

NORTHGATE OUTREACH

**For Seattle Department of
Planning and Development**
April 2013

Summary of
Focus Groups

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OUTLINE

- 1. Purpose and Planning**
- 2. Who Participated**
- 3. What Was Learned**

1. PURPOSE AND PLANNING

Purpose: targeted outreach to neighborhood stakeholders underrepresented in broader planning efforts and events.

Participants were asked their thoughts about community-wide health and livability, with focus on two specific topics: urban design and the light rail station.

Health and Livability

Urban Center Neighborhood Design

- How to achieve Neighborhood Plan vision for Urban Center
- How Urban Center can grow in ways that support health and livability

Light Rail Station Area Urban Design

- How station area can become a vital and attractive heart of the district
- How station area can contribute to a high quality “people place”

Who sponsored the outreach and when and how was it done?

Lead agency: City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development

Timeframe: Nov 2012 – Feb 2013

Approach: invited neighborhood-based groups to facilitate small discussion groups within their own communities or stakeholders; directly organized discussion groups when no host was available

2. WHO PARTICIPATED

Discussion groups were held from Dec 2012 – Feb 2013 and included the following stakeholder groups and participants.

Stakeholder Group	Neighborhood Facilitator/Host	# Participants
Apartment residents	507 Northgate Residence	8
Business & property owners	Consultant-organized	4
Eritrean community	HOPE Eritrean Social Services	13
Health service employees	Group Health Cooperative/project staff	3
Faith-based community	Idris Mosque	15
Apartment residents/youth	Lake City Court/North Seattle Family Center (2 groups)	24
Students	Middle College High School	10
Native American community	Urban Native Education Alliance	10
Senior residents	Northaven Senior Community	16
Students	North Seattle Community College	10
Faith-based community	Olympic View Church	5
Young students/families	Olympic View Elementary	12
Somali community	Techno Formation Vocational Services, Inc.	12
Apartment residents	Thornton Place Residence	10

Participants represented a diverse range of ages, race and ethnicities, gender and backgrounds.

13 men, women, and elders
English-Tigrinyan discussion,
came after church

3 Group Health employees,
1 grew up in the area

15 Mosque members, from
throughout Seattle

15 residents of Lake City
Court, including 9 East
African immigrants, 1 Native
American, 1 African
American, 1 Caucasian, 1
Chinese, 1 Bosnian

9 youth, including 5 East
African, 3 African American,
1 mixed race

10 high school students
including 4 women/6 men;
3 African American, 2 Native
American, 5 Caucasian

16 senior residents of
Northaven Senior
Community

10 students and staff,
residing in Northgate and
throughout Seattle

5 church members and local
residents, 2 women/3 men,
ages 50s to 80s

12 former elementary
school alumni and parents

8 apartment residents,
including 7 men/1 woman,
mostly professionals, all
recent residents of the
neighborhood

10 apartment residents, 6
men/4 women, most car-
less, recent residents

4 participants, including 2
major property owners and
1 Chamber of Commerce
representative

12 Somali community
members, 8 women/3 men,
mostly residing in Northgate
or Lake City

10 Native American
community members, 7
women/3 men, ages 30 to
70

3. WHAT WAS LEARNED

Neighborhood activities. Participants described different ways they are active in or interact with the neighborhood today.

Tiers of activities

- Within specific communities or stakeholder groups
- Neighborhood-level activities

Most frequent neighborhood activities

- Mall and shopping
- Public transit use
- Public/community facilities
 - Parks
 - Library
 - Community Center

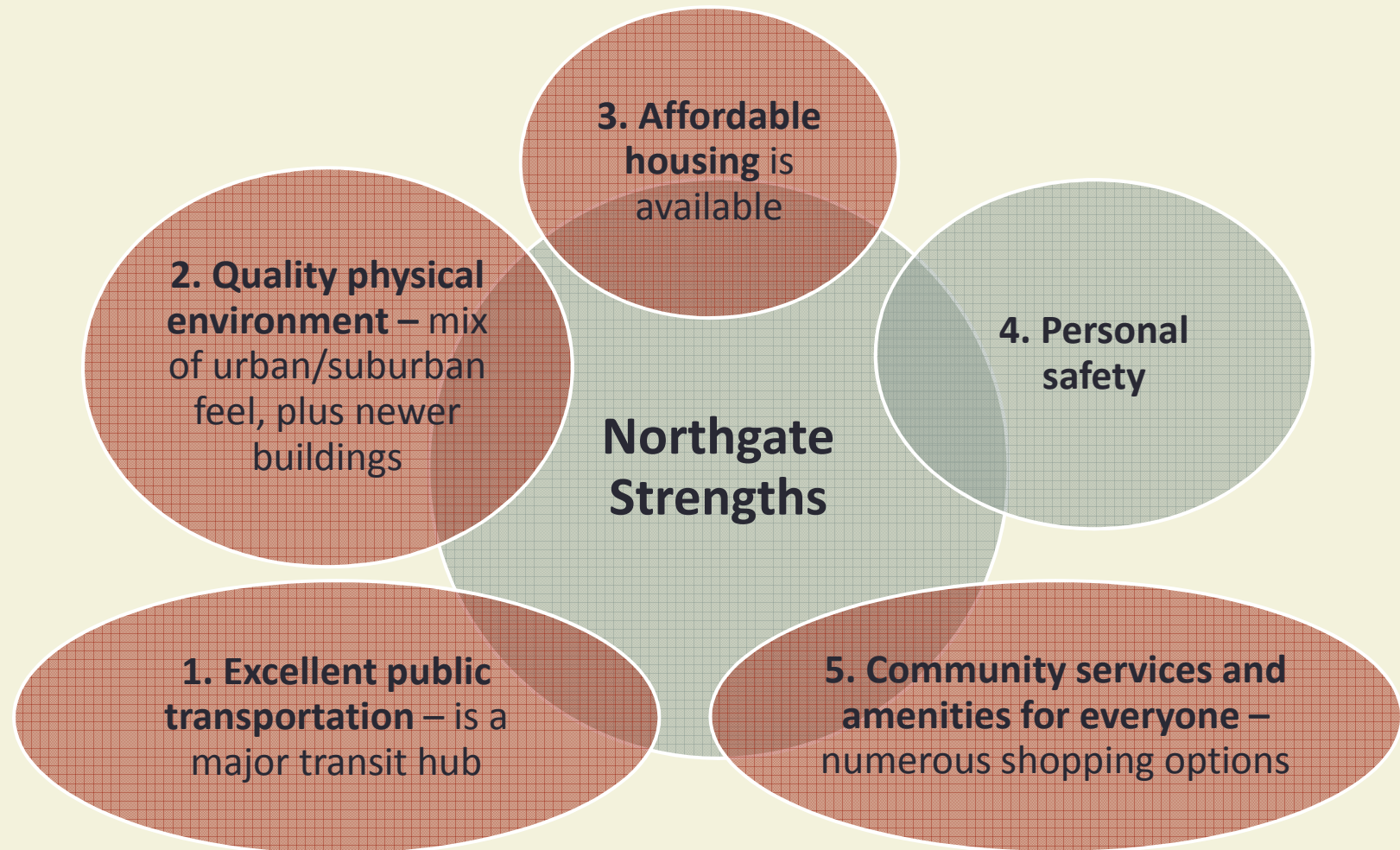
Links and activities beyond Northgate

- Refugee & immigrant communities
- Lake City
- Native American communities
- Faith-based communities
- Commuters
 - Students and employees coming to neighborhood
 - Residents going to jobs beyond neighborhood

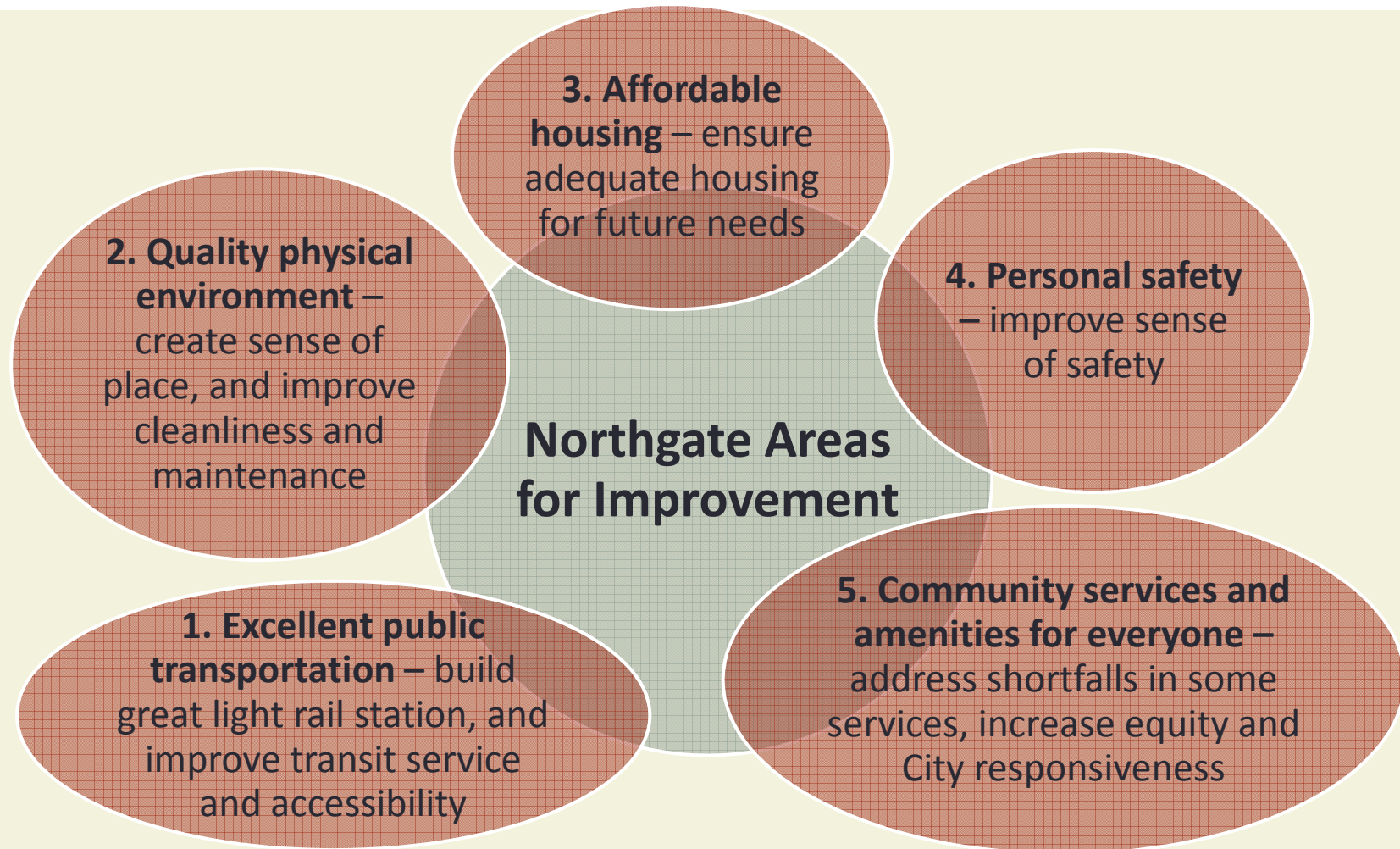
Community-wide Health and Livability. Groups identified several important elements of neighborhood livability.



Neighborhood strengths. Several important strengths or assets of the Northgate neighborhood were described.



Areas for improvement. Participants cited a range of concerns, summarized below with additional details on the following slides.



1. Excellent public transportation - light rail station area development. Most participants see the light rail development as positive, with a shared interest in avoiding negative effects.

Want to see around light rail

- A strong sense of place, and tied into the neighborhood
- Amenities (plazas, green features, cafes, local retail, food vendors, 'social commons')
- Affordable fares, integrated fare for all transit
- Seamless bus transfers
- Safe, secure, well-lit, inhabited areas in and around station
- Adequate park-&-ride capacity
- Heated station, shelter from the wind and rain

Want to avoid

- Increased traffic congestion
- Crime, security problems
- Poorly lit areas
- Lack of cleanliness, garbage
- Un-inviting pedestrian environment
- Noise pollution

Inform the public about construction:
"If I know stuff is coming, I can organize and plan around it. Otherwise, folks get annoyed real fast."

1. Excellent public transportation - light rail station area design.

Participants shared many ideas for the physical design of the light rail station area.

Design themes and qualities

- Northwest Native American themes in public spaces to signify cultural heritage and local identity
- Attention to native vegetation choices and complementary materials (stone), to enhance a distinct local character
- Water, wildlife, and glacial history themes
- Features for healthy lifestyles – walking
- Clean and safe
- European town square, main street, concerts in the park feel
- “New urban feel” - a modern setting

Uses and features

- Sculpture garden, fountains that can be played in
- ‘Social commons’ – comfortable outdoor and indoor places for interaction (family-friendly)
- Pubs, places for live performances
- Farmers market space
- Artist, social & community spaces; Native American museum/cultural center
- Places for start-up businesses, including ethnic or immigrant businesses

1. Excellent public transportation – improve transit services and accessibility. Public transit is an essential transportation link for many, who want to ensure service quality and safe accessibility.

Transit concerns

- Need more streamlined and efficient bus service and connections to other parts of the city
- More service on major bus routes
- Improve overall accessibility and service timing, to overcome the lost time and inconvenience of transferring buses. Otherwise, the automobile will continue to be chosen despite the added cost to the driver.
- A more direct routing to North Seattle Community College (such as the pedestrian bridge) would make it easier for students and college staff to choose light rail.

A student says, "I live in the U-District, but I find a 45-minute to 1 hour bus trip too much time wasted to use transit to NSCC, even though NSCC daily parking is not free."

2. Quality Physical Environment – create a “sense of place.”

Improve sense of place by adding activities and attractions that will enhance local character and destination.

“When I take my kids to the park, we always go elsewhere, like Green Lake or Alki.”

“Because it is geared to large retailers, Northgate feels less homey. I would rather see a collection of mom and pop shops added as the neighborhood grows.”

“Change the area’s focus from business to people.”

“I think of downtown Bellevue’s old Main Street and that big city park there near the mall. That area has walkable streets and shops, and is clean, which makes it a destination spot.”

“You should be able to say, ‘Northgate – that’s the place with _____ [a special place or quality] where I like to go and visit.’”

“My dream would be a distinctly Native American cultural center at Licton Springs, that would be a great attraction for scholars, tourists, and members of all tribes.”

Thoughts about creating a sense of place

- Improve the physical environment to create places people want to be
- More activities geared for families and youth
- Encourage local businesses
- Strengthen distinct identity of Northgate

2. Quality Physical Environment – improve cleanliness and maintenance. Participants mentioned a number of public areas that need improved cleanliness and/or maintenance.

Streets and sidewalks that are clean and safely passable

- Sidewalks modernized – wide enough, smooth, ADA compliant
- Any gaps in sidewalk network filled
- Fix tripping hazards
- Aesthetic streetscape improvements
- Landscape maintenance
- Traffic signals timed well for pedestrian crossing (including seniors) and vehicle traffic

More attention to improving area's appearance and neatness

- The City should be more responsive to street cleaning, ditch/utility cleaning issues
- Improve litter cleanup, parks appearance and civil behavior

Consider native landscaping treatments along streets

Improve corridors for safer walking and amenity value

- Thornton Creek east of 5th Ave NE

3. Affordable Housing – ensure adequate housing to meet future needs. It is important to have adequate affordable housing as Northgate grows.

What will the City of Seattle do to retain existing affordable housing or encourage more of it as the Northgate Urban Center grows?

Housing is important for active, people-friendly, destination-oriented places.

Encourage affordable housing that serves workers in the area earning below median income.

Affordable housing options would allow more people to enjoy a more socially connected and physically health lifestyle.

4. **Personal Safety.** Ensuring personal sense of safety is a high priority.

Traffic and transportation safety

- Pedestrian safety – sidewalks and well-marked crosswalks
- Improve bicycle routes and rider safety
- More and better pedestrian connections to build a complete network that meets today's needs

Personal security and crime

- Special focus on ensuring safety in and around transit station
- Prune overgrown shrubs next to sidewalks
- Ensure adequate street lighting
- Address uncivil behavior on streets and in parks
- Drug activity
- Cultural competence in police response

“We moved from the South End and want to make this community good for our families. But we have a problem now with police. They don't respond to calls from refugees and immigrants. So now we don't feel so safe.”

“Northgate's been known for so long as a big parking lot with needles.”

“People who come to shop at Christmas drive like maniacs.”

5. Community Services and Amenities – address shortfalls in some services. Many expressed a need for key public services and facilities to be more available.

- More library hours
- Continuous community center programs for kids – (no seasonal shutdowns)
- Easier and free or affordable ways to use community center and library rooms, for personal or social service needs (or reassign some existing City space?)
- Food banks
- Affordable/subsidized recreational programs for youth (swimming, dance, day camps, mentoring, etc.)
- Picnic/barbecue spaces in parks
- Daycare
- More availability of community support services
- Ways to bring together and engage youth and seniors

“There’s a huge homeless population, but there are no food banks, no shelters, no youth center, and no public restrooms.”

“All of the Somali Services are in South Seattle, there are none here and it is a long way to go for families.”

5. Community Services and Amenities. Many participants, particularly refugee and immigrant community members, wish to preserve affordability (e.g. housing) and support services.

Concerns about services and equity

- Facilities with community services
- Cultural competence in services (e.g. police response, parent resources, after school programs)
- Affordability of living in Northgate (housing, daycare)

“A facility that would be able to accommodate several families with spaces for child care, after-school tutoring, youth center, and ESL.”

“We hope that when it [Northgate] grows, it won’t become so nice and expensive that we will need to move because we can’t afford it any more.”

“The combination of breaking the language barrier and developing job skills are vital for more persons to be able to effectively enter into community life.”