Olympia, WA:  
**Greening Capitol Way**  
**A Greening America’s Capitals Project**  
Office of Sustainable Communities  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Supporting Communities move towards sustainability is a **priority** for the federal government.

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**Greening America’s Capitals**

- Focuses on capitals to create projects that illustrate what a sustainable community can look like and that are highly visible and replicable.
- Focuses on smaller “ecodistricts” (neighborhood, intersection, plaza, etc.) and solutions that can be implemented.

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**Study Area**

**Why Study Capitol Way?**

- Incorporating “green” stormwater treatment and designing more engaging streetscape can:
  - Establish **stronger sense of place** and connection between the Capitol Campus and downtown;
  - Slow down and **clean stormwater runoff** that currently drains directly to Budd Inlet;
  - Provide visual imagery to attract new businesses and visitors to downtown;
  - Improve access and safety for bus riders, bicyclists, walkers, and drivers; and,
  - Connect to and catalyze other exciting projects happening downtown.

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**Capitol Way**

**Linking Downtown’s Places**

- Potential to be a vibrant main street linking the Capitol Campus through downtown to the Farmers Market

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**Transit, Bike & Pedestrian Networks**

**Existing & Proposed**

- Policy framework for further improvements for pedestrians and bicycles in the downtown
- Supported by Washington Complete Streets policy
- Recent Improvements
  - Capitol Way streetscape and bike lanes between State Avenue and Market Street
Transportation
Potential Network Concept
- Utilize the full network to allow for a balancing of modes across full network
- Some streets have a modal emphasis
- Redesign of streets creates new landscape opportunities

Transportation & Land Use Policy
Existing
- Urban and Strategy Corridors
- Zoning
- Parking
- Parks and open spaces
- Major employers
- Existing retail, restaurants, and services

Public Parking
Existing Supply
- Important asset for commercial uses
- Could be better signed and effectively used
- Improvements to pedestrian environment could support better functioning of parking as a “one-stop” district resource

Stormwater Infrastructure
Topography and Storm Drainage
- Terminus of Capitol Way is the low-point of the surrounding watershed
- Considerable amounts of runoff entering Capitol Way

Existing Conditions
Impervious Area & Street Trees
- Many existing mature street trees in downtown. Sidewalks are buckling due to surface roots
- Inconsistent placement of street trees (building awnings, back of sidewalk
- Very little ground plane landscaping along Capitol Way

Initial Concept Designs
Exploring Choices & Preferences
- What do you see for downtown’s future?
- How can street design serve this vision?
  - Priorities for limited space in Capitol Way?
    - Travel Lanes: number & width
    - Type of bicycle improvements
    - Pedestrian and open space: amount & use
    - Transit: Loading locations & designs
    - Green Infrastructure extent & type
    - Parking: amount & management
- What is appropriate amount of congestion?
Initial Design Concepts

Capitol Way – B to A Avenues

• Street front typically commercial and services, with about half of buildings placed at back of sidewalk
• Senior community and hotel uses
• Adjacency to Farmer’s Market and waterfront
• Character is changing with some new development

Capitol Way from B to A Avenues: Option 1

Shared Street

Wider Sidewalk Zones
Stormwater Curb Extensions
Stormwater Planters
Wider Sidewalk Zones
Stormwater Planters
Boardwalks
Shared Space

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What We Have Learned

Vehicles

• Don’t design for 10-20 minute peak traffic
• Design to manage speeds
• Use the network to disperse traffic (Capitol Campus constrains grid to the south)
• Parking and loading
  • Work to minimize any reduction on Capitol Way
  • Pedestrian comfort and safety are key for downtown to work as a parking district

What We Have Learned

Pedestrians

• Quality pedestrian environment is key to success
  • For transportation
  • For economics
  • For placemaking
  • For public health
• Heaving sidewalks are a problem
• More width needed
• Improve safety and frequency of crossings
• Improve lighting
• Use alleys as part of network

What We Have Learned

Bicycles

• Capitol and Jefferson need improvements through the Capitol Campus
• Design for range of users, also supports gender equality
• Bike lanes on Capitol can’t be achieved without impacting parking
• Create a network in downtown
• Slow traffic on Capitol
• Provide a “climbing lane” from 7th to 11th
What We Have Learned

**Transit**
- Capitol needs to function well for buses
- About 12 routes use Capitol
- Important transportation choice for downtown
- Minimize "dwell time" at stops
- Physical design issues
  - Need 11 foot lanes
  - Some stops have multiple buses at one time

**Economic Vitality**
- Many vital places, but overall there is room for improvement
- Prioritize improvements to support economic investment and return
- Coordinate private and public investment
  - Target public investment to encourage private investment
- Seek partnerships in transportation, public space and stormwater improvements

**Placemaking**
- Slow traffic to allow recognition of Place
- Better wayfinding signage
- Design unique streetscape for subareas and special places along Capitol Way

**Landscape and Stormwater**
- Limited maintenance budget
- Strong desire to maintain existing trees, but they are compromising sidewalk, lighting, and visibility
- Make BIG statement
- Incorporate green roofs and walls
- Amanda Smith Way as green connector to waterfront

**Other Considerations**
- Public health
- Safety perception and reality
- Visibility between pedestrians and vehicles at corners
- Low light levels under trees

**Shared Street District**
- Low traffic volumes
- Investments waterfront public spaces
- Opportunities for new investment in mix of uses
- Capitalize on amenity of Farmers Market, restaurants, and other commercial uses
- Maximize walkability and flexibility for public space
Food Truck Round Up
Farmer's Market/Street Fair

Shared Street District
Shared Street – Special Event Concepts

Refined Concept between Market Street to Olympia Avenue

Shared Street District
Shared Street District – Special Event Concepts

Core Downtown Main Street
Core Downtown Main Street

Refined Concept between B and A Avenues – short term

• Enable downtown’s main street
• Maintain on-street parking
• Enhance pedestrian space
• Opportunities on cross streets/alleys
• Layered approach to green infrastructure given space constraints

Core Downtown Main Streets
Core Downtown Main Streets

Reallocation of space in street cross section

Reallocation of space between 5th and Legion - Before
Core Downtown Main Streets
Reallocation of space between 5th and Legion - After

Core Downtown Main Streets
Reallocation of space – Sylvester Park and Legion

Connection to Capital Campus
Reallocation of space near 7th Avenue - Before

Connection to Capital Campus
Reallocation of space near 7th Avenue - After

Connection to Capital Campus
Reallocation of space in street cross section – Legion Way to Union Ave.

Connection to Capital Campus

• Topography:
  - Speed managements
  - Cascading green infrastructure
  - Bicycle climbing lane
  - Create public space connection between downtown and campus
  - 11th Avenue is gateway to downtown and to campus
  - Amanda Smith Way connection to Capitol Lake
Connection to Capitol Campus
Reallocation of space in street cross section – 7th to Union Ave.

Connection to Capitol Campus
Reallocation of space in street cross section – Union to 11th Ave.

Connection to Capital Campus
11th Avenue Intersection

City Perspective: Design Take-Aways

The road diet surprise:
• Congestion: what will we accept?
• Speeds: flow, but slow

• Happy dilemma: how to use more right of way
• The right bicycle facility

Road Diets: Making Bus Stops Work
Design Take Aways: Street Trees

Street trees in the parking lane

Parking and Placemaking

“People don’t come downtown to park”
“Special places aren’t always easy to get to”

Shared Streets

Design Take-Aways

• Better use of the grid
• Working with a significant land user/owner (Capitol Campus)

Process Take-Aways

The Value of the Process:
• Recklessly focus on vision!
• Graphics work like magic
• Interdisciplinary
• Design charrettes for transportation projects

Implementation

• Now | Interdepartmental team
• 2015 | Downtown Plan
• 2016 or 2017 | Repaving Capitol Way
• Connect & Leverage other projects:
  – 1063 Building
  – LID Updates
  – Downtown Project
  – Community Economic & Revitalization
From Ideas to Action - Lessons Learned

1. Make a Vision and Make it Visual
2. Achieve Multiple Goals with “Greening”
3. Connect People and Places
4. Invest in the Public Spaces You Already Have
5. Seek a Variety of Funding Sources
6. Expand your resources - don’t look at only government funding.

Resources available through the Partnership for Sustainable Communities

Thank you!
Learn more at www.olympiawa.gov/greening-capitol

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