US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

ICF INTERNATIONAL

Spokane's University District:

Policy Options for a New Urban Center

U.S. EPA Smart Growth Implementation Assistance
For Spokane, Washington

With
Charlier Associates
Strategic Economics
Van Meter Williams Pollock

June 25, 2007

Contact: William Schroeer
ICF International
4316 Upton Ave. S, #304
Minneapolis, MN 55410
Tel (612) 928-0788
Fax (612) 928-0782
WSchroeer@icfi.com

EPA Contact: Adhir Kackar
Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation
Smart Growth Program
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW (MC 1807T)
Tel (202) 566-2846
Fax (202) 566-2868
Kackar.Adhir@epa.gov

Consultant Team

Dena Belzer and Melissa Edwards
Strategic Economics
2991 Shattuck Avenue, #203
Berkeley, CA 94705
Tel (510) 647-5291
Fax (510) 647 5295
dbelzer@strategiceconomics.com
medwards@strategiceconomics.com

Jim Charlier
Charlier Associates, Inc.
2511 31st Street
Boulder, Colorado 80301
Tel (303) 543-7277
Fax (303) 543-7278
jfc@charlier.org

Tim Van Meter
VMWP Denver
1529 Market Street
Denver, CO 80202
Tel (303) 298-1480
Fax (303) 893-2595
tim@vmwp.com

Rick Williams
VMWP San Francisco
18 De Boom Street
San Francisco, CA 94107
Tel (415) 974-5352
Fax (415) 974- 5238
rick@vmwp.com

City of Spokane Team

Cody George
Public Works
2nd Floor, City Hall
808 West Spokane Falls Blvd.
Spokane, WA 99201
Tel (509) 625-6232
Fax (509) 625-6217
cgeorge@Spokanecity.org

Brian Jennings
Department of Economic Development
3rd Floor, City Hall
808 West Spokane Falls Blvd.
Spokane, WA 99201
Tel (509) 625-6986
Fax (509) 625-6013
bjennings@Spokanecity.org

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 1

1 INTRODUCTION 3

1.1 THE OPPORTUNITY IN THE UNIVERSITY DISTRICT 3
1.2 CHARGE AND SCOPE OF WORK 4
1.3 THE UNIVERSITY DISTRICT VISION AND DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES 7

2 WORKSHOP FINDINGS 9

2.1 MARKET ANALYSIS 9
2.1.1 The Housing Market 9
2.1.2 Office and Employment Growth 11
2.1.3 Economic Growth in the University District: Issues and Opportunities 12
2.2 RIVERSIDE AVENUE: ISSUES AND ANALYSIS 14
2.3 THE MAIN AVENUE OPTION 19
2.4 DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL OF THE RIVERPOINT CAMPUS 21
2.5 TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT 25
2.6 THE PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE 25
2.7 WATER QUALITY 27
2.8 BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT 28
2.9 THE SPRAGUE AVENUE CORRIDOR: DESIGN OPTIONS 28

3 POLICY OPTIONS FOR INCREASING DEVELOPMENT IN THE UNIVERSITY DISTRICT 32

3.1 SUPPORT AN URBAN RIVERPOINT CAMPUS 32
3.2 DEVELOP A SPECIFIC AREA PLAN FOR THE UNIVERSITY DISTRICT 33
3.3 FACILITATE PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT ON THE RIVERPOINT CAMPUS 34
3.4 ENCOURAGE UNIVERSITY AND CITY COLLABORATION ON DEVELOPMENT ISSUES 36
3.5 PARTNER WITH WSU TO REUSE THE JENSEN-BYRD BUILDING 36

4 CONCLUSION 37

5.0 Appendices……..38

Appendix A: Smart Growth Implementation Assistance Visit
Appendix B: University District, Market Analysis
Appendix C: Key Issues Briefing Paper
Appendix D: Riverpoint Campus Development Program
Appendix E: Retail Oriented Street Case Study
Appendix F: Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus Case Study

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City and citizens of Spokane, Washington have a vision of the University District as a vibrant, urban pedestrian friendly place. City and citizens agree that the University District has tremendous potential and that developing the district as a vibrant, 24/7, pedestrian-first place with an eclectic mix of uses, including homes, offices, shops, university uses, manufacturing, and warehouses, can help the district become a center for intellectual and research excellence and an economic engine for the new economy.

In 2005, the City completed the University District Strategic Master Plan. This Strategic Master Plan established the community's vision for the district. As a next step in plan implementation, the city and local partners applied for assistance under the US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Smart Growth Implementation Assistance (SGIA) Program. The objective of the assistance was to further implementation of the Strategic Master Plan. Specifically, the City asked the EPA Assistance Team to determine the market potential for urban redevelopment in the University District and to identify policy options that can increase development opportunities in the University District.

In response to the City's request, and drawing on best practices from around the country, local data, and the expertise of local residents and professionals, the EPA Assistance Team worked with local partners to identify market opportunities in the University District and develop options for the University District to consider, which, if they choose to implement them, should help the city move toward the vision of the University District.

The Team's market analysis shows that there is an opportunity to transform the University District today. There is broad community support behind the vision of the District as an urban center. The market is also there. Businesses want to locate in the University District, developers want to provide housing, and people want to live there. The premier development opportunity in the district is the Riverpoint campus. Development can and will likely happen because of rising student enrollment; the proximity of campus to downtown and Western Main Avenue; the availability of buildings and land on campus; and the desire of biotech and biomedical firms to locate near existing campus institutions such as Sirti, EWU, and WSU Spokane.

Five options can help achieve the objectives of the University District Strategic Master Plan and support the desired development on the Riverpoint campus.

1. **Use investment in Riverside Avenue to support an urban Riverpoint campus**.

   An urban Riverpoint campus can help the city increase development activity in the University District, further the agglomeration of biotech and biomedical activity in the city, and encourage private sector development that supports the mission and goals of Washington State University Spokane (WSU Spokane) and Eastern Washington University (EWU). A grid street network on the Riverpoint campus would support the desired urban development pattern. The current plan for Riverside Avenue can be modified to support a connected, urban, street grid on the Riverpoint campus.

2. **Develop a specific area plan for the University District.**

   An effective, sustained partnership needs direction to succeed. This direction can be provided by a "specific area plan" that articulates the characteristics of an urban,

pedestrian-first University District and the public and private actions and investments that will support such a development pattern. Such direction can increase the certainty and predictability of the City's development process and make it easier to coordinate public, private, and civic development actions.

3. **Support private sector development on the Riverpoint campus.**

   There is demand for private sector development on the Riverpoint campus. Meeting that demand will require a new approach to developing university-owned land. Such development could reinforce WSU Spokane and EWU's mission of research, teaching, and service and support of employment and residential growth in the University District.

4. **Strengthen partnerships between universities, city and private sector.**

   The city has political, civic, community, and university leaders who are committed to improving the quality of life in the city and who support development of the University District. Achieving the University District vision will be easier if these groups can work together.

5. **Act on catalytic development opportunities such as the Jensen-Byrd Building.**

   The Jensen-Byrd building on the Riverpoint campus has substantial development potential. The City and WSU Spokane could partner to support reuse of this property. Successful reuse of this property would demonstrate the development potential of the University District and potentially open the door for more projects on campus and in the district.

Redeveloping the University District as an urban and pedestrian-friendly place can help the city grow its economy, and create the kind of University District that residents want and that benefits a broad cross section of the community. An urban, pedestrian-first University District supports the city's goal of becoming a destination for knowledge workers by creating a place that provides the amenities and quality of life that they desire. It helps to grow the city's biotechnology and medical sector by increasing the amount of developable land in the District and providing the physical proximity that supports synergies between universities, hospitals, and biotech firms.

An urban University District can also meet the changing housing needs of Spokane and provide residents with safe, decent homes that support social, civic, and physical activity. Compact, mixed-use development and a complete street network in the district, can increase personal transportation choice and make it safer for residents, visitors, students, etc. to walk and bicycle in the University District. By giving residents more transportation options, the city can reduce the need to drive and protect air quality. Directing growth and investment to the University District rather than on greenfield land can protect the region's scenic beauty and natural lands, maximizes past public investment in infrastructure, saves taxpayer money, and supports the reuse of the vacant, contaminated and historic properties in the District.

In sum, the civic, environmental and economic opportunities that could result from the realization of the University District vision are significant. The city and their partners have an opportunity now to realize these positive outcomes and create an enduring place that realizes the promise and aspirations of Spokane and lays the foundation for future success.

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

1 INTRODUCTION

Spokane competes with national and international cities for a top-notch workforce and leading businesses. In an era when "knowledge workers" and other highly sought-after employees can live anywhere they choose, quality of place is assuming greater importance. Cities around the country are recognizing this and making great neighborhoods a key aspect of their marketing. They recognize that mixed-use neighborhoods, town centers, and residential neighborhoods with lively, convenient retail, restaurants, and transportation choices are very popular, particularly among younger workers.

The boom of Spokane's downtown, growth of the city's higher education institutions, and their success at incubating technology businesses creates opportunities to transform the city's University District into a great urban neighborhood and for Spokane to become more nationally competitive.

1.1 The Opportunity in the University District

The neighborhoods that attract a young professional population tend to be urban, vibrant districts that combine homes, restaurants, shops, and entertainment. The University District is ready to become such a place. Historically an industrial and commercial center, the University District is changing. The growth and success of Riverpoint campus institutions including WSU Spokane and Eastern Washington University (EWU) and the Spokane Intercollegiate Research and Technology Institute (Sirti), and increased prominence of Gonzaga University, are transforming this part of town into an intellectual and creative center for Spokane and the region.

Investment by the Downtown Spokane Partnership, the city, and private developers is prompting residential and mixed-use development at the edges of the University District. Eclectic restaurants and shops, and higher-end residential development are contributing to the resurgence of downtown and the East End and bringing people back to the center of Spokane. The University District has the potential to join the resurgence and extend it eastward.

With its small blocks, location between downtown and the Medical District, mix of old and new buildings, and as home to three universities, the University District has many of the physical and institutional assets to be a destination for entrepreneurial young professionals. Redevelopment in the University District can fill some remaining gaps by providing a range of housing, helping the city increase its tax base, and use existing infrastructure more efficiently.

Local landowners, the City of Spokane Economic Development Department, Downtown Spokane Partnership, East Sprague Business Association, university officials, community members, and others have worked hard to get to this point, and they clearly see the University District's potential. In 2004,

The Importance of Place in an Age of Talent

Sandia National Laboratory in Albuquerque, New Mexico employs over 5,000 engineers and other professionals. Speaking about his interest in efforts to revitalize downtown, a senior executive from Sandia noted: "If Albuquerque does not have a vibrant, hip downtown, I do not have a chance of recruiting or retaining the twenty-something software engineers that are the life's blood of the laboratory."

- Christopher B. Leinberger "Turning Around Downtown: Twelve Steps to Revitalization" Brookings Institution: Washington, DC. March 2005. Available at: www.brookings.edu/metro/pubs/20050307_12steps.htm.

these and other stakeholders from throughout the community came together to develop the University District Strategic Master Plan. Completed in 2005, this plan established a vision for the district as a vibrant, pedestrian-first, urban neighborhood. Its objective: create a physical fabric that

- supports expansion of the Riverpoint campus and Gonzaga;
- provides student housing;
- creates redevelopment opportunities;
- increases jobs especially in the technology and health sector; and
- is a desirable place to live, work, and play for the whole community.

As a next step in plan implementation, the city and local partners applied for assistance under the US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Smart Growth Implementation Assistance (SGIA) Program.

1.2 Charge and Scope of Work

EPA solicits applications to the SGIA program from communities that want to create compact, mixed-use development and need the help of national experts to support implementation of local development plans. Spokane was one of four communities selected in 2006 because redevelopment of the University District can help the city meet its economic, community and environmental goals and because this project could become a national model for university and city smart growth partnerships.

The city and its local partners asked EPA to help with the following tasks:

- Develop an understanding of the Spokane market and potential for urban redevelopment in the University District; and
- Identify strategies that the public and private sectors can use to create a strong neighborhood and increase development opportunities in the University District.

After receiving this charge from the city, EPA worked with its contractor, ICF International, to assemble a team of national smart growth experts to assist the city. The multi-disciplinary team (the Team) consisted of:

- Dena Belzer and Melissa Edwards, economists, Strategic Economics;
- Jim Charlier, transportation planner, Charlier Associates;
- Tim Van Meter and Rick Williams, architects and urban planners, Van Meter Williams Pollack; and
- William Schroeer, vice president, ICF International.

Additional support was provided by Adhir Kackar and Matthew Dalbey of EPA.

The city, local partners and the Team agreed that a subset of the University District would be selected as the focus area for the workshop. This area includes the Riverpoint campus, the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad tracks, and the Sprague Avenue Corridor (see Figure 1 for University District Boundaries and Figure 2 for study area boundaries). This area was selected because it was already experiencing redevelopment activity, included significant

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

amounts of assembled land, and, based on the preliminary results of the Team's market analysis, held the greatest market potential for future redevelopment activity.

Additionally, the Team and city officials agreed that the workshop would examine the current plans for Phase I of the extension of Riverside Avenue and explore alternatives, as appropriate. The city is considering extending Riverside Avenue through the University District, along the BNSF railroad line. Since this investment will affect land use patterns in the University District, it was agreed that the Team should analyze the current plan for Phase one of the project and identify alternatives, as appropriate, that support high-quality, urban redevelopment.

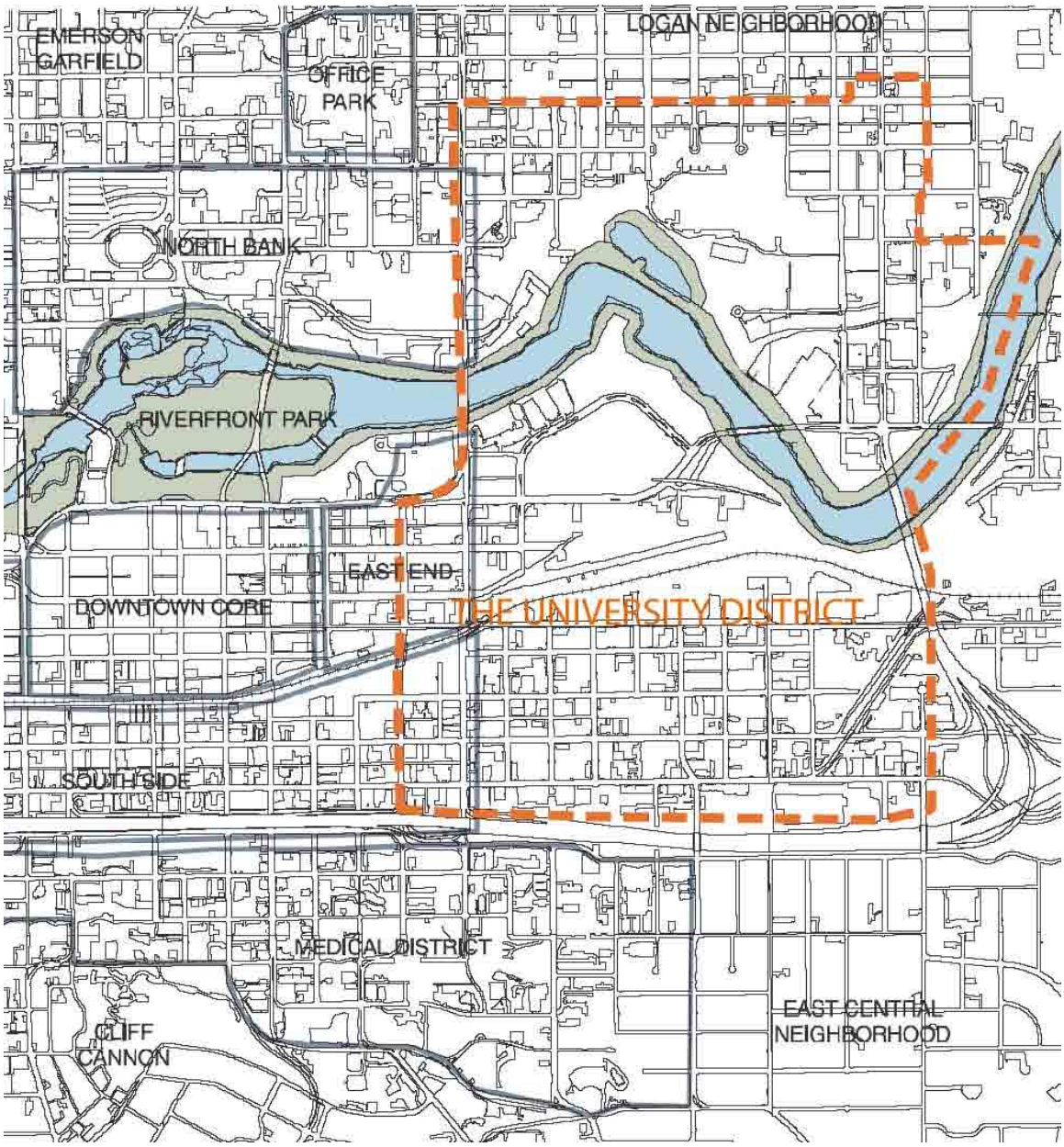
The Team visited Spokane January 17-19, 2007. Site visit activities included a two-day public design workshop, meetings with university and city leadership, and a final public presentation of the team's findings. The workshop and presentation were open to the public and included a wide variety of participants including area residents, property owners, the business community, city and university leadership, local developers, and brokers. (Site visit details, including a list of workshop participants and others the Team met with, are provided in Appendix A.)

This report:

- Describes the current and future market for urban redevelopment in the study area and the University District;
- Presents the Team's analysis of Phase I of the Riverside extension and proposes alternatives;
- Identifies streetscape and design approaches that would support an active and pedestrian friendly Sprague Avenue; and
- Offers policy options that support the vision for the University District and that are consistent with current market opportunities.

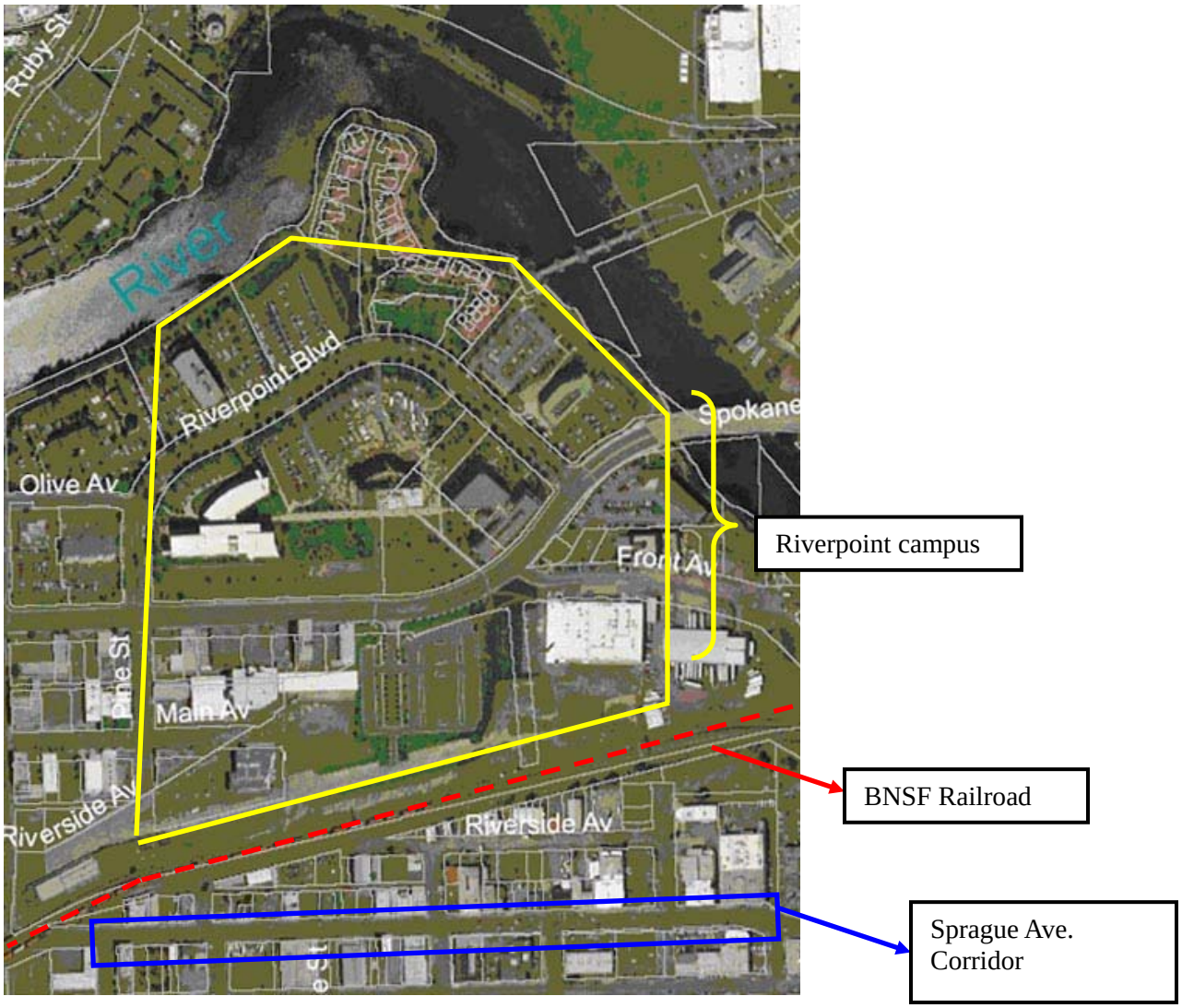
US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Figure 1: University District and surrounding neighborhoods in Spokane, Washington



US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Figure 2: Study area and key features



1.3 The University District Vision and Development Objectives

> *"The University District will be a unique place with a character that is distinctively its own. It will be a place where, when you are in it, you are aware of being a part of it because you can feel its palpable energy. It will be un-prescribed, accessible and original all at once. The University District's Strategic Master Plan is about intentionally creating a space in which creativity has the right kind of environment to flourish.*
>
> *In order to succeed in the new economy, we need to inspire creative people because they are the drivers of this innovative economy. Whether they are researchers, scientists, designers, architects, engineers, artists, musicians or technicians, Spokane needs these people to have a healthy economy." (University District Strategic Plan, page 5)*

The University District Strategic Plan envisions the University District as a center for intellectual and research excellence and an economic engine for the new economy. The District is imagined as a vibrant, 24/7, pedestrian-first place with an eclectic mix of uses, including homes, offices,

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

shops, university uses, manufacturing, and warehouses. There are active, public places—restaurants, bars, cafes and coffee houses—in the District for people to congregate and exchange ideas, and parks and natural areas that allow for solitude and reflection. Bicycling is easy and safe, and trails provide direct connections to the Spokane River. The district includes unique local businesses, and neighborhood residents are a short 5 to 10 minute walk from the market, dry cleaner, drugstore and other essential daily needs and services. Streets are designed to make walking safe and comfortable. Sidewalks are active and inviting public spaces that are wide enough to accommodate street trees, cafés, lights and street furniture.

Figure 3: Images from the University District Strategic Plan

These images from the University District Strategic Master Plan illustrate the desire of community residents to see more vibrant, urban, and pedestrian- friendly places in the University District.

The strategic plan envisions a diverse place that is home to a cross section of the community: young professionals, families, seniors, students, and households without children. As such, it is anticipated that the district will include a varied supply of housing at different price points, including apartments, townhouses, loft condominiums, live/work units, and single-family homes. In this vision, development activity is concentrated around key activity nodes, and the district is connected to downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. The district is seen as a distinct, urban place that is different from any other part of the city. The urban and unique character of the district is maintained through the reuse of historic properties, continuation of historic neighborhood attributes—street grid, narrow streets, street trees—and connections to the Spokane River.

There is significant support from the community for the University District vision. City officials have identified implementation of the University District strategic plan as a priority economic development strategy. They recognize that transforming the University District into a unique, distinct place will provide them with a competitive advantage in the race to attract mobile, creative, highly skilled workers and the firms and industries that employ them. University officials anticipate that the district could support their objective of becoming world-class, research institutions by providing space that supports academic and entrepreneurial work, and the cultural and entertainment amenities, and housing options that are needed to attract and retain top students, researchers, and faculty. Citizens and property owners feel that a revitalized University District could help grow small businesses, and increase development opportunities in the District and in the adjacent East Central neighborhood.

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

2 WORKSHOP FINDINGS

This section discusses the findings of the workshop. It includes a discussion of how market conditions in the University District create the opportunity for job growth and mixed-use development in the District generally, and specifically on the Riverpoint campus. It also presents the results of the Team's analysis of the current plan to extend Riverside Avenue, and discusses how a grid street network can move traffic, support biking and walking, and create the conditions for mixed-use and urban development on the Riverpoint campus. This section concludes with a discussion of several issues of community concern that emerged during the workshop, including: transit-oriented development on the Riverpoint campus, the pedestrian bridge, water quality, brownfield redevelopment; and the Sprague Avenue corridor.

2.1 Market Analysis [1]

Can the vision for the University District be realized? Is there demand for higher density residential development and new office space in the University District? If so, what are the characteristics of that demand and is it consistent with the goals of the community? And what are the barriers to the market? The City asked the team to complete a market analysis of Spokane and the University District to help answers to these questions. This section highlights the key findings of the market analysis. A more detailed version of the market analysis is included as Appendix B.

2.1.1 The Housing Market

There is strong current and future demand for higher density residential property in Spokane and that the University District should account for a portion of this demand. There are two key reasons for this.

1. Downtown won't be able to accommodate all of the market demand for apartments, live/work units, and condominiums. This will make other parts of the city and region, such as the University District, more attractive to developers.

2. The University District has unique assets that are creating a market for residential development, especially in the study area. Assets include: proximity to major employment centers including downtown, the Riverpoint campus, and the medical district; a distinct sense of place; and cultural and natural amenities, such as the universities and Spokane River.

Almost 600 units of multifamily housing (condominiums, apartments) have been built in Spokane in the last five years, and the city is permitting approximately 300 multifamily units per year. Most of these are built in downtown. Condominiums are performing well in the Spokane marketplace and commanding high per square foot prices relative to other residential property. The market for downtown condominiums ranges from $150,000 to more than $500,000. The Team's analysis shows that the high square foot prices commanded for downtown housing will likely continue into the future.

The Team estimated an annual downtown housing demand of 250 to 400 units for the next 20 years (2005-2025). The Team's projection is consistent with previous estimates of downtown

[1] This analysis is adapted from market research that was completed by ICF International under a separate contract with the city. A report summarizing this research is included as Appendix B.

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

residential demand (Volk/Zimmerman 2003). (The Team was unable to determine specific housing demand for the study area or University District.)

The Team assumed that future downtown residents would consist primarily of singles, non-family households, and family households above age 65. This is consistent with national trends and research that has identified these population segments as having a preference to live in denser urban areas[2] and with Spokane's current downtown population, which includes significant portions of young professionals, baby boomers, and the elderly. The Team assumed that 50-75 percent of future Spokane residents[3] that are single or part of non-family households or family households above the age of 65 would chose to live in downtown if downtown housing was available.

Figure 4. Projected Downtown Housing Demand

Housing demand in downtown Spokane is expected to increase substantially (250-400 units per year) in the next 20 years. It's expected that the University District will accommodate a portion of this housing demand because of its proximity to downtown and future employment growth in the District.

As the downtown housing market becomes saturated, developers will begin to look eastward to the University District for residential development opportunities. This will likely happen because of the proximity of the University District to downtown, job growth and campus development in the Riverpoint campus, and the stores, entertainment and cultural and natural amenities in the University District that make it an attractive place to live for people who often prefer denser housing. Higher density residential development is already beginning to take hold in the

[2] *The Coming Demand*, Congress for New Urbanism, 2001.
[3] The Team estimates that the city could have between 230,000 and 280,000 people by 2025. The Team's projection is based on a population estimate for Spokane County provided by the Washington State Office of Financial Management.

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

University District. For example, the Western Soap Building near the corner of Division Street and Sprague Avenue is being reused for condominiums, retail and office space.

Figure 5: The Western Soap Building

Redevelopment of the Western Soap Building is one indication that the demand for higher density housing is growing in the University District.

2.1.2 Office and Employment Growth

Spokane has a diverse and growing economy. Between 1995 and 2005, the economy added roughly 30,000 new jobs, a total increase of 13 percent. The Spokane economy has undergone a significant shift in recent years. The health care, service, and knowledge industries,[4] in particular, have driven job growth in the last decade. For example, the health sector added 3,751 jobs to the Spokane economy, an increase of 39 percent between 1999 and 2004. Between 1999 and 2004, jobs in the service sector grew by 13 percent. Additionally, Spokane is a center for government jobs and the retail trade. Combined, these two sectors comprised 32 percent of jobs in Spokane in 2005.

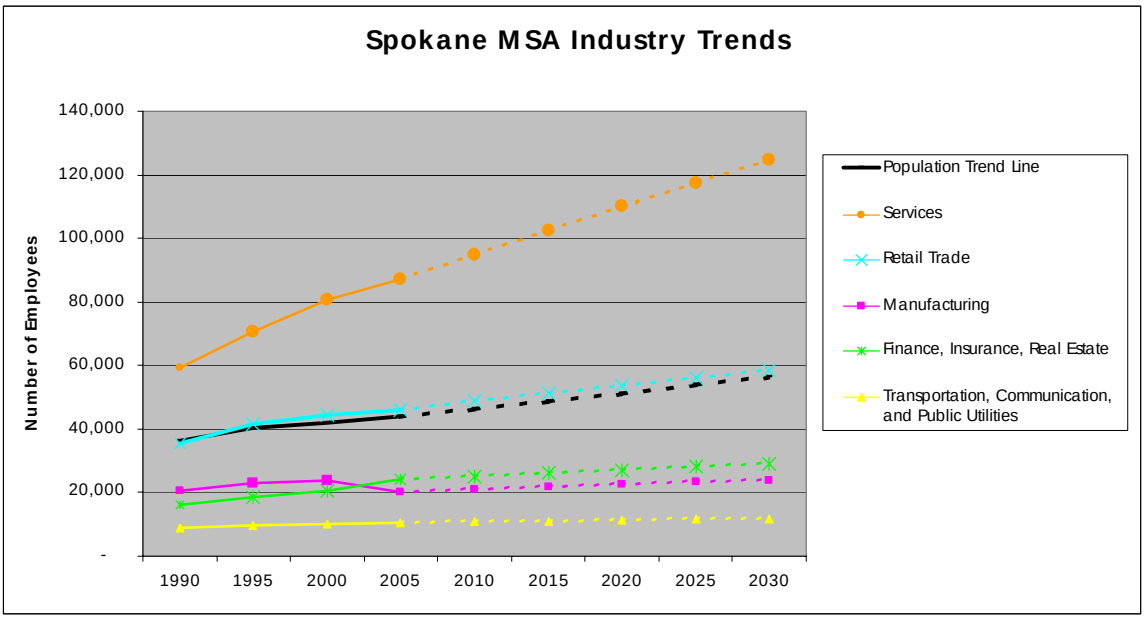
The Spokane economy is transitioning from manufacturing and production to a service and technology-based economy. The extent of this change is especially evident in the manufacturing sector. Between 1999 and 2004, the number of production (including manufacturing) jobs declined by 22 percent. Within the production sector there was growth among high-tech manufacturing jobs.

Spokane is expected to add more than 77,000 jobs between now and 2030. Over one-third of the new jobs will be in the service sector. The Team's projections show that this rate of job growth will support between 2 and 3 million additional square feet of office space[5] every five years (see Figure 6).

[4] Comprised of NAICS codes: 5419 – Other professional, scientific, technical services; 5416 – Management, scientific and technical consulting; 5417 – Scientific Research and Development.
[5] Data limitations prevent disaggregating office space further. Office space likely includes medical and lab space.

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Figure 6. Employment Growth by Industry Sector



Spokane's service sector is expected to grow significantly and generate demand for an additional 2-3 million square feet of office space in the region every 5 years.

2.1.3 Economic Growth in the University District: Issues and Opportunities

Part of the strength and future of the Spokane economy is in the biomedical and biotech industry. According to the Spokane Area Economic Development Council, the region is home to more than 50 biotech and biomedical firms. Evidence of growth of this sector can be seen in many developments in and around Spokane, including Sirti, Liberty Lake, Spokane Valley, Iron Bridge, and the Inland Northwest Technology Park.

Growth in the biotech and biomedical sector is expected to continue, and is being helped by the recent development of the Institute for Systems Medicine (a partnership of Washington State University, Gonzaga University, Empire Health Services and Providence Health System) and the expansion of medical and dental programs on the Riverpoint campus.

The University District is home to many of the research institutions that are driving the biotech cluster in Spokane, including WSU Spokane, Eastern Washington University, and Gonzaga University, Sirti, and is adjacent to the city's major medical and health care facilities, including Deaconess Hospitals, Sacred Heart Hospitals, Holy Family Hospitals, and Rockwood Clinic.

In the Team's discussions with biotech and biomedical companies and organizations about the University District, all of them mentioned that they want to be in the University District because it gives them a competitive advantage. Locating in the University District gives these firms access to labor and ideas and supports synergy and collaboration between businesses, researchers,

Spokane:
A Center for Creativity and Innovation

Spokane ranked 38th in a 2006 review of all 331 metro areas in the U.S. on the University Creativity Index. The index is a measure of how US metro areas are capitalizing on their university capabilities and other creative assets. A ranking in the top 50 means a region has considerable assets to work with and is well positioned to leverage those assets for improved innovative and economic

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

and colleagues. The proximity of the district to downtown helps them attract investors and employees.

Despite a predisposition to be in the University District, many of the businesses the Team spoke with said that barriers prevent them from doing so. Several mentioned that they are having difficulty finding suitable office space in the district. Two barriers were cited in conversations:

- overall lack of supply of office space in the District and on campus; and
- available supply doesn't meet the specific facility needs for wet and dry labs, engineering prototype shops and bench space.

As a result, some biotech companies are leaving the University District for business parks outside the district or in surrounding jurisdictions such as Spokane Valley and Liberty Lake. These companies mentioned that they would like assistance from the city, WSU Spokane, and Sirti to help them identify and secure office space in the District.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS:
MEMBERS OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY SPEAK ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY DISTRICT

On synergies
"[The University District] is where higher education and technology come together."

On collaboration
"People like the community feeling…people like to hang out and that's when you start dialoguing about ideas and that sort of thing."

On why they like being near "the action"
"I like being in the hubbub and when you bring my companies (i.e. big pharma) it's kind of all there is to show off in the neighborhood, which I think shows off well…but if I were taking them to the Spokane Industrial Park, they don't really get a flavor…The University District shows very nicely…I put them up at downtown hotels and they can walk."

On why they've locating elsewhere
"The whole University District thing is not moving fast enough. "

"There's not a lot of inventory [of] buildings [in the University District] so I've had discussion about building a new building [outside the district] but I would prefer not to go that way."

Source: These quotes are from interviews and discussions that the Team had with developers, businesses, and property owners in Spokane. Discussions and interviews were conducted prior to the January site visit.

This dispersion of biotech companies hurts Spokane. It results in lost revenue and jobs and slows the growth of Spokane's biotech and biomedical industry. The industry mostly consists of smaller firms that locate in Spokane because they have a connection to the area. Experience in other communities has shown that industry clusters grow and strengthen when they contain a diversity of firms (large and small) and are able to attract businesses from outside the region and support expansion of local firms. Focusing and concentrating like-minded and supportive industries facilitates information sharing and technology transfer between businesses and researchers, which increases industry competitiveness and growth.

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

City and community leaders in Spokane have indicated that they want the University District to be a vibrant, urban place and economic engine. There is an opportunity for the District to be precisely that. Current and future demand for residential and office development supports the vision of the University District as a vibrant, urban place and job center. The combination of growth in downtown, the desirability of the University District and the changing demographics of the city is generating market demand for dense housing in the University District. The biotech sector is maturing. Many of the firms that are responsible for its initial growth are expanding and seeking space in the University District. They want to remain in the district because they recognize the competitive advantage of growing in a place where they are near prospective employees, fellow researchers, universities and medical institutions, downtown and natural amenities, including the Spokane River. It is also in the interest of the city and community for these firms to be able to grow in place. By removing the barriers discussed above and supporting the efforts of firms to remain or locate in the University District, Spokane can become more competitive as a center for biotechnology and ensure that the University District becomes the economic engine and urban place that many in the community want and expect it to be.

2.2 Riverside Avenue: Issues and Analysis

During the workshop, the Team examined the current plans for phase one of the Riverside Avenue extension. The city has received federal funding to extend Riverside Avenue, an east-west arterial, across the University District. There is general agreement among the community that this area needs investment in its roads and that the investment should support development activity on the Riverpoint campus. The question is whether the current plan to extend Riverside Avenue will improve traffic flow, maximize the development potential of the Riverpoint campus, and support an urban and pedestrian friendly development pattern, or if there are alternatives worth considering.

This section presents the results of the Team's analysis. Specifically, it:

- evaluates current plans for the extension of Riverside Avenue;
- discusses how a connected street network can meet development objectives; and
- presents options for a connected street network on the Riverside campus.

This discussion is adapted from a briefing paper the Team delivered to the city on January 26, 2007. The briefing paper is included as Appendix C.

Current plans call for the extension of Riverside Avenue immediately adjacent to the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe rail corridor. Riverside Avenue is designed as a parkway with a median strip and one travel lane in each direction, left-turn lane as appropriate and average traffic volume of 10,000 – 12,000 vehicles per day. Under current plans, the extension of Riverside would also include a single north south street that would connect Riverside Avenue with Spokane Falls Boulevard. In future phases, Riverside Avenue will extend east to connect with Trent Avenue. The extension of Riverside Avenue would make it possible to downgrade Spokane Falls Boulevard and shift vehicle traffic from the center of campus to its southern edge. This would help reduce the potential for pedestrian and car conflicts in the interior of campus. Figure 7 shows the current plan for the extension of Riverside Avenue.

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Figure 7: Current plan for the extension of Riverside Avenue

Source: City of Spokane Department of Economic Development

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Figure 8: Main Avenue Option

Source: City of Spokane Department of Economic Development

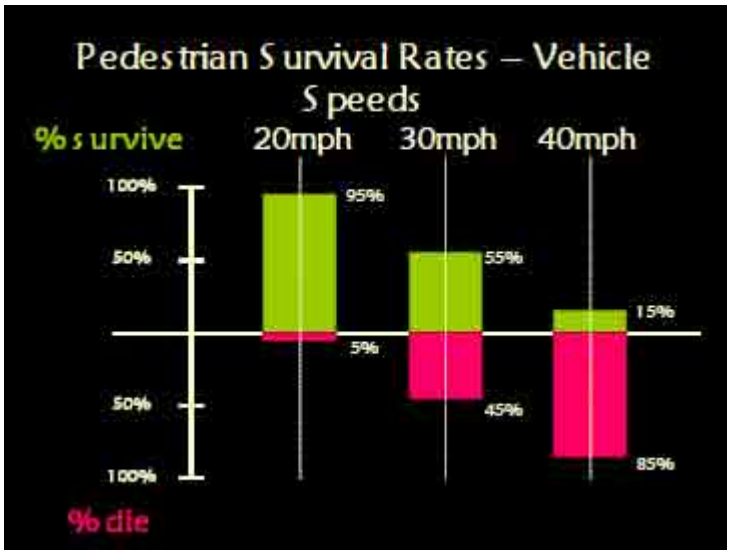
The extension of Riverside Avenue will support an *arterial-based* street network on campus. Arterial street networks are characterized by having few roads and intersections, and operate by funneling traffic onto a limited number of streets. In this instance the majority of campus and cross town traffic would be carried by Riverside Avenue.

Recent transportation planning literature, leading professional organizations, including the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), and the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) have begun to question the effectiveness of using arterial street networks in an urban context or where high levels of pedestrian activity is desired or possible, both conditions that exist in the University District and the Riverpoint campus. Concerns about arterials in an urban context include:

1. Traffic speeds and pedestrian safety

Roads within an arterial network are designed to move traffic quickly and efficiently with no or minimal delays in travel. As a result, roads have few intersections or access points. Under the current plan, Riverside Avenue has few intersections and access points. A lack of intersections and access points on roads often encourages cars to travel at high speeds. High vehicle speeds create a less desirable walking and biking environment because people feel unsafe and unprotected from traffic. The intuitive reaction to feel less safe and consequently avoid walking or bicycling along streets where traffic speeds are high is supported by traffic safety research which shows that pedestrian survival rates decline as traffic speed increases. Figure 9 illustrates the relationship between vehicle speed and pedestrian safety.

Figure 9. Pedestrian Survival Rates and Vehicle Speed



2. Street width and pedestrian safety

Pedestrian safety is also affected by street width. Wide streets are often less safe environments for walking, because their design encourages drivers to drive faster. For instance, a study of over

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

20,000 accidents in Longmont, Colorado found that more accidents of all kinds occur on wider streets.[6]

Current plans for Riverside Avenue call for a 2-3 lane road, with approximately 10,000 – 12,000 vehicle trips per day. Under these plans, Riverside Avenue will carry the majority of traffic in the area of campus, Spokane Falls Boulevard will be downgraded, and two north-south streets will connect Riverside Avenue with Spokane Falls Boulevard.

The resulting street network will funnel traffic to Riverside Avenue and offer few alternative travel routes for cars. The limited connectivity of the street network under the current plan creates conditions that could result in the widening of Riverside Avenue if a higher vehicle volume is projected or results for the area.

3. Adjacent land uses

In addition to their impacts on pedestrian safety, wide streets with fast moving traffic also impact the value of adjacent lands. Property values can be negatively impacted when:

- Streets are designed to maximize the flow rate of pass-through traffic at the expense of local circulation and access to abutting and nearby properties; and,
- Streets are built with inadequate attention to appearance and amenity.

Overly wide, unattractive streets with high volumes of fast-moving traffic often have the effect of "blighting" abutting properties and making them less desirable locations for urban and pedestrian-oriented businesses, including coffee shops, cafés, restaurants. In instance where streets are unattractive and have fast moving traffic, adjacent land uses often respond by drawing back from the street and by changing to auto-oriented uses (fast food restaurants, drive-through banks, auto repair and supply, etc.). Such areas may also reach a point where the only viable economic use is large-footprint retail (discount big box stores) with large surface parking lots buffering the stores from the street.

Figure 10: Impact on adjacent land use: urban avenue vs. arterial
These two transportation corridors support the same amount of development activity. The arterial design produces more auto-oriented land uses, where as the urban avenue supports more pedestrian and urban oriented land uses.

Urban Avenue

Arterial

[6] Swift and Associates, Residential Street Typology and Injury Accident Frequency, 1997.

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

2.3 The Main Avenue Option

The current plan for the extension of Riverside Avenue can be modified to support a connected street network on the Riverpoint campus. During the workshop the Team worked with the Mayor, city council, city staff (including transportation engineering and public works), university leaders from WSU and EWU, and the public to explore and develop the Main Avenue option.

This option would serve many of the same traffic movement objectives realized by extending Riverside Avenue, but would rely upon a more diffused circulation pattern and result in an urban street grid similar to, and echoing, the existing grid found throughout downtown and the rest of the University District. Under this approach:

- the primary road investment would shift and be located one block north, connecting directly across Division to West Main Avenue;
- Main Avenue would proceed east, tying into the same alignment proposed in Phases 2 and 3 of the current plans for the extension of Riverside Avenue; and
- Main Avenue is designed as a two-way, urban street, left-turn lane as appropriate and average traffic volume of 10,000 – 12,000 vehicles per day.

Figure 10 shows the proposed alignment for this option. This option is meant to be illustrative and demonstrate how a connected and grid street network can be built on the Riverpoint campus, and help the city and university increase development opportunities on campus, move traffic, and better support an active, pedestrian-friendly, urban campus.

One or both of the key elements of the Main Avenue option can be applied to the current plan and would result in a more connected street network. (Key elements of the Main Avenue option include: the addition of north south streets and the extension of Main Avenue across campus). For instance, the city could increase the number of north south streets in the current plan from two to four. This would increase route choice and could make it possible to reduce the width of Riverside Avenue. Additionally, the city could pursue a hybrid approach where they adapt all or portions of the current plan and Main Avenue option.

In addition to addressing some of the concerns noted with the arterial-based approach, this approach offers the following benefits.

1. Traffic circulation and pedestrian-friendly streets

The Main Avenue option moves traffic and supports an urban and pedestrian-friendly environment because it includes frequent intersections, short blocks, and multiple, narrow, low-volume streets. These characteristics result in a more connected and urban street network. Analysis shows that a well-designed network of lower-volume streets, as proposed under the Main Avenue option, produce vehicle travel times through key areas that are comparable to configurations, such as the extension of Riverside Avenue, that rely upon major arterial roads.[7]

The increased connectivity of the Main Avenue option creates more route choices for vehicles and disperses traffic across the whole network. By dispersing traffic across the street network, the

[7] "Smart Growth and Smart Transportation: The NJDOT Experience" presentation by Mark Stout, Director of Planning & Development, New Jersey Department of Transportation, New Partners for Smart Growth Conference, February 9th 2007, Los Angeles, CA.

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Main Avenue option reduces the amount of traffic that each individual street in the network needs to accommodate. This lowers the volume and speed of traffic on individual streets in the network and makes it possible to narrow widths of all network streets. Narrow streets can slow vehicle speeds and thus create a safer walking and biking environment. The greater frequency of intersections and shorter blocks under the Main Avenue option makes it easier and more attractive to travel on foot. Studies suggest that short blocks (250 to 350 feet) increase pedestrian activity, especially when they include continuous sidewalks, safe street crossings, and interesting buildings. When combined with narrow streets, short blocks reduce the distance that people have to walk to cross the street and reach additional destinations.

Additionally, by calming traffic and supporting a safe walking and bicycling environment, the Main Avenue option adds value to adjacent property. This can help make property more valuable and thus make it more financially feasible for a property owner or developer to pursue mixed-use and higher density development.

2. Air Quality

The Main Avenue option moves traffic at lower speeds which encourages a walkable urban development pattern. However, some participants at the workshop were concerned that because of these characteristics, the Main Avenue option would create carbon monoxide (CO) hotspots and increase particulate-matter emissions and ground level ozone. While precise forecasts of changes in air quality at local and regional scales requires detailed emissions modeling, some reasonable generalizations can be made about the likely impact of both alternatives.

For carbon monoxide, two factors affect the potential for hotspots: travel volume and traffic speed. Hotspots tend to occur most often along heavily congested or high volume roads (20,000 – 30,000 vehicles per day or vpd). Such high travel volumes are not anticipated under either the current Riverside Avenue option or the Main Avenue option.

The relationship between travel speeds and CO emissions is complex and somewhat counterintuitive. Emission rates are highest in stop and go conditions. That does not necessarily mean that higher travel speeds always result in lower emissions. As vehicle speed increases above 40 miles per hour (mph), emission rates for most pollutants rise and approach emissions rates equal to stop and go conditions. The lowest emissions per mile result when cars travel at average speeds of 15 to 35 mph. A connected and pedestrian oriented street network supports travel speeds in this range. Furthermore, people tend to drive less in compact, mixed-use areas because they can easily get around by other means. This helps to further minimize the potential for exposure to carbon monoxide from local hotspots or regional concentrations.

Particulate emissions are largely shaped by the anticipated volume of heavy trucks in the area and fugitive dust from streets, rather than traffic speeds. Given the characteristics and function of the street network under both options—lower speed and primarily local traffic—it is unlikely that particulate emissions will be a problem under either option.

Ground-level ozone pollution is fundamentally a regional phenomenon. Ozone formation is determined by largely by total daily vehicle emissions and atmospheric temperatures. Emissions in turn are driven by travel. Both alignment alternatives could help slow increases in ozone pollution because they support infill development. Infill development reduces overall vehicle

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

travel.[8] In central locations such as the University District or downtown Spokane, jobs, homes, and shops are closer together, so walking and biking become more appealing means of getting around. The employment and housing densities in infill locations also help to make more frequent and convenient transit service feasible. Finally, even when people choose to drive, destinations are closer together, and shorter trips mean fewer miles traveled each day.

2.4 Development potential of the Riverpoint campus

The Riverpoint campus is growing. This and the adjacency of campus to downtown creates the opportunity for the campus to capture significant amounts of mixed-use and retail development that can complement the research and academic objectives of the campus institutions, promote a more urban pattern of development, and support the concentration of biotech and related activity on campus. Additionally, development on the Riverpoint campus could strengthen and extend mixed-use development that is occurring along West Main Avenue and make this part of Spokane a destination for the creative class and students. West Main Avenue is emerging as a retail and entertainment center and provides many of the places—cafés, restaurants—that young professionals and students like, and that the community has said that they want more of in the University District.

The Team estimated the amount of possible developable land that would result from the extension of Riverside Avenue and the Main Avenue option. Its analysis shows that the Main Avenue option supports more development activity and a greater diversity of development types than the current plan for the extension of Riverside Avenue. Specifically the Main Avenue option accommodates 66,027 more square feet of retail, mixed-use; and campus space; 120 more housing units and 50% more retail activity than the Riverside option. The development program by block for both options can be found in Appendix D. Possible development patterns under each option are illustrated in Figures 11 and 12.

Table 2: Possible Development Activity: Riverside Avenue and Main Avenue

Option	New Dwelling Units	New Retail (sq. ft.)	New Campus (sq. ft.)	New Parking (sq. ft.)
Riverside Avenue	720	61,714	746,050	2,851
Main Avenue	840	93,451	780,340	3,039
Percent difference	16%	50%	4%	6%

The team made the following assumptions in its analysis.

- New development includes mixed-use, residential and campus development.
- 700,000 sq. ft. of new campus buildings (including public/private lab space) will be built in the next 50 years (provided by City of Spokane Economic Development Department).
- All new buildings are four stories tall.
- All parking is provided through shared, structured, or on-street parking.
- All new parking structures are 3.5 levels or 2.5 decks.
- Riverside and Main Avenue are both 2-3 lane roads.

[8] EPA, *Our Built and Natural Environments: A Technical Review of the Interactions between Land Use, Transportation and Environmental Quality*, 2001. Available at: http://www.epa.gov/dced/built.htm.

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

- The Campus is not served by streetcar or light rail.

These assumptions applied to both options and reflect best practices in parking, current market conditions, and anticipated campus build-out. Changes to any one or all of these factors will change estimates of developable land.

The Main Avenue option (Figure 11) increases development opportunities on the Riverpoint campus in two ways:

- First, it shifts the road investment one block north of the BNSF railroad tracks. This gives buildings and land in the interior of the campus (such as the land adjacent to Sirti, or the Jensen-Byrd buildings) street frontage. This increases the development potential of those buildings and that land and is the primary reason for the greater amount of mixed-use (housing and retail) and retail development under the Main Avenue option. Businesses, especially retail, desire street frontage. Street frontage provides access and visibility to pedestrians and cars, which can translate to more customers.

- Second, extending Main Avenue into campus leverages the creative class corridor that is emerging along West Main Avenue, and extends it into campus. Shifting the road northward also makes it possible to preserve an existing historic warehouses located northwest of the BNSF tracks. Extending Riverside Avenue would require demolishing this property. If this property were demolished, it is unlikely that additional development (other than a gas station) could be accommodated in this location. The small size of the resulting parcel (2.1 acres) and its awkward shape would limit development options for the site.

The extension of Riverside Avenue supports less retail and mixed-use activity because it does not change the amount or type of access that properties in the interior of campus currently have. Under present conditions and under the current plan for the extension of Riverside Avenue these properties (such as the Jensen-Byrd) and land (such as land around Sirti) are accessed by a service alley. This type of access limits the reuse options of properties in the interior of campus to multi family residential (Jensen-Byrd and adjacent buildings) or parking and warehouse loading space (land adjacent to Sirti).

Retail and mixed-use development is most feasible in locations with high levels of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Alleys, in contrast to streets, typically provide secondary access to property. And alley access is usually limited to pedestrians and service vehicles. For instance, the Mizuna restaurant in downtown Spokane has both street and alley access. Primary pedestrian and vehicular access to Mizuna is provided by Howard Street, secondary access is provided by an alley that runs parallel to Howard. Because of their function as secondary or service routes, alleys do not offer the same degree of visibility or carry the same amount of pedestrian and vehicular traffic as a street and are therefore less likely to support retail and mixed-use development.

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Figure 11: Possible Development Pattern under Main Avenue Option [9]

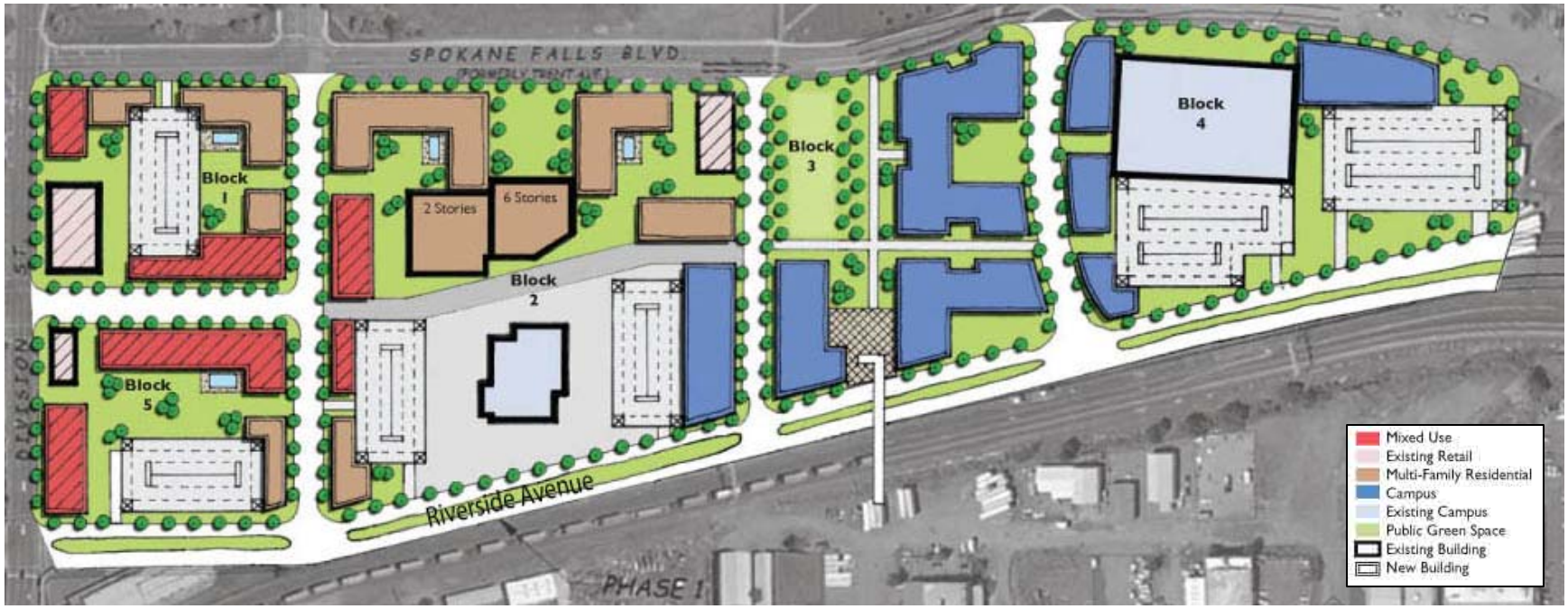
Development opportunities in the Riverpoint campus could be increased by extending Main Avenue eastward through the Riverpoint Campus.

[9] This is an illustrative plan. Proposed uses of existing and future buildings or land are not recommendations.

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Figure 12: Possible Development Pattern resulting from the extension of Riverside Avenue [10]



Extending Riverside Avenue per the current plans will support a different land use pattern than alternative road investments, including the Main Avenue option.

[10] This is an illustrative plan. Proposed uses of existing and future buildings or land are not recommendations.

2.5 Transit Oriented Development

The Riverpoint campus may include a light-rail or streetcar station in the future. The team was asked to identify which option would be more effective at supporting transit use and found that the Main Avenue option does a better job because it accommodates more development activity, supports a greater mix of land uses within half-mile of potential transit locations, and creates a safer walking and bicycling environment. All three of these factors support a future streetcar or light-rail investment in this area by building a strong ridership base.

Transit performs better when areas around stops have high densities (more than 17 units/acre); include a mix of housing, jobs, shops, and services oriented toward transit; and are safe and comfortable walking environments.[11] Because it accommodates greater development activity, the Main Avenue option makes it possible for more people to live or work near transit, increasing the potential number of transit riders. As a general rule, the most likely transit users are people that live or work within a half mile radius of a transit station. (The half mile area is often referred to as the station area.) This increases the likelihood that transit demand will exist throughout the day. The Main Avenue option has a connected and pedestrian-and-bicycle friendly street network. This builds transit ridership by providing safe and direct access to transit for those immediately adjacent to and south of the tracks. Studies show that people, including students and commuters, are more likely to take transit if they can walk or bike to a transit station.[12]

2.6 The Pedestrian Bridge

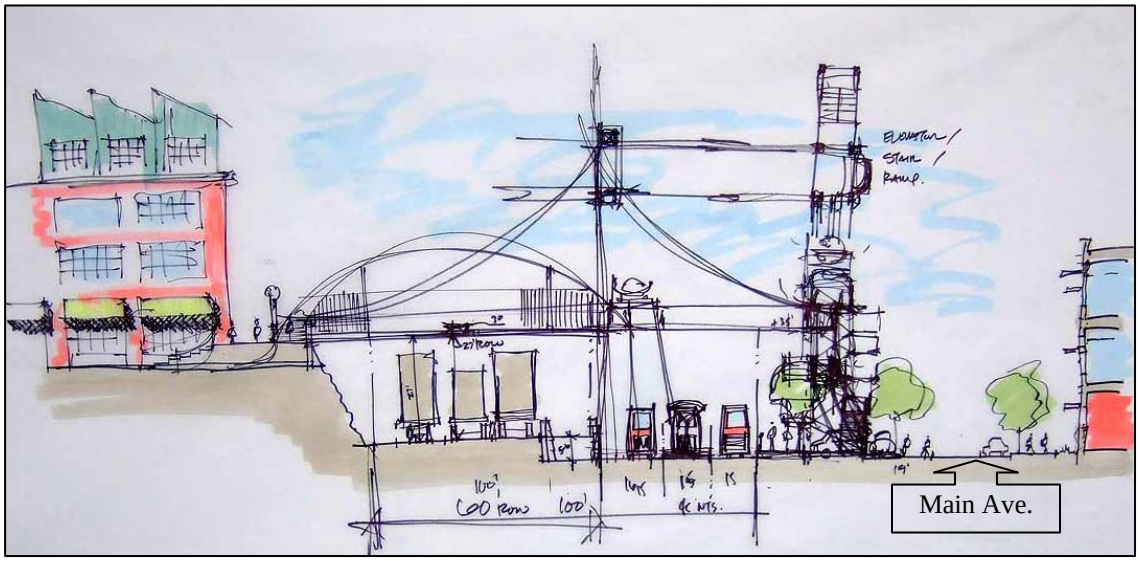
The University District Strategic Plan identifies a pedestrian bridge across the BNSF railroad as a priority investment. A bridge will provide a needed north-south connection between the Riverpoint campus and points south. It will also improve pedestrian and bike access to the campus and support development south of the railroad tracks. The pedestrian bridge is a substantial public investment. Developing the Riverpoint campus and Sprague Avenue corridor as mixed-use places will increase the number of destinations in each area and encourage frequent use of the bridge.

Figure 13 is a schematic of a possible design for a pedestrian bridge under the Main Avenue option. Because of topography and the grade south of the railroad line, it assumes that the bridge would be approached from the east. This would also help reduce the footprint of the launching area, leaving more land free for development. Development opportunities around the southern edge of the bridge could include office and commercial uses and possibly a multi-modal bus transfer facility.

[11] Urban Land Institute, *Developing Around Transit*, 2004.
[12] *Transit Oriented Development in the United States*, TCRP Report 102, 2004.

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Figure 13: Schematic of Pedestrian Bridge



A pedestrian bridge across the BNSF railroad would support walking and bicycling in the University District and help connect the Sprague Avenue corridor to the Riverpoint campus.

During the workshop, officials from Spokane Regional Transportation Council and Spokane Transit said they would consider placing such a bus transfer facility at the southern edge of a pedestrian bridge. Integrating pedestrian, bike and bus service at a transfer facility would make this part of town more accessible and give people options besides driving. Additionally, this option envisions a bus loop circulator between Grant and Sherman. Co-locating the transfer station and the bridge may expand financing sources for the bridge.

The University District Strategic Plan identifies the pedestrian bridge as an iconic landmark that gives the city and the district a distinct sense of place. Successful examples in other regions, such as the Millennium Bridge in Denver, Colorado, can be models (see Figure 10). Additionally, such projects are eligible for Transportation Enhancements funding. This set-aside to the Federal Surface Transportation Program provides a critical source of support for such multimodal projects.[13] Also useful is the Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP) guidebook to transportation planning, *From the Margins to the Mainstream*. Chapter three of this guidebook contains a discussion of flexibility in Federal highway funding programs including Transportation Enhancements.[14]

[13] Additional information about Transportation Enhancements funding is available on-line at: http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/te/overview.htm.
[14] The guidebook can be downloaded at http://www.transact.org/.

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Figure 14: The Millennium Bridge, Denver, Colorado

The Millennium Bridge in Denver is an example of an iconic pedestrian bridge that connects a mixed-use neighborhood with the downtown core.

2.7 Water Quality

The Spokane region is growing, and there are many desirable development locations within the region and the city. The Riverpoint campus is just one of them. Accommodating new development within the city, on previously developed land, and in areas with existing infrastructure, such as the Riverpoint campus and University District, can help the region protect regional water quality.

The Riverpoint campus can accommodate anywhere from 720 to 840 new residential units, and 807,000 to 870,000 square feet of new retail and campus development, within a 30-acre footprint. If this development was to occur in a conventional, lower density, dispersed pattern, it would consume large amounts of green space in the region. Such a pattern can degrade watersheds and individual water resources (e.g, lakes, streams, rivers) because it increases the amount of impervious surface in a watershed, consumes open space, and disrupts the ability of natural lands to mange and treat stormwater runoff. Higher density and infill development will help to protect regional water quality by minimizing overall watershed imperviousness and preserving open space and natural lands in the region. Preserved lands help filter and manage stormwater runoff before it reaches drinking-water supplies.

While increasing densities can better protect water resources at a regional or watershed scale, a poorly planned development with higher density can increase site-level impervious cover, and create site-specific water quality problems. When combined with compact development, techniques such as reducing surface parking and narrowing streets can prevent, treat, and store runoff and associated pollutants and help ensure that higher-density development achieves its potential for enhancing environmental quality. These approaches can be used in both options.

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

2.8 Brownfield Redevelopment

Evidence of the University District's industrial legacy can be seen in the brownfield properties around the District. EPA defines brownfields as "real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant." Clean-up and redevelopment of these properties can reduce or eliminate threats to public and environmental health posed by possible exposure to contaminants. Brownfield redevelopment also helps conserve undeveloped and open lands on the urban fringe, by taking development that might otherwise go there. Open lands often form important parts of the region's watershed, serve as habitats and migratory routes for endangered species, and act as carbon sinks for greenhouse gases.

Codes and Brownfield Redevelopment

In a soon to be published study conducted by the Land of Sky Regional Council in Asheville, North Carolina private developers were asked to identify the primary barrier to brownfield redevelopment. Survey participants responded that local development regulation was the primary barrier to redevelopment: specifically the absence of regulations that support flexible reuses of brownfield property such as compact and mixed-use development.

Source: Linda Giltz, *Stimulating Brownfield and Infill Development in the Land of Sky,* Presentation to the City of Asheville Sustainable Economic Development Advisory Committee, May 10, 2006.

There is no exact count of brownfield properties in the University District. According to the University District Strategic Plan, approximately 25 percent of the land in the University District is vacant or underutilized. Given prior industrial activity in the University District, some of these vacant and underutilized parcels in the district are most likely brownfields.

Both options create the conditions for area-wide brownfield redevelopment by increasing development opportunities on the Riverpoint campus. Experience has shown that it is easier to redevelop brownfields when overall market conditions favor redevelopment.[15] As the Riverpoint campus develops, it will attract market interest that will likely spill over to the rest of the University District, particularly in areas near the Riverpoint campus, such as the Sprague Avenue corridor.

2.9 The Sprague Avenue Corridor: Design options

Sprague Avenue is one of four mixed-use activity centers identified under the University District Strategic Plan. Development activity along the corridor is increasing because of its adjacency to the Riverpoint campus, current traffic volumes, and connection to downtown. Development opportunities will likely increase in the future as downtown and the Riverpoint campus build out. These factors create the opportunity to transform Sprague Avenue into a mixed-use activity center. The city can encourage mixed-use development along Sprague Avenue through streetscape improvements that support walking and biking.

The Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) recently issued a new design manual for urban streets, *Context Sensitive Solutions in Designing Major Urban Thoroughfares*. It establishes

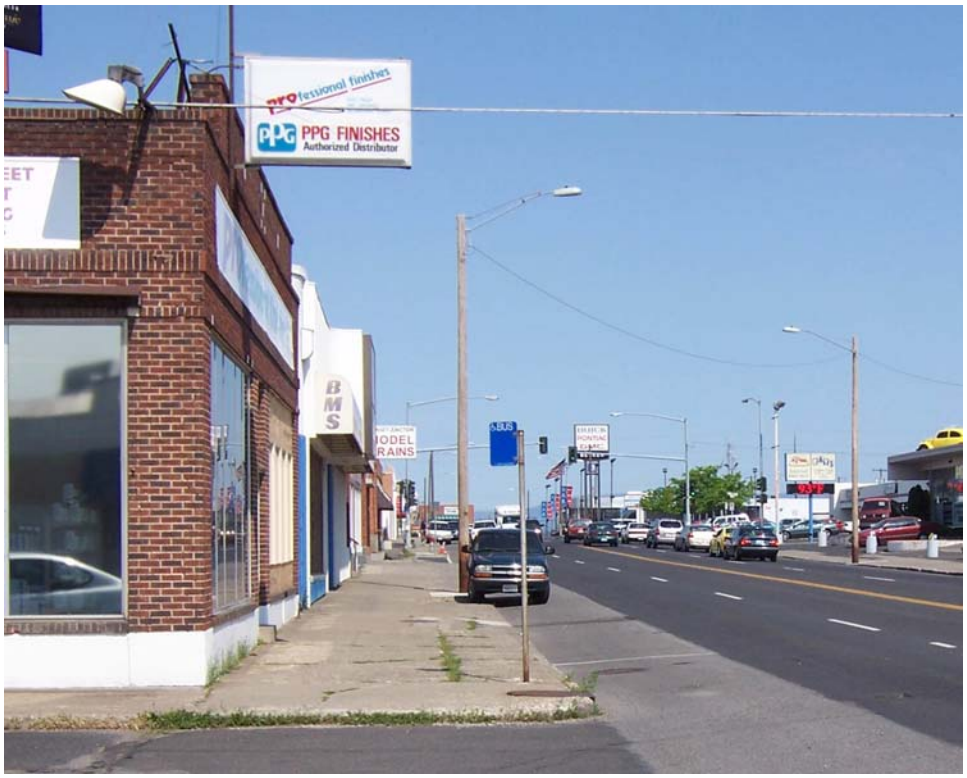
[15] Urban Institute, *et al.*; *The Effects of Environmental Hazards and Regulation on Urban Redevelopment,* U.S. Department of Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research, and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Policy, 1997. http://www.huduser.org/rbc/pdf/Environmental_Regs_Hazards_and_Regs.pdf

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

specific design parameters for the redesign of key corridors such as Sprague Avenue. It shows how streets can be effective at moving cars, meet accepted road engineering and safety standards, and create places that are vibrant, attractive, and pedestrian-friendly. In developing guidance, the ITE consulted real-world examples of communities that have successfully dealt with many of the same issues that Spokane is dealing with on Sprague Avenue.

One example that ITE cites in its guidance is particularly relevant (ITE does not identify the location if the example). This street is similar to Sprague Avenue. It has four lanes of traffic and a similar daily traffic volume (10,000 -13,000 vehicles per day) and average vehicle speed of 35 mph. To transform this street into a place that is pedestrian friendly and that supports mixed-use and commercial activity, the community chose to increase sidewalk width to 12 feet, add parallel on-street parking, and include a left-hand turning lane. The resulting street had two 10-foot travel lanes, two 8-foot parallel parking lanes, an average travel speed of 25 mph, and traffic volume of 10,000 to 12,000 vehicles per day. A copy of this example is included in Appendix E.

Figure 15: Existing Streetscape Sprague Avenue



High traffic speeds and the lack of a buffer between the street and sidewalk make pedestrians reluctant to walk along Sprague Avenue.

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

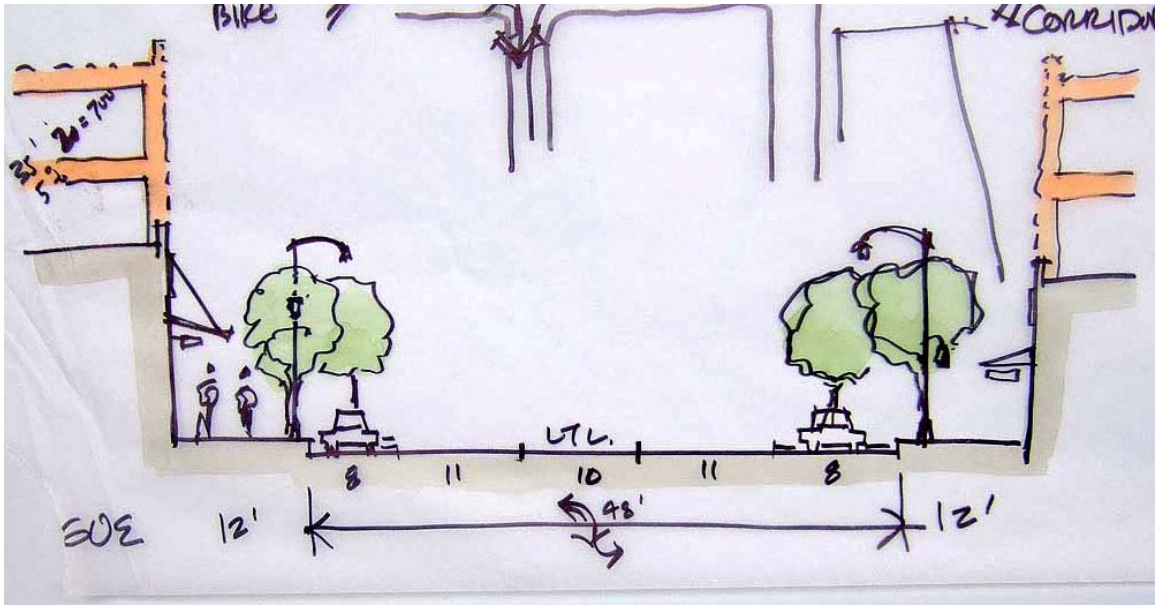
Figure 16: Elements of a Pedestrian Friendly Streetscape

This street in Winter Park, Florida includes many of the streetscape elements (wide sidewalks, on street parking, street furniture, ground floor transparency, mix of land uses) that support a safe and active walking environment and that could be applied to Sprague Avenue.

These and other streetscape improvements can be applied to Sprague Avenue. Sprague Avenue is a wide street. It is possible to reduce the street width from four lanes to two, add a left-turn lane, and maintain the same amount of daily vehicular traffic. The current right of way that accounts for two lanes of traffic can then be used for a buffer strip, wider sidewalks, designated on-street parallel parking, and other streetscape improvements. These investments will make Sprague Avenue more pedestrian friendly, keep traffic volumes steady and calm traffic, increasing its development potential and maintaining needed road capacity. These concepts can be applied to other streets in the Spokane and the University District, such as Riverside or Main Avenue.

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Figure 17. Sample cross section for Sprague Avenue



A safer walking environment can be created by widening sidewalk, on- street parking spaces and adding street trees.

As a first step in enhancing the streetscape the city could hold a design workshop or charette for Sprague Avenue. A charette could be completed in a week and produce a concept design for Sprague Avenue. The concept design could include desired land uses and streetscape improvements for the corridor. The concept design could be implemented through an update of the existing General Commercial zoning requirements or by adopting an overlay zone for the corridor. A concept design with supporting zoning would support land use and public investments (including streetscape improvements) along the corridor that are mutually reinforcing and that support a vibrant, urban and pedestrian friendly Main Avenue. Additionally, the city could work with property owners along the corridor to raise funds to complete initial streetscape improvements, such as widening sidewalks. This might come in the form of a special assessment district. To reduce the burden placed on property owners the city could supplement spending on improvements with state transportation enhancement funding, bonds, or other revenue sources.

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

3 Policy Options For Increasing Development In The University District

The opportunity to redevelop the University District is now. A broad cross section of the community supports the University District Strategic Plan and stands to benefit from the transformation of the area into a vibrant, urban center. The synergism created by Sirti, WSU Spokane, EWU and area hospitals is helping to create successful businesses that want to be in the University District. The proximity of the University District to downtown, cultural and natural amenities, and jobs makes the area a good place to meet the strong demand for new, higher-density, residential development, particularly from young professionals and empty nesters.

This section discusses policy options that support high-quality urban development, are consistent with the market opportunities and community vision for the University District and that can support development of the Riverpoint Campus. The strategies presented support implementation of the University District Strategic Plan and are consistent with Spokane's entrepreneurial and independent culture and current market conditions. They identify strategies that can help Spokane maximize transportation investments, address redevelopment barriers, and create an institutional and regulatory framework that supports investment in the University District. They are presented as options for consideration. Final decision-making authority belongs to the city and its local partners.

3.1 Support an urban Riverpoint campus

The Riverpoint campus is the premier development opportunity in the University District. Development can and will likely happen here because of rising student enrollment, the proximity of campus to downtown and Western Main Avenue; the availability of buildings and land on campus; and desire of biotech and biomedical firms to locate near existing campus institutions such as Sirti, EWU, and WSU Spokane.

Other cities and urban universities with similar assets have become centers of research and innovation by supporting an urban development pattern on campus. These universities, such as Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, the Buffalo-Niagara Medical Campus in New York, or the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia have chosen an urban pattern because they want campuses that reflect and embrace their urban surroundings and that are integrated into the community. These urban universities also recognize that an urban campus can provide the mix of land uses and intensity of development that are needed to create a vibrant, active and fun place.[16]

An urban campus is consistent with the goals and objectives of the current Riverpoint campus master plan which calls for an urban campus that is integrated into the community.

> *"Because of its location, the Riverpoint Campus has the opportunity to become a truly urban university in Spokane."*
>
> *"The Riverpoint Campus is an integral part of the Spokane downtown and, from a planning perspective, ultimately the best use of the land would require an urban density*

[16] CEO for Cities, Leveraging Colleges and Universities for Urban Economic Revitalization: An Action Agenda, 2002.

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

> *of development consistent with the urban environment on the east end of Spokane's downtown."*
>
> *"The Riverpoint Campus is envisioned as an urban university, with buildings addressing streets and major pedestrian corridors, and parking accommodated in structures around the periphery of the academic core. Open spaces are to be pedestrian scale, interconnected via pedestrian ways, and developed to a high standard."*
>
> *(Riverpoint Higher Education Campus Master Plan, Executive Summary)*

It is possible to build an urban Riverpoint campus. The current plan for Riverside Avenue can be modified to support a connected, urban, street grid on the Riverpoint campus. This grid pattern exists throughout downtown and the rest of the University District and is characterized by short blocks, frequent intersections, and multiple north-south streets.

Extending the grid onto campus would provide for traffic circulation, maximize development opportunities for university and private sector development and create a pedestrian and bicycle friendly environment. The Main Avenue option is one possible approach to building a connected, street network on campus. The city could also consider a hybrid approach that partially or fully extends Riverside and Main Avenue and that includes multiple north south streets.

Additionally, the city could also partner with WSU- Spokane to update the Riverpoint campus master plan. WSU Spokane officials have indicated that they would like to update the current campus master plan to better reflect their objective of building an urban campus that is integrated into the community.

Urban development of the campus can yield multiple beneficial outcomes that the community wants from growth. It can provide needed space to meet the academic and research needs of WSU Spokane and EWU. It can also support new private sector office and laboratory space that builds on the academic and research strengths of the institutions on campus to create a place where innovation and progress in the academy is partnered with success in the private sector. This can further the agglomeration of biotech and biomedical industries in the University District and strengthen the competitiveness of this sector of the Spokane economy. Lastly, urban development of the campus can increase housing and shopping options in the University District and support future redevelopment of the southern portion of the University District by creating a new urban center north of the BNSF tracks.

3.2 Develop a specific area plan for the University District

The University District has great potential for both housing development and job growth, but developers and property owners need greater certainty about public objectives and public investments for the area before market opportunities can be fully realized. Developers and landowners like predictability and certainty in the planning and development process. They want to know the type and timing of infrastructure and public investments that will be made in a given area and want a clear picture of the type of development that is acceptable in a community and that will receive permits quickly and easily. Predictability provides assurances about future development and public investments and can make the private sector more likely to pursue development.

During the workshop, participants, including developers and property owners in the area, identified the lack of a predictable development process as a barrier to redevelopment in the

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

University District. Participants felt that the current plans and zoning lacked detail and did not clarify the type and character of development that the city would permit in the University District. Participants also mentioned that they are uncertain of the city's capital improvement strategy and priorities for the area. In fact, many participants were surprised to hear that the city was planning to extend Riverside Avenue. Participants mentioned that greater clarity about public investments and desired development would help them make better and more informed decisions about their own properties. Many indicated that they are interested in developing their property but are hesitant to do so because the city has not articulated a clear and consistent vision for the University District.

The city can add predictability and certainty to the development process by adopting a specific area plan for the district. The University District Strategic Master Plan articulates a general vision for the district but lacks detail about the character of the district, the scale of development, anticipated public investments, and the expectations for neighborhood amenities. Specific area plans give developers and the public certainty and predictability about development outcomes by articulating the development pattern that the community desires in a given area or neighborhood. Specific area plans typically identify the desired land uses (including public amenities: parks, schools, etc.) for a neighborhood, the preferred characteristics of building form, neighborhood design, and block and street pattern. They also state anticipated public investments, such as upgrades to utilities and street investments. Knowing this helps developers plan accordingly and can encourage greater coordination of public and private investments in the area.

A specific area plan is not an enforceable document on its own. It can be implemented via development regulations, (zoning, design guidelines) and incentives, such as reduced parking requirements, to get development consistent with the plan's vision. If the city developed a specific area plan for the University District, it might need to update or replace the General Commercial zoning that applies to most properties in the University District. Also, designating the University District as a center under the city's comprehensive plan would support implementation of a University District specific area plan. The District is not a center or corridor under the Spokane Comprehensive Plan, and designating it as such would expand the range of development incentives that could be used to support redevelopment activity.

3.3 Facilitate private sector development on the Riverpoint campus

There is significant demand for office and residential development in the University District. Businesses, especially those in the technology and medical sectors want to be here to access and capitalize on the resources of WSU and EWU, Sirti, and other technology and medical businesses in the area. Developers recognize that the University District's employment opportunities, cultural and natural amenities, and proximity to downtown make it a desirable location for higher density residential development.

In discussions with the Team, these firms indicated that they would prefer to stay in the University District, rather than locate somewhere else in the city or region. For instance, one firm that the Team spoke with said that it is moving from Sirti to a space outside the district because the district doesn't have sufficient office space that meets their needs. These firms want lab and engineering space. The Riverpoint campus could meet some of their space needs, either in the form of new development or by reuse of existing buildings such as the Jensen-Byrd property.

WSU Spokane is the primary land owner in the Riverpoint campus, having assembled most of the developable land in this area. Having already assembled parcels that are large enough to support development is a significant incentive that can support private sector redevelopment activity and

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

grow the Riverpoint campus in a pattern that WSU Spokane, the city, and the community want. The private sector is not currently benefiting from this opportunity, and development is not occurring as rapidly as it might, because much of the developable and assembled land on the campus is not accessible to the market. Statute or administrative structure often limits how public institutions can use their land and how easily their land can be leased or sold to the private sector.

Based on the Team's assessment of projected WSU Spokane and EWU enrollment over the next 50 years, there is sufficient land on the Riverpoint campus for teaching and research programs and for private sector development that would reinforce WSU's mission of research, teaching and service and support job and residential growth in the University District. Given this, WSU could sell or lease some of its property to the private sector for non-academic purposes, including mixed-use projects, housing, retail, or office space. This would immediately increase the supply of land in the University District, support the agglomeration of biotech firms, and initiate the process of creating a vibrant, mixed-use center in the University District. It could also help WSU raise funds. Many universities have raised revenue and endowments through strategic use of their real estate.

Other universities have similar challenges to the use of campus land for non-academic or private development activity. Their experience suggests that there are strategies that WSU could use to support private sector redevelopment of its property, or to participate in public–private partnerships. Changes to the statutes that establish WSU's powers may be required prior to using some of these strategies.

1. Real Estate Foundation

These are non-profit entities that operate independently from a university. They are usually responsible for the acquisition, transfer, and disposition of university property. Their staff and board of directors are often comprised of university staff or officials. The legal independence of real estate foundations makes it possible for them to very nimble and responsive to private developers and the marketplace. A WSU Real Estate Foundation could fulfill this role.

Virginia Commonwealth University established a real estate foundation to assist with disposition issues associated with the development of the VCU-Biotechnology Research Park. The foundation was created because VCU recognized that university and state requirements prevented them from being as responsive to market needs as they desired. The Biotechnology Research Park covers a 34-acre parcel in downtown Richmond, next to the VCU Medical Center. It is home to 65 companies and 1.1 million square feet of office space.

2. Redevelopment authorities

Some universities, such as The Ohio State University (OSU), have established redevelopment authorities to manage their real estate assets. The activities of redevelopment authorities are typically established by state statute. Their authority often lets them be quite aggressive in promoting redevelopment activity, giving them substantial power to acquire, demolish, or clean-up property; assemble land; and also provide "patient capital" for development activity. OSU established a redevelopment authority, Campus Partners, to help spread risk, shield the university from potential controversy, and inspire community acceptance. OSU plays a significant role in the direction and operation of Campus Partners. It provides most of the authority's funding and is responsible for appointing a majority of the authority's board.

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

3.4 Encourage university and city collaboration on development issues

Transforming the University District into the vibrant place and economic engine that is desired will require the successful collaboration of property owners, citizens, and city and university officials on planning, land use, and infrastructure issues. Spokane is in an enviable position: it has political, civic and community leaders that are committed to improving the quality of life in the city and who can bring resources to this effort. Making the University District a reality requires the cumulative and coordinated actions of community, city and university leaders.

Across the country, from Buffalo, New York, to Richmond, Virginia, to Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Columbia, South Carolina, universities are expanding beyond their traditional function as academic enterprises. They are taking on additional roles: business incubators; facilitators of the transfer of knowledge from research to the market; developers of housing, retail and office space; providers of public amenities; purchasers of goods and services; and employers. These institutions are realizing that growth and development impacts their ability to be successful in these efforts, so they are supporting city, university, and community partnerships to coordinate growth and development decision-making.

Increasingly, cities and universities are turning to non profit community development corporations to facilitate these partnerships. Most of these non profit corporations work in a geographically defined area and are funded by annual contributions from member organizations. The non profit is an impartial, third party whose mission is to coordinate partnerships for the overall good of the district. These organizations are often run by a board of directors representing the member organizations, including city and community officials, and a professional staff employed by the board.

A successful example of such a partnership, which could also serve as a model for Spokane, is the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus (BNMC). The BNMC was started by the city of Buffalo in 2001, in response to the mayor's desire to realize the economic potential of the city's medical district. The district is home to many of the leading medical and related research institutions in the city and encompasses 100 acres near downtown Buffalo. Today, the BNMC is governed by a board of 20, employs 5 staff members, operates on an annual budget of $600,000. Funding comes from a variety of sources, including dues paid by member organizations, grants, charitable contributions, and some direct governmental appropriations. The BNMC has been instrumental in creating a place that is walkable, urban, and mixed-use and that supports the vision of the district as a world-class medical center. The results of its efforts are impressive. There are 8,000 jobs in the district, and businesses in the district account for $300 million in direct economic impact, $600 million in expenditures, and $23.3 million in tax revenues each year. Redevelopment within the BNMC is also stimulating reinvestment of the adjacent neighborhoods, including new office, residential, and retail development. A complete case study of the BNMC is found in Appendix F.

3.5 Partner with WSU to reuse the Jensen-Byrd Building

The development community is often hesitant to try out new markets if the perceived risk is great. Lenders are also hesitant to loan money to projects building untested products or in transitional areas. Catalyst projects show the development community as well as lenders that development is feasible and opens the door for more projects. The city could partner with WSU Spokane to reuse the Jensen-Byrd Building for office space and other compatible uses. This would help spur additional development on campus, add to the city's tax base, promote further synergies between university programs and key regional economic strengths, and support future redevelopment in the University District.

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

The Team's market analysis and discussions with developers reveal that there is market demand for and interest in reusing the Jensen-Byrd facility. The proximity of the Jensen-Byrd Building to downtown, its location on the Riverpoint campus, and historic character contributes to its development potential. Also, the space is flexible enough to meet the needs of new and growing businesses, including those that are graduating from Sirti. And because it is generally quicker and less costly for a business to reuse existing space than it is for them to purchase and build comparable new space, reuse of the Jensen-Byrd may be cost effective for some businesses.

4 Conclusion

An opportunity exists to transform the University District and begin to create the kind of vibrant, urban place that Spokanites want. This report has identified options that can help the city turn this opportunity into a reality. Implementation requires partnership and collaboration that is coordinated and directed by a single entity. This type of leadership is critical to avoid missing this current opportunity. Spokane's development community and property owners are ready to invest in the University District. They need the community to articulate a clear physical vision for the University District, and the city to create a supportive policy environment, in order for them to do so.

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

5 APPENDICES

Appendix A: Smart Growth Implementation Assistance Visit
Appendix B: University District, Market Analysis
Appendix C: Key Issues Briefing Paper
Appendix D: Riverpoint Campus Development Program
Appendix E: Retail Oriented Street Case Study
Appendix F: Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus Case Study

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT