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Sunset Area Community Revitalization CONTEXT SENSITIVE SOLUTIONS CASE STUDY

Project Overview

The Sunset Area Revitalization Program is a neighborhood redevelopment effort that coordinates four major elements:

- Redevelopment of Sunset Terrace public housing project,
- Sub-regional stormwater control using low impact development techniques,
- Improvements to SR 900, and
- General neighborhood development including growth in housing and employment, and improvements to parks, recreation, schools, and infrastructure.



Sunset Terrace Redevelopment Concept

Transportation improvements include upgrades to SR 900 to comply with a new Complete Streets Ordinance, and the development of "green connections." While any of the four major elements of the Program could have been developed independently, this coordinated, interdisciplinary process led to innovative approaches to community issues, cost savings, and a better chance for the public to shape the future of their community.



Before



After

Context

The Sunset Area emerged as publicly funded worker housing to support World War II and grew to include multi-family housing, schools, shopping areas, and civic buildings. Sunset Terrace, a 100-unit public housing project, is located in the heart of the Sunset Area, with a handful of older senior public housing projects spread throughout the neighborhood. For several decades the Sunset Area was a stable community, but over time homeownership declined, housing maintenance was deferred, social support systems declined, environmental problems increased, and crime escalated. Developed without much regulation, the neighborhood lacks adequate sidewalks and stormwater control. An antiquated, struggling commercial area straddles SR 900, also known as Sunset Boulevard. SR 900 physically splits the community in half and is not designed to encourage pedestrian or bicycle circulation.

Collaboration

Community stakeholders shaped the effort from the beginning, framing local issues, identifying important context elements, and setting a vision. Through a series of public processes from 2006-2011 the project grew based on collaboration, each effort moving the project forward: turning a vision into a concept, developing a strategy for implementation, assessing multiple alternatives, and selecting a preferred alternative. Stakeholders involved in defining the context included public agencies, neighborhood residents and property owners, and local business owners.



Project Contributors

Sunset Area Partners

City of Renton
Renton Housing Authority
Renton School District

Project Consultants

CH2M Hill
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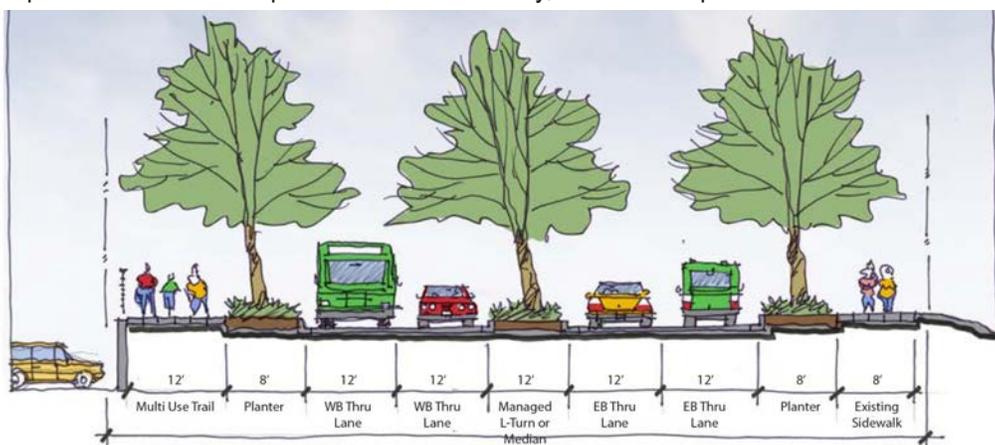
Community Partners

Colpitts Developments
King County
King County Library System
Neighborhood House
Providence Health and Services
Renton Technical College
State of Washington
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Department of Transportation
Washington Community Reinvestment Association



Complete Streets and Green Connections

Complete streets principles will be applied to SR 900 to improve opportunities for multi-modal transportation by providing bike lanes, increasing space for transit shelters, creating planting strips that calm traffic and provide a pedestrian buffer, enlarging sidewalks, improving crosswalks, and providing better street and sidewalk lighting. As redevelopment occurs in the rest of the neighborhood, surrounding streets will also be upgraded consistent with City complete streets standards, but the project notably goes one step further by creating “green connections.” Green connections combine complete streets principles with low impact development stormwater systems to build a network of park-like pathways. Pedestrian corridors that link community amenities will be enhanced with landscaping, benches, and rain gardens that promote low-impact storm water development. This builds upon the system of pathways and shortcuts originally built for a community that was less dependent upon automobile transportation than it is today, and are unique to the Sunset Area.



Context Sensitive Solutions

- Landscaping improvements will buffer pedestrians from motorists to create a safe and comfortable pedestrian experience along SR 900.
- A multi-use trail will separate bicycle traffic from automobile traffic on the uphill climb of SR 900.
- Complete streets improvements will connect the north and south halves of the neighborhood and eliminate SR 900 as a community barrier.
- The first phase of Sunset Terrace redevelopment will be shifted slightly north to accommodate the increased right-of-way needed to install complete streets on that segment of SR 900.
- Green connections will link community nodes, connecting schools, parks, community facilities, housing, shopping, and employment.
- Green connections integrate complete streets with low impact development stormwater techniques such as rain gardens, landscaping, and porous pavement to improve water quality and stormwater control.
- Comprehensive approach integrates transportation planning with land use and economic development planning.
- Planning is consistent with both the community vision for the Sunset Area and the Livability Principles developed by the Federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities.