

## Wallingford

Wallingford's is bound by Stone Way N to the west, Lake Union to the south, Interstate 5 to the east, and Woodland Park and NE 60th Street to the north. Its commercial district extends along N 45th Street from Stone Way N in the west to Sunnyside Avenue N. A smaller business district is on N 55th Street and known as Tangletown or Meridian and considered by some to be outside of Wallingford proper.<sup>19</sup>

### Wallingford's Commercial District is a Top Priority

Most of the Wallingford residents interviewed chose the business district as the most pressing issue for their neighborhood. The core district extends along 45<sup>th</sup> Street between I-5 and Stone Way and along Stone Way from 45<sup>th</sup> Street to Lake Union. While residents viewed the mix of business in the neighborhood as adequate, nearly all cited room for improvement. There was general consensus that Wallingford's commercial district was starting to feel run-down and uninviting, due to vacant store fronts and graffiti. Most interviewees expressed a desire for a cleaner shopping district. Dave Pucket, a resident and activist, commented,

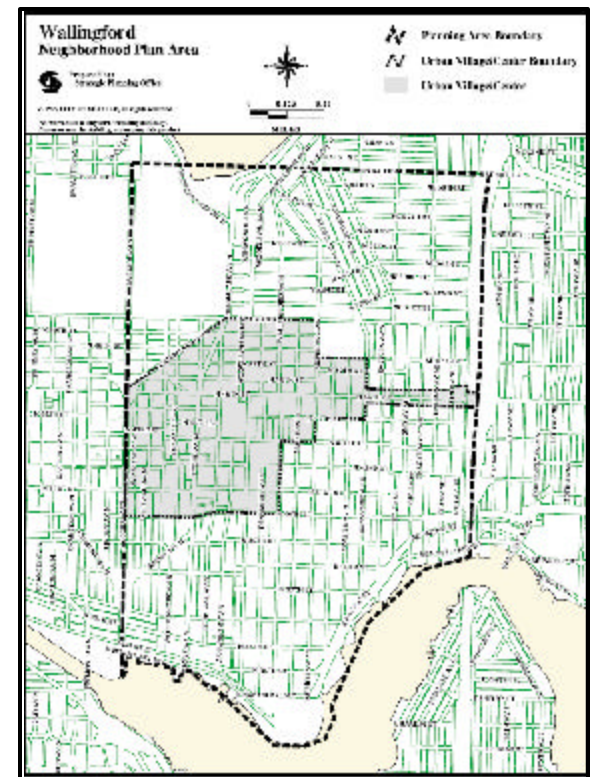
My feeling is that the commercial district should serve the people that live there, first and foremost, and I don't think it does currently....There are a lot of specialty shops that are kind of nice for the neighborhood but don't really serve the neighborhood all that well...or the people that live there. That is my number one concern. [The commercial hub is] generally unappealing. There is a lot of stuff

---

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.answers.com/topic/wallingford-seattle-washington>

### Top Priorities in Wallingford

- Thriving Commercial District
- Greenery, Parks and Open Space
- Active and Connected Citizens



up there that is run down and not well taken care of. Vacancy is a big part of that. But along with vacancy is upkeep and graffiti. As much as I hate to say it, I'd like the neighborhood to be a little more polished. It's a little too rough.

Another Wallingford resident and member of Weaving Wallingford<sup>20</sup>, Chris McKenzie, viewed the maintenance of a thriving commercial district as an issue that is gradually improving,

The thriving commercial district will follow the density and we'll get the density...I think the business mix will naturally evolve to meet the needs of the neighborhood, as long as the community stays involved and engaged, and this neighborhood is very engaged. You can bet that if something moves into the neighborhood that they don't like....[the neighborhood will not support that business]. And the "black plastic" windows [are finally rented out after many years].

The "black plastic" windows and storefronts that remained vacant for many years, by choice of the property owner, were mentioned by numerous interviewees as a huge blight to Wallingford's commercial district. These store fronts have just recently been leased out, much to the relief of Wallingford residents and business owners.

A number of interviewees commented that the business district lacks clothing stores and a variety of grocery stores. As a result, residents frequently leave the neighborhood to purchase general clothing items and a greater variety of food. Chris White, a Wallingford resident and activist, lamented that the availability of organic and locally produced food was limited in the neighborhood,

I think the QFC is a great asset to our neighborhood, but we don't have a PCC or a mom and pop equivalent. I drive to PCC or Whole Foods and that's where I primarily do my shopping. It [organic and locally produced food] is a niche market and it's an expensive one too. I think there is a big concern here for organic food.

---

<sup>20</sup> <http://office.iactivesite.com/page.aspx?navid=1277>

Most interviewees admitted to shopping at grocery stores just outside Wallingford's boundaries, because QFC is the main food store in the neighborhood.

Although Wallingford's commercial center meets most of the needs of its residents, respondents explained that there was room for improvement. When asked what he needed to leave the neighborhood to purchase, Dave Pucket responded; "Clothes. I don't think I could ever find any clothes in my neighborhood." Mark Johnson, who has lived in the neighborhood for many years and is active in neighborhood parks projects, shared a similar complaint, "I never buy clothes in the neighborhood. There really aren't any places where I can buy clothes in the neighborhood."

For the most part, interviewees generally agreed that the main commercial district in Wallingford was pedestrian-friendly because 45<sup>th</sup> Street receives quite a bit of foot traffic during the day and at night. Yet, when asked if there were any obstacles to shopping in the business district, interviewees said the sidewalks on 45<sup>th</sup> Street were not wide enough and, moreover, in need of maintenance. Respondents mentioned numerous intersections, particularly along Stone Way, that are not pedestrian-friendly. Several interviewees noted that recently a child was severely injured while crossing the intersection of Stone Way and 40<sup>th</sup> Street. Since that time, the neighborhood has worked with the City to make that intersection safer for pedestrian traffic.

### **A Strong Base of Active and Connected Citizens is Evident in Wallingford**

The majority of residents interviewed stressed community participation and activism as the neighborhood's strengths. Citizen participation was measured by most people in relation to the number of organized groups in the neighborhood and the extent to which groups represented the neighborhood in decision-making processes. Chris White said, "I think it's a strength and I think it can be greatly enhanced. That's what we're working very hard on, setting up a block watch network throughout the neighborhood and really getting people connected with information."

All 10 Wallingford respondents were part of an organized group and knew of several organized groups in the community, including the Community Council, Chamber of Commerce, Weaving Wallingford, Friends of Gas Works Park, and the Anti-Graffiti Campaign Team, just to name a few. Nearly all interviewees rambled off an extensive list of regular neighborhood events, which they felt were well attended by the community. The Wallingford Wurst Festival, the Home and Garden Tours, the Spring Clean-up and Kiddie Parade were among the most frequently cited events. However, some respondents expressed concern over keeping ongoing community involvement. Greg Flood shared,

I think it [community participation] could be improved. Part of it is looking at it from my small involvement in the park. When we were doing the park...it had a lot of interest...and we could get people involved, but now that it's done and there are more mundane things to do, weeding and all that, it's a lot harder to get people involved. And the same thing with keeping the streets clean and all that stuff...It's

stuff that could be done by the neighborhood, essentially, or done through different work parties. The neighborhood office is coordinating stuff like that and in the past few years they've done a really good job of organizing those things and regular neighborhood events.

When asked if there were any groups or members of the community not engaged in the community as much as they should be, all 10 respondents said yes. Most of the interviewees thought that if more of the local business owners were involved in the community, the commercial district would be more profitable and successful. Gene Slagele, a local business owner and head of the neighborhood's anti-graffiti campaign explained,

One business is not willing to get with the program and allow graffiti etc. to flourish because they're not active and connected... there is your weak link. So, if everybody realizes that there are a few people that are fired up about this, like that one resident that said 'Hey, I'll volunteer to help ya'; that's what you like, that's the people you want...

All interviewees were asked if the community design guidelines were relevant to neighborhood development and if they were used by developers. While over half argued that the design guidelines were indeed relevant, nearly all respondents seemed unconvinced that developers were following these guidelines. "It feels like right now the emphasis is on building and building as high as you can" (Chris White).

### **Green Parks and Open Space are Well-Loved, Well-Used, But There Can Always Be More...**

The majority of residents felt that there was enough open space in the neighborhood, largely due to the fact that the organized groups in the

neighborhood had made this issue a priority in the past. Several interviewees were actually members or leaders of specific parks committees who had worked on improving the quality and accessibility of these parks. Chris McKenzie said, “we’ve got great parks. We’ve got really great parks....We’ve got Gas Works, Wallingford Playfield, Meridian Park, and little pocket parks all over the place.” The parks, according to respondents, are all well used and maintained by the City. Greg Flood, a Wallingford resident who headed a project to remodel the Wallingford Playfield, is a huge advocate of open space in the neighborhood. He worked to help Wallingford playfield accommodate a wide range of uses by balancing the scheduled and non-scheduled use,

It’s heavily used, under a wide range of different uses. We wanted to keep that. ...The problem there being that when you schedule a use, granted you might be able to use the facility to a higher extent, but you’re also bumping off a lot of the things you like to encourage having open space for; which is you can just walk down to the park and play Frisbee, or fly a kite, or play catch with your kids...

When asked how Wallingford’s parks affect the community, one respondent noted,

For one thing it gives people a place to play. And I think that it enhances community pride, civic pride....in a way it seems like it lifts up [draws attention to] the wealth and power [of the neighborhood] because we can have a really nice park here.

All of the respondents who picked greenery, parks, and open space as a neighborhood priority believed that Wallingford was “blessed” with a number of these valuable assets, but that more open space would be needed as the density of the area increases.