

## Greenwood/Phinney Ridge

Greenwood and Phinney Ridge are two separate neighborhoods that undertook the development of a neighborhood plan as one community. Each neighborhood has its own community council, with one local chamber of commerce to serve the two commercial districts. The Greenwood-Phinney Ridge community participates in the SUNI program as one neighborhood.

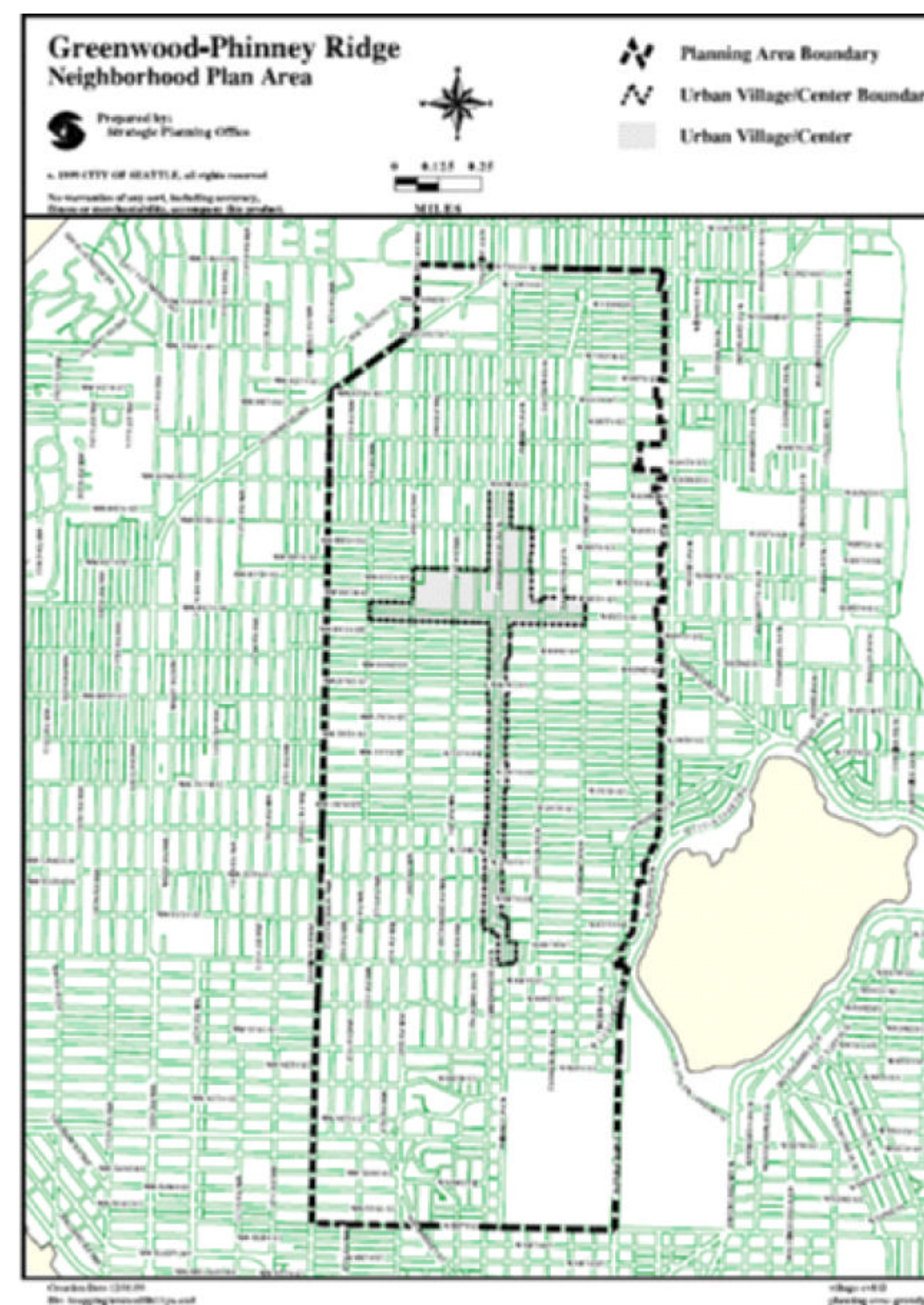
Greenwood extends beyond the former Seattle city limits at N 85th Street to Holman Road NW and angles into N 100th Street. The community's western boundary at 8th Avenue NW marked the city limits when the neighborhood took its name, and Aurora Avenue N runs along its eastern edge. Only the southern boundary, which divides Greenwood from the Phinney Ridge neighborhood, varies depending upon who is speaking. Most people agree that N 80th Street, the former terminus of the electric trolley, serves as the logical boundary. Phinney Ridge lies mostly on a high ridge and runs east to Green Lake and over the edge of Ballard at 8th Avenue NW to the west. The ice age moraine runs north from Phinney's southern boundary at N 50th Street and tapers out somewhere south of N 80th Street, where Phinney and Greenwood community residents disagree over sovereign rights.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.historylink.org/results.cfm>

### Top Priorities in Greenwood/Phinney Ridge

- Affordable Housing
- Thriving Commercial District
- Safe
- Clean and Welcoming



### **Affordable Housing is Top Priority for Residents in Greenwood/Phinney Ridge**

More than half of interviewees cited the rapid increase in housing prices as of primary concern. While the majority of interviewees were long-time residents and home owners, most felt fortunate to have bought their homes years ago, when housing prices were still somewhat reasonable. Dave Liatos, a small business owner on Greenwood, argued that single-family housing is no longer affordable to lower and middle income families,

Well, just like any part of Seattle, the house prices have skyrocketed in the past couple of years and it's super hard to buy a house. The bottom of the housing market is around \$400,000 in this neighborhood. That's almost a \$2500 a month payment.... How many people working on Greenwood can afford to buy a house in the area they work? I'm a big believer in that. I think a lot of people want that option. I feel very fortunate that we bought a house when we did and were able to afford it.

When asked who should be responsible for making housing more affordable to a variety of income levels, Kate Martin, a neighborhood activist and member of the Greenwood Community Council, viewed an increase in neighborhood density necessary to make housing more affordable, "I feel that affordable housing is a leadership issue. I think that Seattle needs to be much denser in order to make affordable housing accessible."

Interviewees cited the rising costs of housing as cause for increased gentrification in the neighborhood. Phinney Ridge and Greenwood are becoming less racially, culturally, and economically diverse as a result.

Kate Martin argued that Greenwood and Phinney Ridge have unofficial cultural and economic boundaries,

The lines are so strong. I feel much more comfortable in a diverse neighborhood. There is a little bit of diversity on my block..., but north of 85<sup>th</sup> and 95<sup>th</sup> there are hardcore lines. I think these people [ethnic groups and lower income] aren't involved in public process....and I want to engage [everyone]. You have to go out and consciously try to engage [people]. You have to speak their language.

Similarly, Jimi Lou Steambarge, a local business owner in Phinney Ridge, attributed the racial gentrification of the neighborhood to the rise in housing prices. "I think this neighborhood is very Caucasian, the housing prices are pretty steep and the type of housing that is here, old craftsman style housing, also makes the houses more expensive."

While owning a home was seen as a major concern, respondents offered mixed views regarding the availability of diverse housing options. Carol Jensen, a local minister explained,

I think it's hard for older people to stay in their home because of the houses. The lack of affordable housing makes this a very hard for this to be an economically diverse community. When we look at people aging, we really need to look at more facilities and options for people as they age to stay in this neighborhood.

Another interviewee who lives and works in Phinney Ridge commented, "There are a lot of condominiums and there is some low and fixed income housing. There is the Norse Center for elderly housing, so there seems to be some options." The Norse House, located across from the zoo, was one of the most frequently cited

*Norse House*



examples of housing options for aging populations. Interviewees noted that Greenwood has a substantial number of low-income or subsidized housing options.

**The Commercial District Not Clean and Welcoming,  
Disjointed**

Many interviewees felt the neighborhood commercial district was not as clean, welcoming, or inviting to shoppers as they would like. Most felt that the business core of Greenwood and Phinney Ridge could attract more shoppers through small changes, such as the addition of greenery, trees, benches, and improved upkeep of store fronts and sidewalks. Jeanne Barwick, the former President of the Chamber of Commerce and owner of Mae's Phinney Ridge Café, described her involvement in making the business district more welcoming,

I work with the Greenwood Arts Council, and we got started with a project called the Greenwood Avenue Bench project... We got a grant from the city to make the street and sidewalks more inviting [through benches]. It's a place for people to sit and chat and do the "European thing". The benches are works of art in themselves. We've also done some murals at Greenwood Elementary and did a really cool mural that traces the history of flight from the Wright Brothers to space stuff.

While Greenwood and Phinney Ridge share the same neighborhood plan, interviewees highlighted the disconnect between the two communities. Respondents tended to describe Phinney Ridge as more racially and economically gentrified than Greenwood. On the whole, Greenwood residents and business owners felt that they did not receive the same level of city services or responsiveness as compared to Phinney Ridge. Approximately half of the interviewees who are

residents or business owners in Greenwood (as opposed to Phinney Ridge) felt that the commercial district was struggling, while that of Phinney Ridge was generally successful. Respondents representing Greenwood maintained that their business core was bar heavy and not very clean and welcoming. Respondents attributed this to a lack of greenery, shop upkeep, and sidewalk maintenance. The owner and head “rib man” at the OK Corral in Greenwood, Otis Austin, highlighted the connection between tree, sidewalk and safety issues,

I got a problem right in front of my restaurant. I’ve been trying to get the City to do something about....They got these trees planted and they don’t keep them up. And the tree roots go and rip up the sidewalk. I’ve probably seen thirty people fall.

In addition, Greenwood has seen increase in drug and prostitution activity as a result of recent efforts by police to curtail criminal activity on nearby Aurora Avenue. Otis Austin explained,

When the police crack down on Aurora all the crime moves right over to Greenwood. I can watch the prostitutes in the Safeway parking lot and the Walgreens parking lot, working the customers. We need the police.

Another Greenwood resident, Crystal Perry, who is active in her children’s school, said that she has thought of moving because of the changing character of Greenwood,

The dynamics in our neighborhood are changing... there just seems to be a lot more activity going on, a lot of traffic activity, a lot more people coming up from Aurora- people that you don’t really want in your neighborhood. So, when you have kids, it’s not the environment that you want.

In addition, respondents also commented that the speed and amount of car traffic, especially in Greenwood, is an obstacle to shopping in the area. Greenwood Avenue, 85<sup>th</sup> Street, and Phinney Avenue are all major thoroughfares that often serve as a relief to traffic on Aurora Avenue. Some interviewees suggested that slowing traffic and adding crosswalks and greenery on the streets might encourage drivers and pedestrians to slow down and be more observant of what is available in the commercial core. While interviewees suggested that the mix of business could be improved, there was no single type of store or service that emerged as a major need.