
APPENDIX C: KEY ISSUES BRIEFING PAPER

Continued U District Growth and Development: Paths Forward

A central topic of discussion at the Smart Growth workshop January 17 – 19 was whether the Riverside Avenue investment, *as planned*, would be the best way to support Spokane's goals for the University District, and if not, what alternatives might be more supportive of Spokane's goals. This memo evaluates the alternatives against Spokane's objectives for the area.

Spokane's Smart Growth Objectives

Most of these objectives are taken from local planning documents – including the *University District Master Plan*, *Riverpoint Campus Master Plan* and the *Spokane Comprehensive Plan*. Others were identified by participants in the smart growth workshop.

1. Integrate the Riverpoint Campus with the rest of the University District and Downtown Spokane such that the public's investment in the campus leverages nearby infill residential development and new office/R&D projects thereby reinforcing the ongoing urban resurgence in Spokane.
2. Plan, design and build out the Riverpoint Campus as a modern urban college campus that is seamlessly integrated into the surrounding urban core to support, and provide places for, spin-off development related to university research programs, SIRTI, and the medical complex to the south.
3. Build a well-connected grid of small streets in and around the Riverpoint Campus rather than a few poorly connected wide, high-speed streets, and thus:
 - a. improve circulation and access within the campus;
 - b. avoid barrier streets with associated impacts to walking environments; and,
 - c. provide an urban street network that supports urban infill development.
4. Limit growth in pass-through traffic on the Riverpoint Campus to reduce negative impacts of traffic and facilitate development of a pedestrian-oriented campus.
5. Expedite drawdown of transportation funding (federal, state and local) allocated to the extension of Riverside Avenue to ensure that this major public infrastructure investment is expended to catalyze private sector investment and improve access and circulation on the Riverpoint Campus.
6. Support conversion of one-way streets in the downtown core to two-way circulation (Main and Spokane Falls Blvd.) as a means of improving local connectivity between the University and East End District and improving the pedestrian environment within the University District.
7. Use transit investments to increase transportation choices in the University District and to support a pedestrian-orientation on the Riverpoint Campus, manage air quality, and provide a transit-oriented development (TOD) environment to further support private and public investment in the U District.
8. Provide a highly visible pedestrian/bicycle connection across the railroad corridor from the Sprague area to the Riverpoint Campus and thus:
 - a. connect the Riverpoint Campus to the south part of the University District and the residential neighborhoods and hospital complex south of I-90;
 - b. provide an iconic landmark giving identity and "address" to areas on both sides of the tracks;
 - c. anchor a future transit center with cross-platform transfers between bus and rail transit; and,
 - d. support and catalyze redevelopment along East Sprague Avenue.
9. Preserve historic buildings and provide access to them that encourages their rehabilitation and reuse.
10. Reduce the impact of the railroad corridor as a dividing barrier between the Riverpoint Campus and the rest of the City and diminish its impact on the investment potential of nearby lands by integrating it into a dense urban development pattern.

Transportation Corridor Options

Current plans developed by the City in conjunction with the two Universities, the State Legislature and other entities call for the extension of Riverside Avenue through the Riverpoint Campus immediately adjacent to the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe rail corridor and (in future phases) on to the east to connect to Trent Avenue east of North Hamilton Street. This project is intended to reduce pass-through traffic on Spokane Falls Boulevard through the heart of the Riverpoint Campus. The first phase of the project is partially funded. Because of impacts to historic buildings, a draft Environmental Assessment has been prepared as a means of addressing Section 4(f) requirements.

During the smart growth workshop several alternatives to this project were identified. These are described and compared below.

Riverside Extension (Current Plan): The Riverside extension project is intended to allow consolidation of the Riverpoint campus by downgrading Spokane Falls Blvd. between Division Street and Hamilton, and within the campus. Some of the future pass-through traffic would be shifted out of the core campus by extending Riverside Avenue (two general purpose lanes with left turns as needed) from Division Street to Perry Street, with an alignment continuing to the east along the south bank of the Spokane River. Due to its size, the project has been broken into three phases; Phase 1 would provide a half-mile extension of Riverside east from Division Street, curving to the north near the eastern border of the WSU Spokane campus (west side of the Spokane River), then connecting to Spokane Falls Blvd prior to the new Trent Avenue Bridge. Phase 2 would extend Riverside Drive 3/4-mile further east along the south side of the Spokane River to connect with Trent Avenue at Perry. Street. Phase 3 would connect the eastern portion of the Riverside extension with an extended Erie Street tying into the East Sprague Business District.

Main Street Extension: This alternative would implement the same general traffic distribution strategy as the Riverside Extension: Spokane Falls Boulevard would be downsized through the Riverpoint Campus and a new corridor would be developed connecting across the south part of the campus to Trent Avenue east of Hamilton. This alternative differs in that the new corridor would be located one block farther north, connecting directly across Division to West Main Avenue. This corridor would proceed east across the campus tying into the same alignment proposed for the Riverside Extension in Phases 2 and 3. Hence, only Phase 1 of the project would be different than the current plan. This new street would be designed as an urban “downtown-like” street with on-street parking and continuous sidewalks. It would connect with a network of north-south streets thereby encasing future building sites within an urban street grid similar to, and echoing the existing grid found throughout the core districts of urban Spokane. This new street would include two general purpose lanes with left turn provision as appropriate. With this alignment, it would be possible to line the street with infill development on two sides.

Hybrid Approach: This alternative would combine the current proposed Riverside Avenue Extension project as described above with a more complete network of local streets on the Riverpoint Campus south of Spokane Falls Blvd., including extending Main Street into the campus. This is intended to capture as many of the concepts developed in the smart growth workshop as possible, except for the realignment of the proposed Riverside Avenue investment.

The options comparison table on the next page draws on the ten smart growth objectives identified on page 1 to provide a basis for comparison. Each option is evaluated as either providing **STRONG**, **MODERATE** or **WEAK** support to achievement of each of the ten objectives. In one case two of the options would **FAIL** to meet an objective entirely.

These are subjective, qualitative assessments that are intended as a starting point for discussion and decision. Nonetheless, the comparison table suggests that the Main Street Extension option substantially better fulfills the goals that Spokane has set for itself.

Key Issues and Opportunities - University District Implementation

Comparison of Transportation Corridor Options

	Riverside Extension	Main Street Extension	Hybrid Approach	Notes
1. Integrate the Riverpoint Campus	WEAK	STRONG	WEAK	The Main St. option would connect the campus to the South and to the West.
2. Modern Urban College Campus	WEAK	STRONG	MODERATE	The Riverside Extension option reinforces a suburban campus layout and would not provide internal street addresses for new buildings in the south campus.
3. Well-Connected Grid of Small Streets	WEAK	STRONG	MODERATE	The Main Street option facilitates development of a complete grid; the Hybrid option provides a partial grid.
4. Limit Growth in Pass-Through Traffic	STRONG	STRONG	STRONG	All alternatives would allow the City to limit growth in pass-through campus traffic.
5. Expedite Drawdown of Transportation Funding	STRONG	MODERATE	STRONG	The Main Street option requires design revisions which could affect the construction schedule.
6. Conversion of One-Way Streets to Two-Way Circulation	WEAK	STRONG	WEAK	The Main Street option not only supports, but requires the conversion of W. Main and Spokane Falls Blvd. to two-way operation.
7. Transit-Oriented Development	WEAK	STRONG	MODERATE	The Main Street option allows integration of a transit center into a local street/pedestrian network and does a better job of capitalizing on the ped/bike bridge connection.
8. Highly Visible Ped/Bike Connection Across RR Corridor	WEAK	STRONG	WEAK	Extending Riverside along the railroad would require a longer, more expensive bridge and would adversely affect its design and function.
9. Preserve Historic Buildings	FAIL	STRONG	FAIL	The Main Street option would allow preservation of a Riverside Ave. historic warehouse building that would be lost with the Riverside Extension. The Main Street option would also facilitate reuse of the Jensen-Byrd building.
10. Reduce Impact of the RR Corridor	WEAK	STRONG	MODERATE	The Riverside Extension and Hybrid options create a wide transportation corridor along the south edge of campus that would be a major negative space in the local urban development pattern.
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Riverside Extension (Current Plan)



Main Street Extension (Option)



Hybrid Approach (Option)

