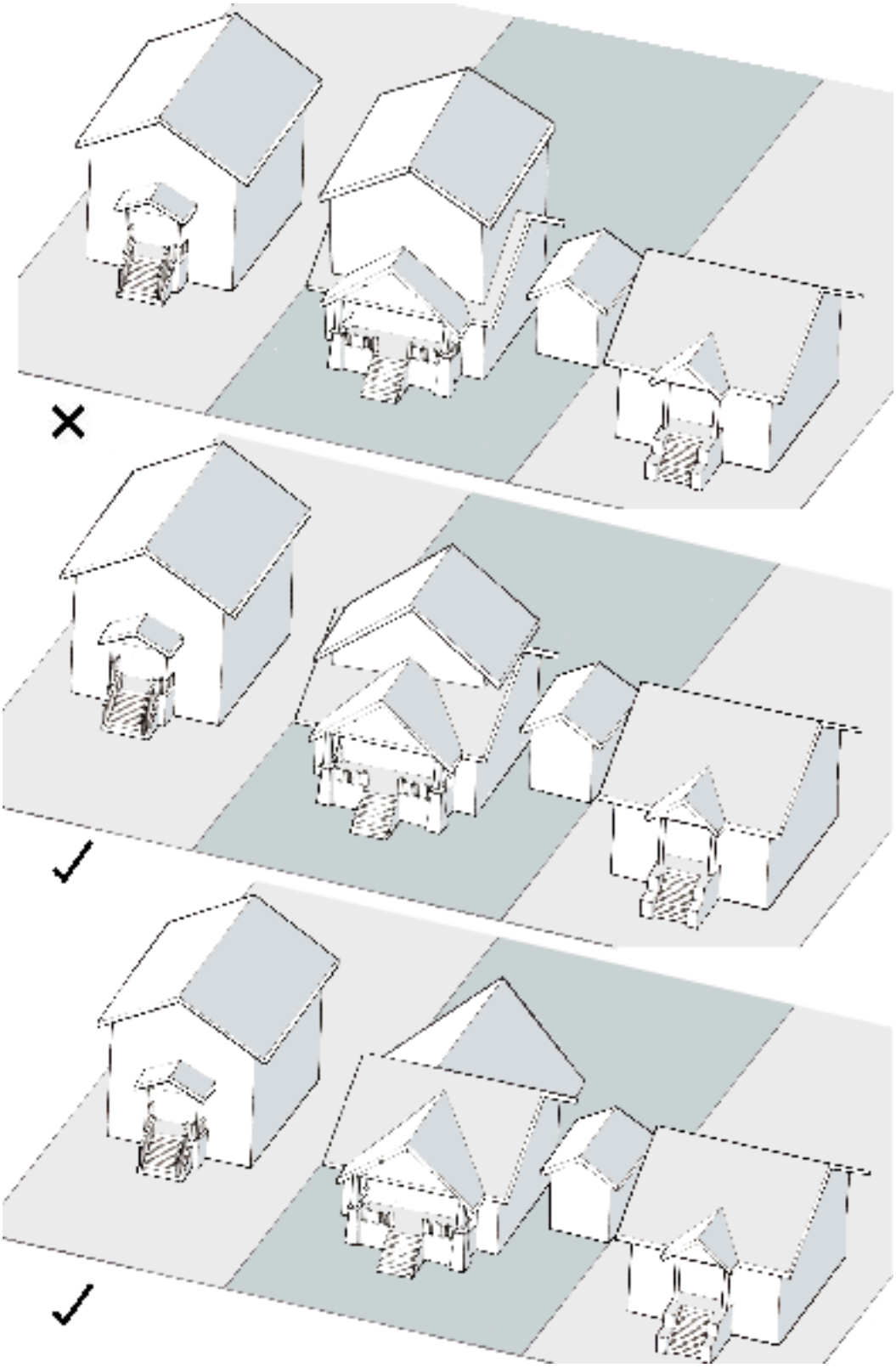


Figure 6.13. Bulk and Scale in Additions and Alterations.

4. **Roof Forms**

Many traditional roof forms are found in the district. Several sketches exploring all types of roof forms in different contexts determined that new construction and additions should use roof forms commonly found in the district (or otherwise matching the style of the original, historic building). The majority of roof types are included in this category, with the exception of two, flat roofs with or without a parapet and shed roofs when used as the principal roof form. Shed roofs, or single-plane roofs, may be suitable for some additions or accessory structures. To the extent possible, additions to existing building should retain the original roof form. Historic low-rise and commercial buildings may be excluded from this guideline. Figure 6.14 depicts a selection of several of the allowed roof types as well as two that would be incompatible

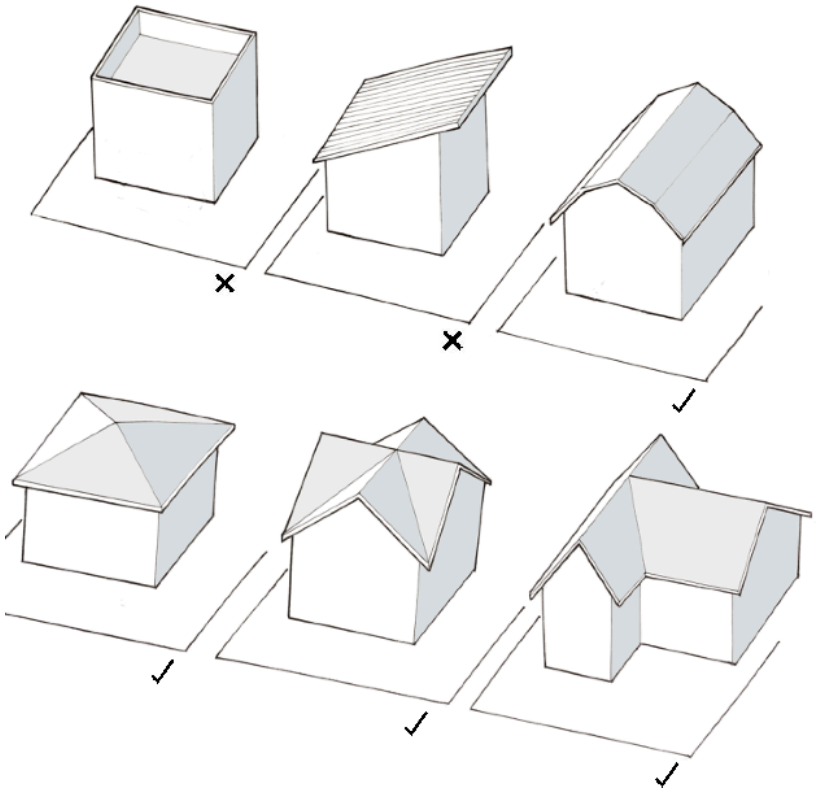


Figure 6.14. Roof Forms.

5. **Garage Locations on a Lot**

One of the characteristics of Wallingford's lot patterns is the garage location. Many garages exist in various positions in the neighborhood and this exploration serves to confirm that historic locations should continue to exist. Attached garages are not allowed in front of the house per the existing zoning code and this guideline would suggest they not be allowed attached to the side of a house as this configuration is not historically found in the district. This guideline would allow that garages be accessed from any facade given that they be located below grade. Detached garages have greater flexibility, and this would not limit existing conditions as historic garages can be found in the rear yard, side yard and terraced into the front yard. Figure 6.15 depicts several potential locations for compatible garages, with one exception

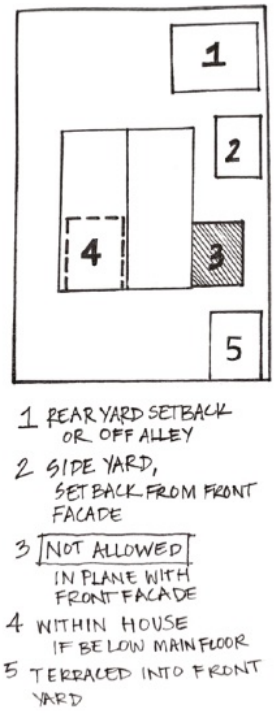


Figure 6.15. Garage Placement on a Lot.

Chapter 7. PREFERRED APPROACH

The research and explorations performed in this thesis led to a preferred approach for the implementation of a Wallingford Conservation District. The following sections describe the goals, structure, reviewing body, boundaries, and design guidelines suggested for adoption in the neighborhood.

7.1 GOALS

These goals, developed based on the contextual analysis of Wallingford, have guided the proposal. The foremost goal is to manage growth and density in a way that is complementary to the district, yet still provides opportunities for change. A secondary goal is to provide education and increase awareness and pride for the neighborhood among residents and neighbors.

7.1.1 *Goals*

1. Manage growth and density in a way that both retains historic resources and allows for neighborhood growth.

2. Retain the character-defining features of the Wallingford neighborhood.

3. Retain the scale and contextual relationships within the neighborhood and environment.

4. Integrate historic resources into neighborhood planning and provide a structure for incentives and review.

5. Educate residents, owners, and renters on proper and effective maintenance and adaptive reuse practices.

6. Increase awareness and pride of the neighborhood and its historic context among residents, owners, renters, and the public.

The historic resources are defined as the contributing buildings and their parcels. The character is defined as the makeup of the tangible and intangible factors that are

experienced within the neighborhood, including open space, sidewalks, and planting strips, height and scale, noise and traffic, tree canopy coverage, and architectural features. To enhance these, one must consider the effects of adjacent development, continuity, and scale of the resources.

The goals advocate that the neighborhood conservation district should be incorporated into neighborhood planning through a city-wide preservation plan that manages, records, and actively searches for resources and districts to add to the city's repository.

7.2 District Type and Reviewing Body

The Lund proposal recommended a "hybrid model" to use zoning overlays in combination with a review board for Seattle's conservation districts. This thesis concurs with Lund's proposal in order to provide a predictable, regulation-based system for owners, residents and developers to follow. The primary purpose of the review will be to verify that the regulations are followed for permit applications, to provide feedback on advisory guidelines, and to deliberate on demolition reviews. The secondary purpose of the board is to provide advice for potential project applicants on a regular basis, to address any code violations, and to represent the district in city matters.

The reviewing body is proposed to be organized similarly to the existing review board for the Seattle Landmarks Commission. Jim Lindberg, in FORUM 2020: Best Practices in Conservation Districts, recommends NCD programs not to have a fully volunteer commission. He notes that notices, regulations, and waiting periods are important to manage and neighborhood politics should not be involved (Lindberg, 2020). This thesis proposes that each district will have the administrative assistance of one or more NCD program staff members. The review board should consist of an odd

number of members, between 3-5 people. Review members should serve finite terms and may apply to be placed on the board by the Seattle NCD program staff. An architectural historian, historic preservation consultant, or design professional should occupy one of the positions, one should be held by a community member at large, and the remaining positions should be occupied by the constituents of the district, including renters. With this small size and the suggested membership, the proposed reviewing structure would operate efficiently and should take no longer than 1-2 meetings to approve any project.

With regard to including multiple voices, Lindberg notes, "Conservation districts are a tool that allow us to manage change, and we need to be aware of who is involved in deciding what changes are desired. We owe it to our community to be deliberate about having an inclusive conversation. It should be guided by a full spectrum of stakeholders," (Lindberg 2020). New positions should also be made available as necessary to address changing constituent needs.

7.3 BOUNDARIES

The proposed boundaries for the Wallingford Conservation District are based on the Northwest Vernacular feasibility study boundaries which follow the original neighborhood boundaries drawn for the Wallingford Neighborhood Inventory by Nyberg and Steinbrueck in 1975.The NCD boundaries have been expanded from the four NRHDs proposed by Northwest Vernacular because the NCDs allow for much greater flexibility in what might qualify compared to the NRHD.

The boundaries exclude properties in the northwest corner and along the western SR 99 periphery as their historical context differs from the areas of Wallingford

neighborhood housing. Also excluded is most of the commercial and industrial districts along Stone Way and North Northlake Way that have been significantly redeveloped. With the resulting boundary, the upzoned area covers nearly one third of the proposed district. The upzone is particularly problematic at its north section because it includes 25 contributing blocks and this thesis suggests the upzone boundary be revised to include only the blocks adjacent to the Stone Way and N 45th Street arterials. By including the upzone area, however, the district achieves a balance between higher and lower density areas, while keeping the upzone in check to foster a more cohesive whole.

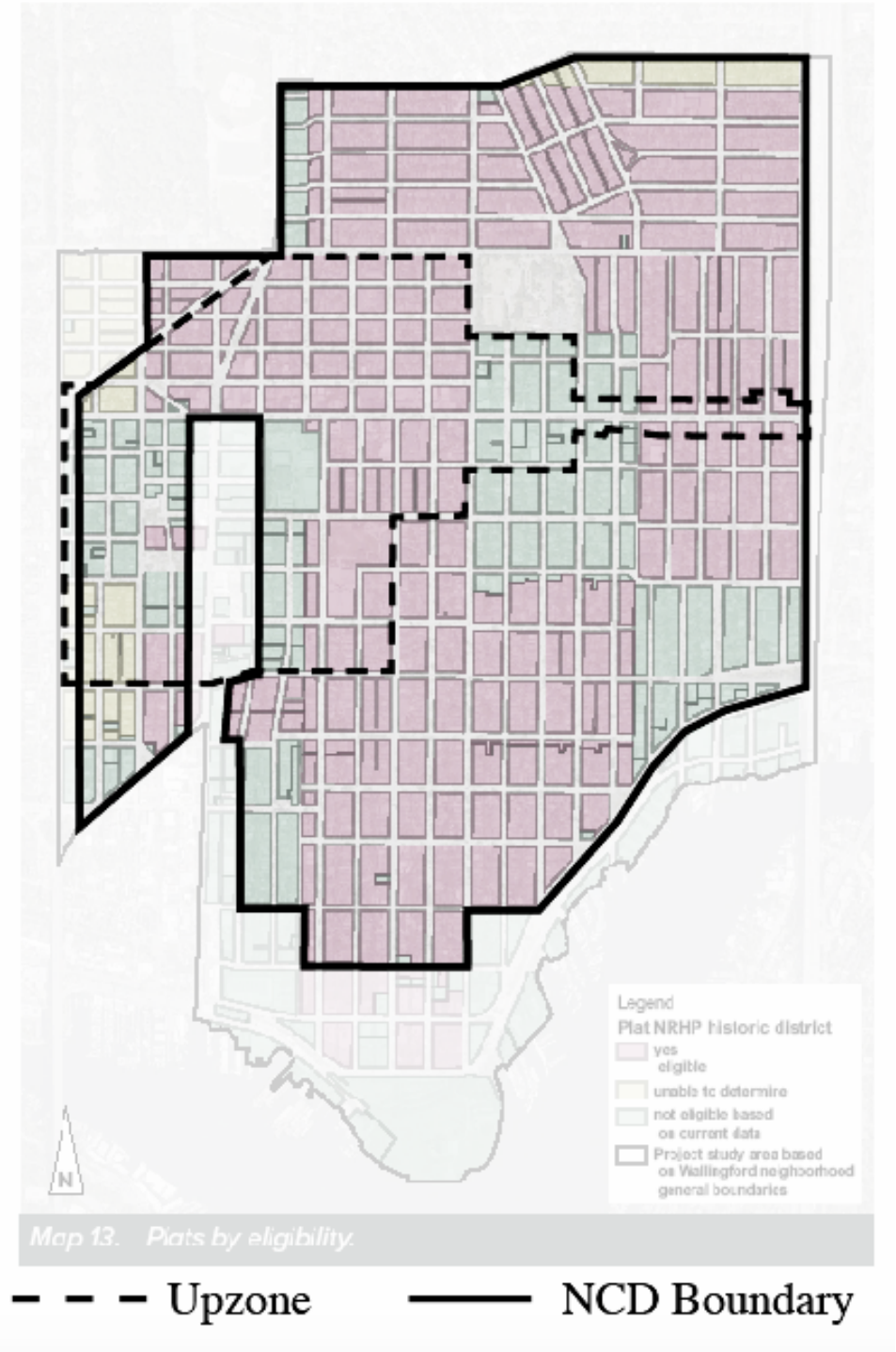


Figure 7.1. Map depicting the proposed NCD boundary with the Urban Village upzone boundary superimposed.

Note: The background map shows the NRHD “contributing" blocks in pink as determined by the Northwest Vernacular feasibility study.

7.4 Demolition Review

Numerous NCD districts include demolition review as a core aspect of their regulations. Demolition review is one of the most important aspects in a regulatory framework to prevent the loss of original fabric in a neighborhood. Demolition review should be required to determine the significance of properties within the district, and properties with a higher historical value may not be granted demolition approval without an appeal. What constitutes "higher value" can be derived from the Seattle Landmarks Board's criteria for designation and may include a significant relationship to a significant person, place, or event; a significant architect, builder, or engineer; an exceptional example of an architectural style. In the case of an NCD, being part of a significant group of buildings must also be considered. Demolition approval should only be granted when an applicant has an approved building permit in hand. This process should eliminate almost all speculative demolition.

Given the history of property rights law in the state of Washington, it is assumed that within the new HALA upzone boundary prohibition, from demolition, if it were to be recommended by an NCD board, may not be feasible. Current landmark law in the city of Seattle allows a historic landmark demolition to move forward if the owner can demonstrate that they cannot achieve a reasonable rate of return (minimum 5%) retaining the historic landmark versus building to the maximum development allowed on a property. In a single-family zone under existing code, a reasonable rate of return is typically possible. If the property has been upgraded to a low-rise zone, such as a large portion of western Wallingford, a low-rise apartment or a condo development, particularly market-value or luxury units, can achieve a much higher rate of return and would likely succeed in demonstrating their case in an appeal (Overstreet, 2000).

For these reasons, the proposed NCD will accept, but discourage the demolition of historic properties within the upzone; adaptive reuse will be suggested first in most cases. It has been demonstrated with this thesis that additional density can be achieved through several methods that can retain the original buildings. If redevelopment is to occur, contextual development is recommended. Cottage housing, row housing, and townhouses inspired by the surrounding area and following the design guidelines are preferred; low-rise apartment buildings are discouraged within the upzone unless they can demonstrate their complementary relationship with the existing neighborhood character. Several existing small-scale apartment buildings, typically mid-century style, have demonstrated appropriate compatibility, but in most cases, they are less than three stories in height and are setback from the street. While this thesis does not address the complexities of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), a TDR program could be implemented per neighborhood block or intersection within the upzone in order to build one larger building, in trade for the preservation of the majority of properties on the block (OPCD 2019).

7.5 INCENTIVES

Incentives vary in neighborhood conservation district programs, from monetary relief to regulatory relief, but most NCDs actually lack any incentives. Little research exists on NCD incentives, but that does not mean incentives are unwarranted. This thesis research showed that the most beneficial approach to identifying useful incentives is in evaluating the needs of the district. For example, an underfunded or gentrifying district could benefit greatly from restoration or technical assistance grants

funded by neighborhood development, while a district under development pressure such as Wallingford may have greater use for tax incentives or TDR.

Other approaches seek to provide equal or greater incentives for preservation compared to new construction. In Seattle, "green building" can lead to expedited permit review. As preservation is nearly always a "green" endeavor, rehabilitation projects should be included in expedited permitting. Some cities also use a waiver of local taxes and permit fees to incentivize owners to preserve. Another approach is to disincentivize demolition which would help complement the city's sustainability goals as well as retain historic character. Disincentives can include higher taxes and fees for demolitions and/or salvage requirements. Seattle, along with Vancouver, BC, Portland, Milwaukee and San Antonio all have a demolition deconstruction ordinance requiring placing materials into salvage programs for most projects as a tool to prevent unnecessary waste. Combined with an NCD program, a salvage ordinance could open a greater opportunity for local repair and reuse of building materials.

Although this thesis does not delve deeply into the benefits and drawbacks of various incentive types and programs, it is thought that due to Wallingford's teardown trend, a combination of financial benefits for building retention and regulatory relief for non-conforming buildings or those not meeting the current energy code would best benefit an NCD program. In Seattle, using fees as disincentives has proven to not work very well. With the high-stakes real estate market, fees, fines, and higher taxes have become a norm for city developers who would prefer to pay rather than follow regulations, such as keeping a significant tree or including affordable housing in their projects.

7.6 DESIGN GUIDELINES

The following design guidelines were developed based on the study of existing NCD ordinances across the United States. Relevant guidelines were selected and then modified to best address the needs of the Wallingford neighborhood. The test scenarios conducted previously served as a framework for determining the most impactful guidelines.

The design guidelines initially included more stringent requirements for changes to existing historic buildings, such as mandatory review for changes in materials, remodels to the exterior, fencing and other site modifications. However, after considerable deliberation and discussion, it was decided that the difference between a conservation district and a historic district must remain clear and that the priority for the NCD program is scale and context rather than details. Historic districts more commonly consider materials and detail elements, but a conservation district should focus on the bigger picture.

The regulations for the district are separated into Mandatory and Voluntary requirements. Mandatory requirements address the bulk, scale and compatibility of new construction in the neighborhood. Voluntary guidelines address the preservation of character features, materials, as well as restoration and are suggested to be supported with incentives. Foremost in the Mandatory regulations, new construction must be compatible with the development patterns and context of the adjacent properties, but should be distinguishable in materials, design or character. Well-designed modern architecture that fits within the guidelines of the neighborhood is encouraged. New additions should follow similar guidelines and should carefully address the difference between new and original. Significant features of the original building such as roof

shapes, porches, and other character-defining elements should be preserved to the maximum extent possible. Voluntary guidelines are concerned with preserving and restoring original features in their original configuration and would be eligible for incentives or grants if available.

These guidelines reflect the need to manage the bulk and scale of new projects, their general shape, and their location on the lot, and reflect the desire to celebrate Wallingford's existing historic fabric. As the goals state, a significant aspect of the NCD program is to educate owners and residents about the history of the district and how to care for and maintain the buildings and sensitively update them for a modern lifestyle. The proposal suggests architectural and building advice be made available regularly to residents as they consider remodels.

7.6.1 *Design Guidelines:*

Neighborhood development shall adhere to the following design guidelines, including new houses and development, new additions to existing houses, changes to the exterior envelope, and substantial alterations.

I. Mandatory

A. New Single-family, Multi-family, and Accessory Structures

1. New construction shall be consistent with the character-defining features of the surrounding properties within the conservation district, including in massing, proportion, and building materials.
2. New construction should not significantly alter the appearance of the neighborhood but be distinguishable from and complementary to the historic resources.
3. House placement on the lot should reflect a similar location to the majority of houses on the same block face, unless replacing the non-conforming location of an existing house.
4. The front facades of new primary structures shall be in similar scale to original properties on the block. The backside of the building may be taller than the front facade.

5. Where allowed, new multi-dwelling structures shall not overwhelm the scale of the adjacent homes on the front facade. The backside of the building may be taller than the front facade.
6. Side yard setbacks should be a minimum of 5′ from the property line, unless replacing the non-conforming location of an existing house.
7. The front facade width shall not exceed the average width of houses on the block face, excepting designs that include offset planes, varying building masses, and architectural features to break up the facade.
8. No building or structure shall be at a greater height than 30′ AAG, except as stated by the SMC.
9. New construction should use a roof type traditionally found in the neighborhood. Shed roofs may be appropriate for some additions but are inappropriate for the roof of a primary structure.
10. New garages may be attached to a primary residence but are not allowed to be located adjacent to and in plane with the front facade of the primary structure. Attached garages beneath residences are allowed.
11. Windows on the front facade should reflect the proportions of windows in adjacent historic houses.
12. Well-designed, contemporary architecture shall not be excluded from the neighborhood given that it adheres to the guidelines.

B. Additions and Exterior Alterations to Existing Structures

All applicable guidelines from Section I shall apply to projects in Section II.

1. Additions shall not significantly alter the appearance of the original structure and be distinguishable but complementary to the original structure. Additions should be minimized visually from the street.
2. Original architectural features should be retained in their original configuration including, but not limited to, front porches, dormers, roof appurtenances such as brackets, trim, and fascia boards, windows and their trims, doors and their trims, roof eaves, and overhangs.
3. Documentation is required where original materials cannot be used for repair in order for a different material to be approved. Salvage review is required.
4. Where allowed, duplexes, triplexes, and quadplexes may be allowed in an existing structure, as long as the other guidelines are met.
5. Primary roof types shall be retained, i.e. gable, side-gable, Dutch gable, and hip. Shed roofs may be appropriate for some additions but are inappropriate for the roof of a primary structure. Historic low rise and commercial may be excluded from this requirement.
6. New additions above the main floor of the primary structure should be setback a minimum of 10′ from the front facade of the building, except when determined to not detract from the structure by the reviewing body.
7. Roof decks and railings shall be in keeping with the style of the original primary structure and shall not detract from the character of the house from the street.

C. Demolition

1. Demolitions of contributing buildings are discouraged. A COA is required for demolition review and will be assessed against the value of the property within the context of the district. In cases where the structure is found to be significant, demolition may not be approved.
2. Demolition shall be reviewed for contributing resources as a method to suggest alternate options for adaptive reuse or other methods to retain the building as well as to review potentially harmful new construction.
3. Proposed building plans shall be submitted for any demolition review in order for the review to be approved.

II. Voluntary

A. Materials & Character Features

1. Vinyl, Stucco, Asbestos, and Cement Board materials should not be installed as siding or roofing on the primary structure of new or original primary structures. Cement board may be used on new construction, including non-street facing additions, given that it follows a traditional siding pattern.
2. Original architectural features should be retained in their original configuration including, but not limited to, front porches, dormers, roof appurtenances such as brackets, trim, and fascia boards, windows and their trims, doors and their trims, roof eaves, and overhangs
3. Original windows and front entry doors should be repaired and retained before replacing on the primary structure. True divided lites shall be used on replacement windows pre-1940.
4. Painting unpainted brick is highly discouraged due to its detrimental effects on the material.
5. Fencing over 3' should be discouraged on the front-facing facade of the property. Fences located on the front-facing facade should be at least 30% transparent or less than 4' in height.
6. New utilities and mechanical systems shall be placed on a side or rear facade, out of view of the street face.

III. Other

1. Local organizations are encouraged to set up architectural review sessions at regular occurrences for architectural advice for all projects, including
2. Local organizations and groups are encouraged to hold seminars on proper care and maintenance of relevant historic resources.
3. The development of educational materials on the history, construction, and architecture of the neighborhood is encouraged for all age groups.

Chapter 8. CONCLUSION

8.1 POST-ANALYSIS COMMENTARY ON THE LUND PROPOSAL

Based on the research and findings of this thesis, several comments can be made regarding the Lund proposal. There are many consistencies between the proposal and this thesis, though this thesis did not seek to use or emulate the proposal in any way other than to compare to it. The Lund proposal did not identify specific design guidelines or code language, though it noted that such information would need to be developed on a district by district basis, as was recommended by Lubens and Miller. Though not explicitly expressed, Lund recommended a "hybrid" approach much like this thesis, where code language defined what may or may not be allowed in addition to review by a volunteer board and staff. This proposal differs from Lund in that it calls for review boards to be neighborhood specific. Lund recommended a city-wide board to function similarly to Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board, whereas this thesis determined that the number of potential building applications could easily overwhelm a single board. By delegating this task to the neighborhoods, the boards can function independently of one another and maintain efficient reviews, while a small group of city staff members manages district administration.

Lund also placed significant weight on incentives which is unique for a neighborhood conservation district program. However, as evidenced in the PPCOD, incentives must be carefully considered to avoid exploitation and must have a strong regulatory framework to support them. It is important to note that as bulk and scale are among the primary priorities to manage, code departure incentives for FAR or height should be limited.

Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, the Lund proposal did not sufficiently address the need for density and housing equity in the city and how this issue relates to character preservation. This issue is one of the primary reasons that the program failed in 2015 and must be properly addressed in future discussions for such a program.

8.2 On National Register Districts

The conservation district framework also opens up the opportunity for the recognized national historic districts in Seattle, separate from existing city-designated historic districts, to receive a moderate level of preservation status. Seattle has five residential National Register Historic Districts (NRHD), which are honorific only and provide no legal protection, that are not recognized at all on the local level, and two additional nominations were being prepared in 2020. Several more areas stand out as future potential NRHDs (Katie Pratt, personal communication, 2019). Each of the five existing NRHDs has identified boundaries, recognized architectural integrity, and been the subject of a thorough, professional survey and background research to demonstrate significance to the strict standards of the National Register.

As discussed in Chapter 2, conservation districts generally have less strict requirements for historical character and consistency than National Register Historic Districts. If a conservation district program were adopted in Seattle, many of these areas could easily be added to the program. There would likely be significant benefits to designating these neighborhoods as conservation districts. For the city, infusing the program from the start with a vetted group of neighborhoods could serve to strengthen the program. There will also likely be financial savings during preparation as these

areas have already demonstrated their value, boundaries, and individual property statuses. For the residents, having already completed the National Register nomination demonstrates an active interest by a majority of owners in some level of preservation. A CD would provide them the opportunity to develop tailored guidelines for actual protection as well as potential incentives. While an automatic addition to the NCD program would not be recommended so as to not discourage potential new NRHDs, it could provide an easy avenue to be added to an NCD program should the residents decide to participate.

8.3 Concluding Remarks

The Wallingford neighborhood presents a significant concentration of buildings with communicable character and integrity. Such an area may qualify as a historic district under Seattle's Landmarks Ordinance, but like Dallas and many other cities, another historic district is highly unlikely to be proposed. Moreover, many Seattle residents do not appear interested in another historic district; fewer rules and regulations that can provide a moderate level of preservation are more attractive to owners and developers alike. In order to quell the teardown trend, Wallingford will need to introduce a strategy that incentivizes the retention of the existing fabric. A conservation district approach would allow for areas such as Wallingford to be afforded a level of local protection that is feasible in the current political climate while allowing for managed growth and development in the neighborhood.

The proposed guidelines attempt to find a moderate approach to preservation in the current pattern of rapid development. The value of the vernacular fabric in Wallingford is worth preserving as it tells the unique story of the evolution of housing

design in the 20th century and the history of growth and development in Seattle. By illustrating that density and growth can be achieved in a manner that accommodates the existing fabric, this thesis asserts that a neighborhood conservation district program can and should be implemented to prevent further loss of character to the historic neighborhood.

The NCD is a tool that can be of great use to Seattle in preserving all types of neighborhoods to prevent speculative demolition, out-of-scale development, and to encourage contextual growth. It is clear that the issue of conservation districts is less based in preservation than it is on broader issues of affordability, density, and social equity. NCDs have been evidenced to function as a tool against gentrification by maintaining affordable housing and providing technical grants for house repair and maintenance (Lubens & Miller, 2002-03).

To institute an NCD program in the city, the City of Seattle must recognize the compatibility of historic preservation with a denser, livable, and affordable city; the two goals are not mutually exclusive. The ongoing discussion on housing and growth has polarized Seattle politics, but nonetheless historic preservation is a fundamental contributor to the heritage of the city. Given the recent zoning changes across the city, the concern for the loss of historic character is legitimate. It has become increasingly important to determine how much of the historic fabric is of value to the city. With its demonstrated role in furthering affordability and preserving neighborhood character, neighborhood conservation districts should be introduced as a viable alternative to widespread redevelopment.

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