

## **D# 95 PROPERTY MAINTENANCE – PART 1: MAPPING DOWNTOWN**

### **General Description**

The City of Renton Planning Division requested this docket item.

There are many different ways that the City's Downtown is mapped in City Code and for events. For the purposes of the Code, this can be challenging, as well as confusing for staff and applicants in the administration of the Code. For the purposes of events, it may lead to diminished impact of the branding and identity of the Downtown as a place. There is consensus amongst these sources about what constitutes the core of Downtown, but little agreement about the extent of Downtown. This docket item seeks to definitively map the Downtown in a manner that will be consistent in both Code and in practice.

### **Impact Analysis**

Effect on rate of growth, development, and conversion of land as envisioned in the Plan

Not applicable.

Effect on the City's capacity to provide adequate public facilities

Not applicable.

Effect on the rate of population and employment growth

Not applicable. However, if a clearly mapped area helps build a cohesive approach for activities and regulations for the Downtown it could lead to revitalization which could increase the number of people who choose to live and/or work in the Downtown. There is one map (Multi-Family Property Tax Exemption Targeted Areas) of Downtown that maps an area where incentives are provided for development of multi-family development. If that area is reduced in its extent of the area where incentives are provided, then it could lead to a reduced rate of population increase in that specific area.

Whether Plan objectives are being met as specified or remain valid and desirable

There are multiple policies within the Comprehensive Plan that reference or are about Downtown. It would be beneficial to have clarity regarding what specific area constitutes Downtown. To the extent that a clearly mapped area could help facilitate improvements in the Downtown, this would meet some of the policies of the Plan. For example, Objective LU-QQ calls for the encouragement of *"the evolution of downtown Renton as a regional commercial district that complements the redevelopment expected to occur in the Urban Center - North."*

Effect on general land values or housing costs

Not applicable. There are no anticipated effects on general land values or housing costs created by the proposed map changes.

Whether capital improvements or expenditures are being made or completed as expected

Not applicable.

### Consistency with GMA and Countywide Planning Policies

The proposed map changes are consistent with the statewide Growth Management Act and City Comprehensive Plan which call for sound planning.

### Effect on critical areas and natural resource lands

Mapping the Downtown will not have any effect on how critical areas and natural resource lands are managed.

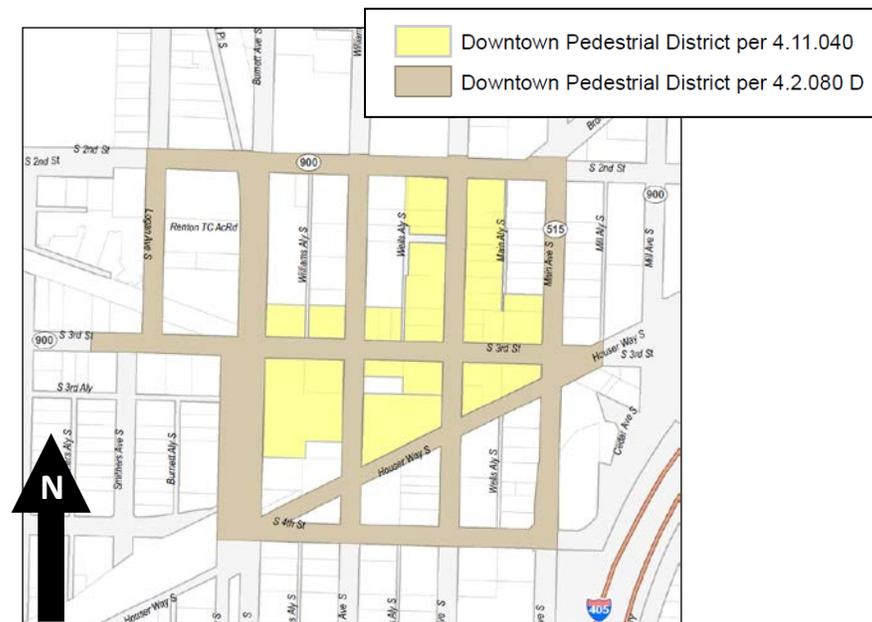
### Effect on other considerations

Depending on the resultant map of Downtown, other maps of Downtown may need to be considered for possible amendment. This includes the Multi-Family Property Tax Exemption Targeted Areas and the zoning map with the Center Downtown Zone. However, these mapped areas could also be left as they currently exist or amendments could be made, such as creating subareas.

## **Discussion**

### Mapped in Code and Defined

Within Renton Municipal Code there are many references to uses that are allowed or things that are required of properties that are within the “Downtown Pedestrian District”. It is mapped in 4.2.080D (shown in tan) and is defined in 4.11.040 as: *“Those uses, buildings and walkways along either side of South Third Street between Burnett Avenue South and Main Avenue South, and along either side of Wells Avenue South between South Second Street and Houser Way South.”* As is shown in the map below, the map and the defined areas do not match. Another concern with the map as it is currently adopted is that it does not indicate actual parcels that would be included within the Pedestrian District, only streets. According to the Code definition, it is intended to include the parcels that abut specified streets. So, the map in the Code should show those parcels. At minimum, this conflict in the Code should be resolved.



**Downtown Pedestrian District in Title IV**

## Downtown Character Map

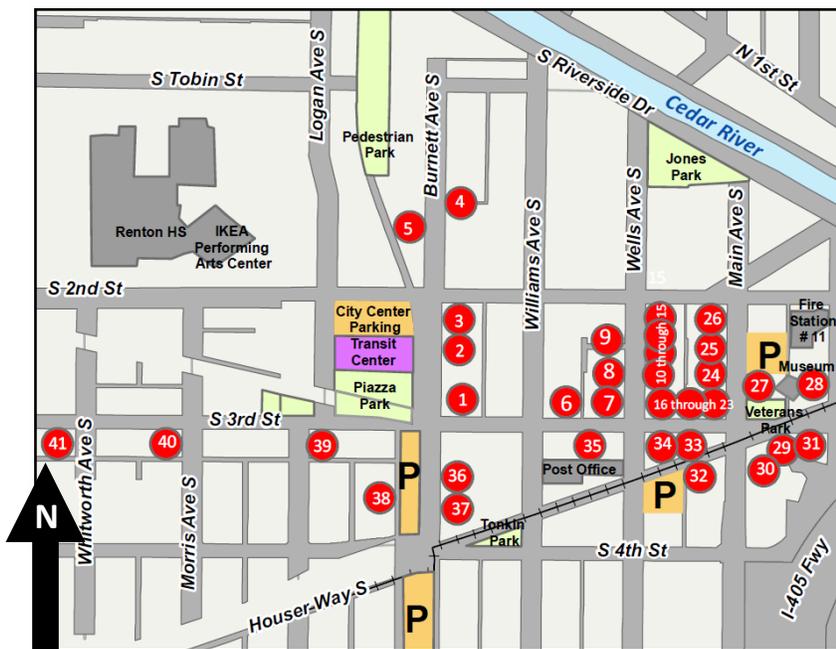
There are many other maps that identify a specified area as being Downtown. The Economic Development Division uses a Downtown Character Map to give an impression of what the architecture and character of Downtown is like. On this map, a pedestrian district is indicated that very closely matches the one adopted in 4.2.080.D, but it does not extend along South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street past Morris Avenue South. Additionally, the map shows many structures outside of the Pedestrian District that are demonstrating the character of Downtown. For the purposes of this map, City Hall, the Safeway on Rainier Avenue South, Renton High School, and Merrill Gardens are included. Are these areas also a part of Downtown?



Economic Development Downtown Character Map

## Economic Development Events Maps

The Economic Development Division has also helped facilitate some events in the Downtown. Events such as the Return to Renton Car Show and Poker Tour have focused on the Downtown. Those maps are shown below and are consistent with other maps in identifying the general core area of South 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Main, Wells, Williams, and Burnett Avenues. However, these maps extend west along South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to Whitworth Avenue. Both maps are significant to help demonstrate how far participants are willing to walk as part of the Poker Tour or to look at cars. The Poker Tour Map is also significant because it helps to understand the businesses that are willing to participate in a Downtown event and who must perceive themselves as being located Downtown. There is one uniquely mapped feature in the Poker Tour map. That is in regards to the extent to the west along South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street that is included; #41 Good Neighbor Tire and Auto Service, a Goodyear franchise, is identified as a Downtown business.



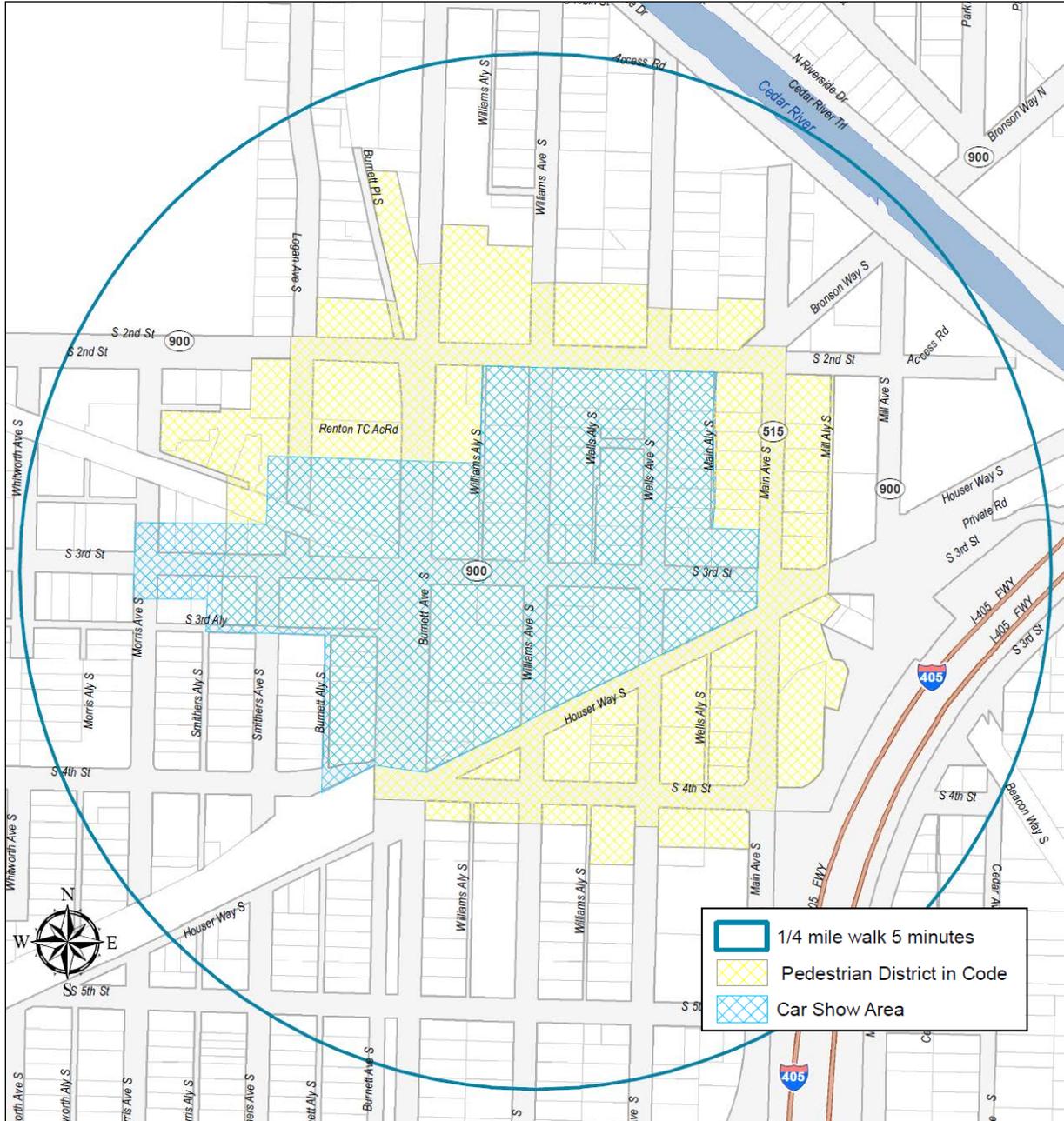
Economic Development 2008 Poker Tour Map



Economic Development 2013 Return to Renton Car Show Map

### Five Minute Walk Map

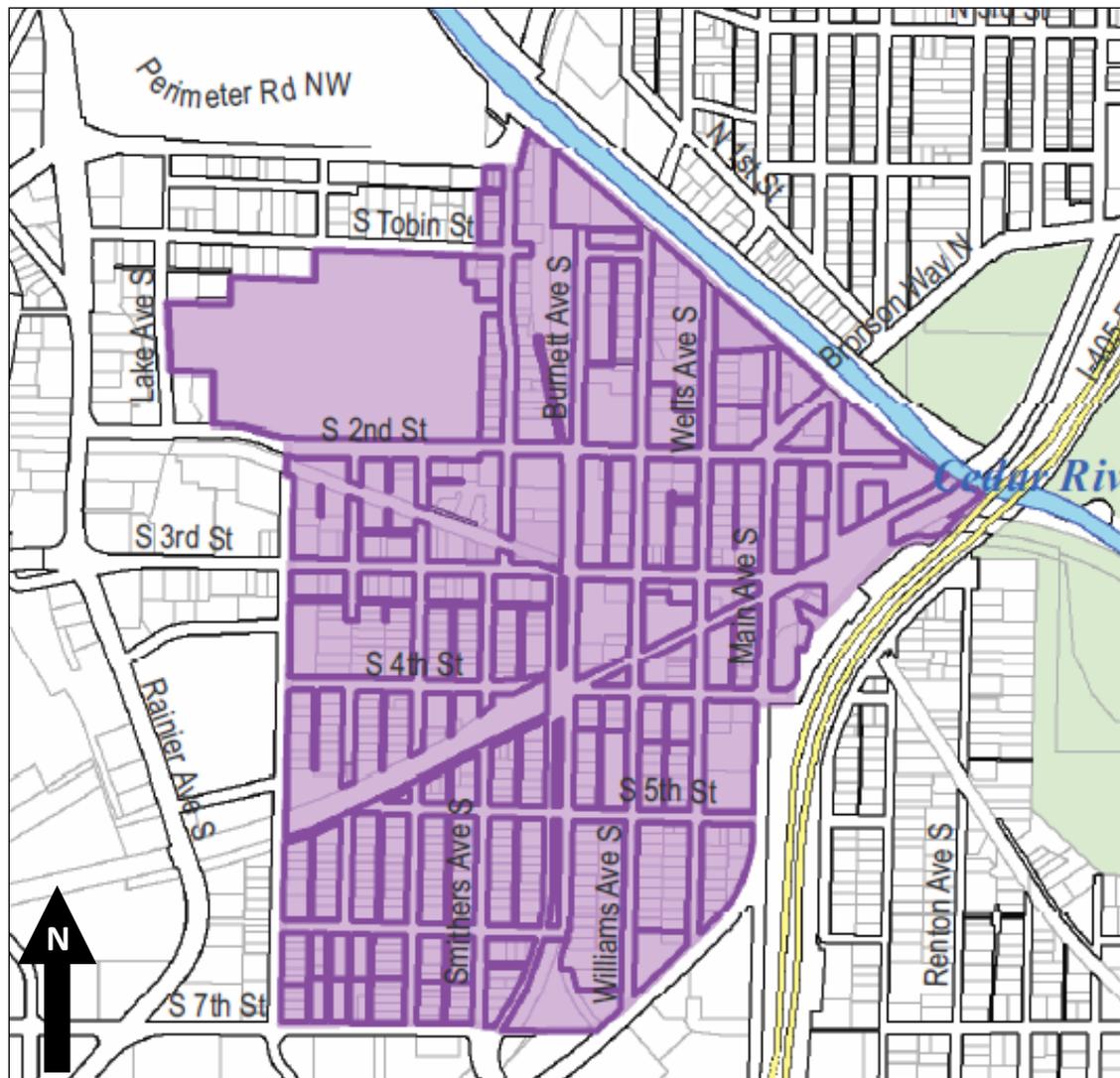
In order to consider the walkability of Downtown, the map below shows a circle that is ¼ mile from the intersection of South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and Williams Avenue South. A quarter of a mile is considered to be a five minute walk. Additionally, the map below shows the area that is mapped in Code as the Downtown Pedestrian District and the Car Show area. A five minute walking area can be utilized to help frame the outer edges of the Downtown.



Title IV Pedestrian District, Car Show area, and 1/4 mile walking radius

### Multi-Family Property Tax Exemption Targeted Area

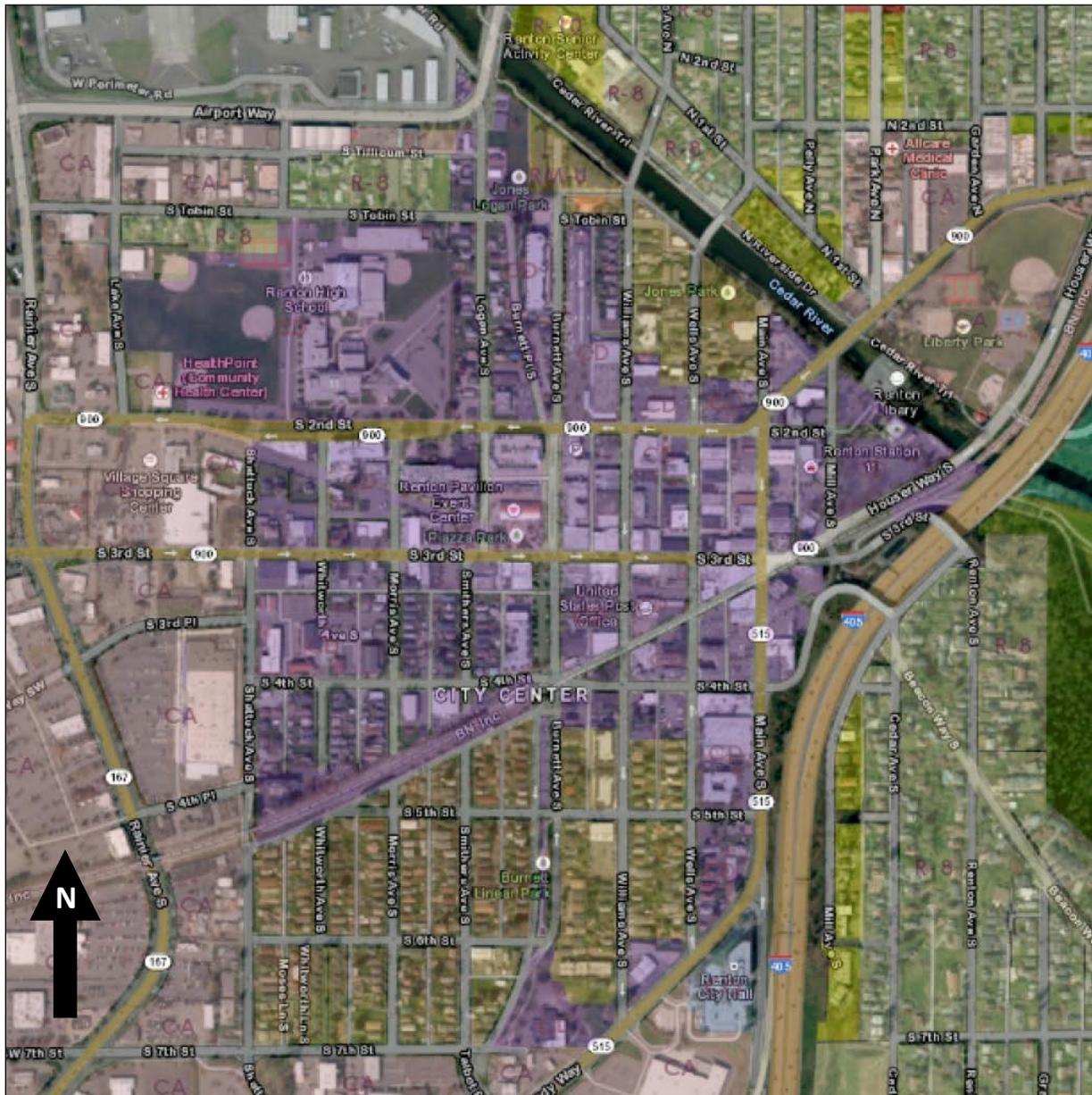
Renton has a tool that is in place to help stimulate the development of new multi-family housing in two areas of the City. The tool allows properties to be exempted from paying property taxes for 8-10 years, depending on if they include affordable housing. One of the target areas is "Downtown". In the context of this map, Downtown extends south to include the South Renton neighborhood and goes to Grady Way. This map indicates the most liberal identification of the Downtown of all the maps staff found. As part of the City Center Community Plan and the 2013 recommendations from the City Center Plan Advisory Board, staff has begun exploration of the possibility of rezoning the South Renton neighborhood to a less intensive zone that does not make single family housing non-conforming. If that rezone occurs, the Exemption area may no longer be appropriately included in this mapping of Downtown. However, there are also many zoning alternatives which would still allow multi-family housing and the area may still be appropriately included in this map.



**Downtown Multi-Family Property Tax Exemption Targeted Area**

## Zoning Map

Finally, the adopted City zoning should be considered. The Center Downtown zone is indicated on the map below in purple. The zone extends north to the Cedar River along Logan Avenue and Burnett Avenue similar to the Multi-Family Tax Exemption boundary, but does not extend to the other side of Whitworth Avenue. To the east, the CD zone includes old City Hall and the library. To the south, the CD zone runs along Main Avenue and dips down along Burnett Avenue to include a property at Grady Way. It also includes many single family residences that are north of the railway corridor. To the west, the CD zone extends all the way to Shattuck Avenue and includes Renton High School.



Center Downtown (CD) zone (indicated in purple)

### Staff Recommendation

There appears to be consensus among the maps about what constitutes the core of Downtown. Specifically, all maps focus on South 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Streets with Williams and Wells Avenues as sort of the heart of the area. They all also extend east to Main (but don't necessarily include Main Avenue) and to the west to at least Burnett Avenue. After that the maps diverge with where the Downtown ends at all of its boundaries. Staff recommends utilizing the ¼ mile walking radius as a guide in determining the extent of the Downtown boundary. In regards to the eastern boundary, staff recommends including the History Museum, library, and old City Hall, but not extending to the east side of I-405.

The southern boundary could extend to South 5<sup>th</sup> Street with the ¼ mile walk, but no map other than the Multi-Family Tax Exemption Area Map and portions of the CD zone, extends this far south. There appears to be more consensus that one parcel south of South 4<sup>th</sup> Street is the southern boundary. Staff recommends using this as the southern boundary. However, this is only to Burnett Avenue extending to the west. How the boundary continues from there is one of the outstanding issues.

Beyond these initial boundary recommendations staff has identified several areas where the boundary delineations are less clear and these are identified below.

**Issue #1:** There is no recommendation for how the southern boundary extends to the west beyond Burnett Avenue. Does it jump up to South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to match the pedestrian district boundary that runs one parcel south of South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street? The extent this boundary runs to the west will depend on where the western boundary is determined to lie.



Potential southern boundary

**Issue #2:** Staff does not have recommendations in regards to the western boundary. In part because South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street is one way headed east, this corridor is essentially a gateway into Downtown. Where does that gateway begin? Just after the Safeway at Rainier Avenue South, near Lee's Martial Arts Studio at Whitworth Avenue, or at Morris Avenue where the Why Too Grocery and the old Roxy Theater are located.



South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Looking East



South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Intersection with Shattuck Avenue

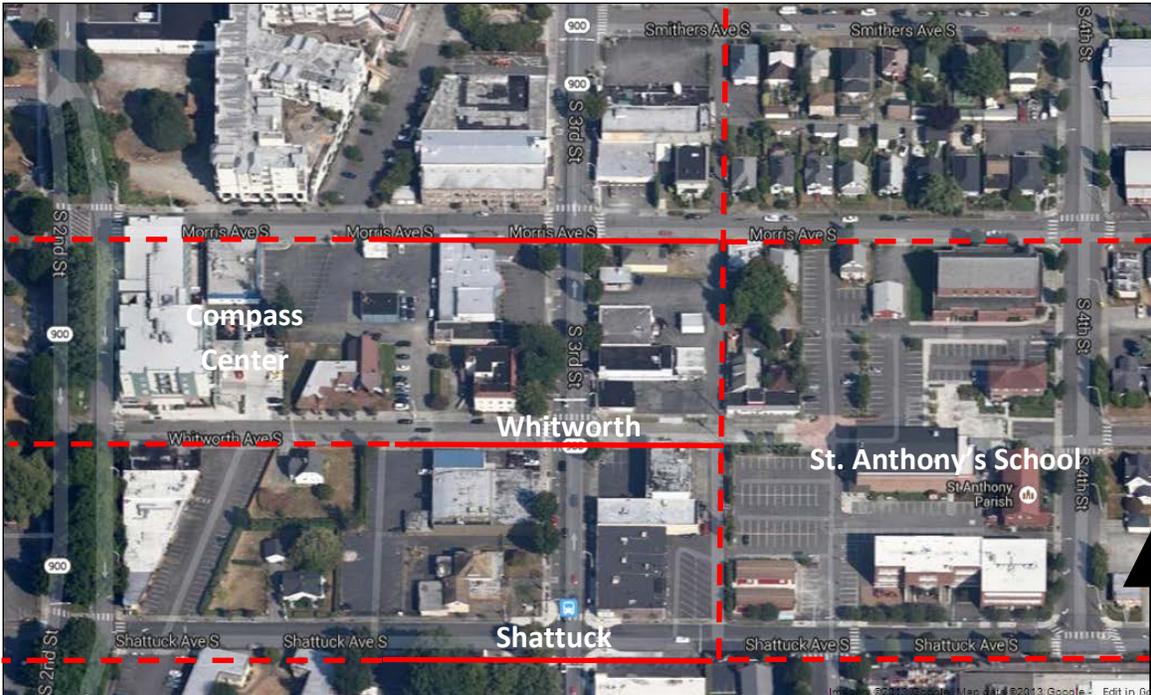


South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Intersection with Whitworth Avenue

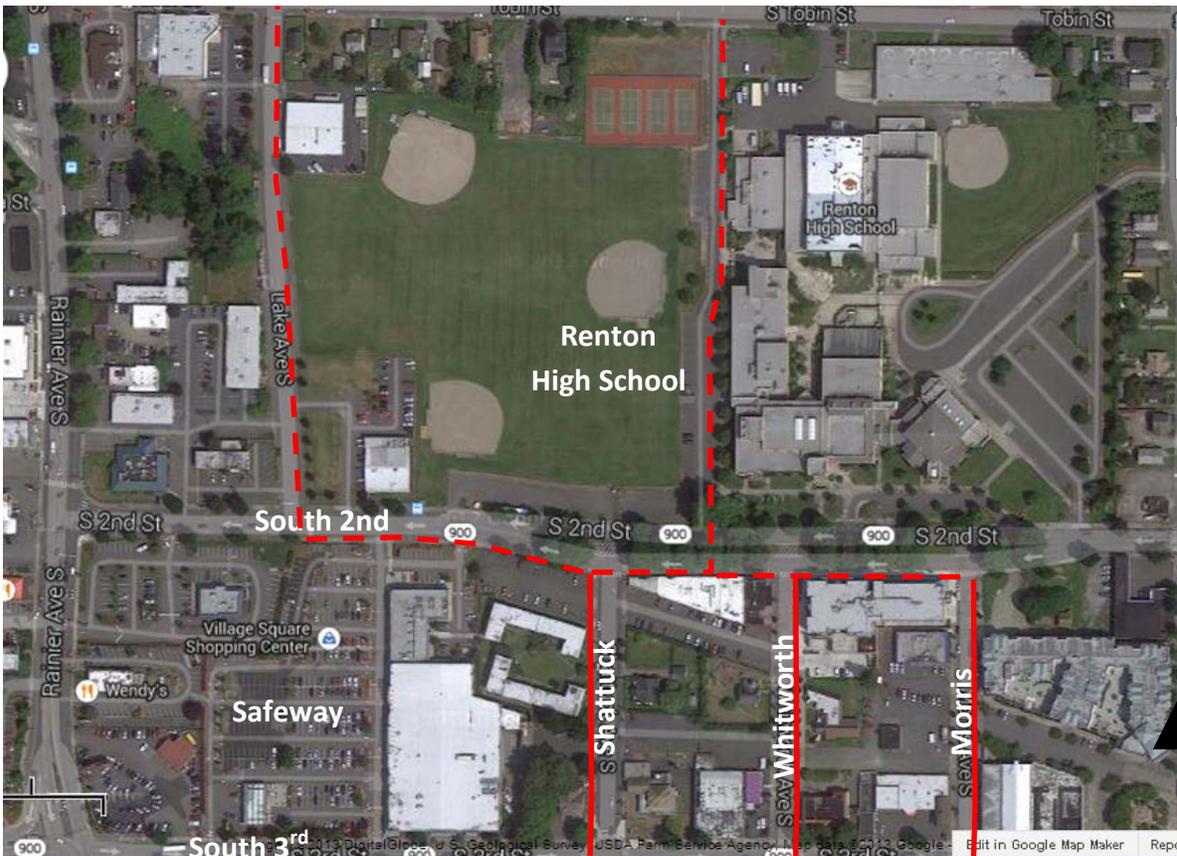


South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Intersection with Morris Avenue

**Issue #3:** How far to the south and north does the boundary extend from the starting point on South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street? For example in regards to the extent to the south, if the boundary begins at Shattuck Avenue, should St. Anthony's School which begins roughly at the half block point to the south be included? If the boundary begins at Whitworth Avenue, then St. Anthony's School is still present at roughly that half block position. In regards to the northern boundary, at Whitworth Avenue, would the boundary extend to the Compass Veterans Center or extend further north across South 2<sup>nd</sup> Street to include Renton High School?

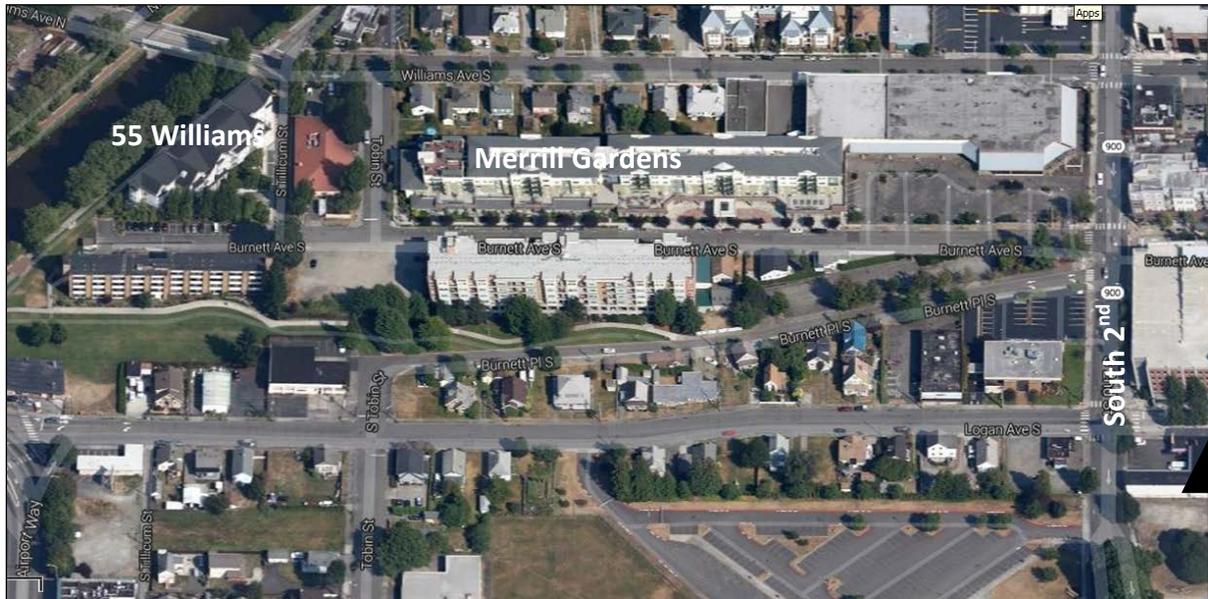


South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street at center looking east with St. Anthony's in the lower right



Looking north South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street with South 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and Renton High School

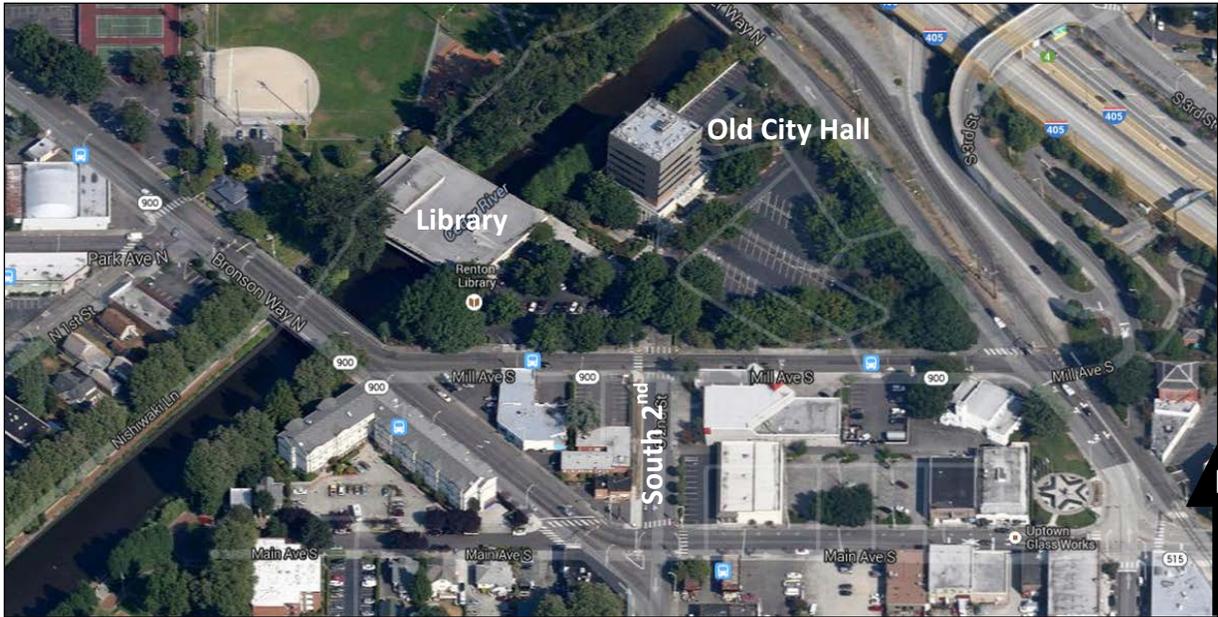
**Issue #4:** It is clear that South 2<sup>nd</sup> Street is perceived as part of the central core area of Downtown, but it is not clear how far to the north beyond South 2<sup>nd</sup> Street the northern boundary should extend. The Pedestrian District extends just one parcel to the north, while the CD zone runs north to the Cedar River along just Logan Avenue and Burnett Avenue, and the Multi-Family Tax Exemption area extends to the Cedar River. Does Downtown include all of the multi-family development that is on Burnett Avenue (Merrill Gardens, and the 55 Williams condominiums) to the Cedar River? Does it continue on towards the east to include Jones Park and to meet with the recommended eastern boundary at the library and old City Hall?



South 2<sup>nd</sup> Street with Burnett Avenue



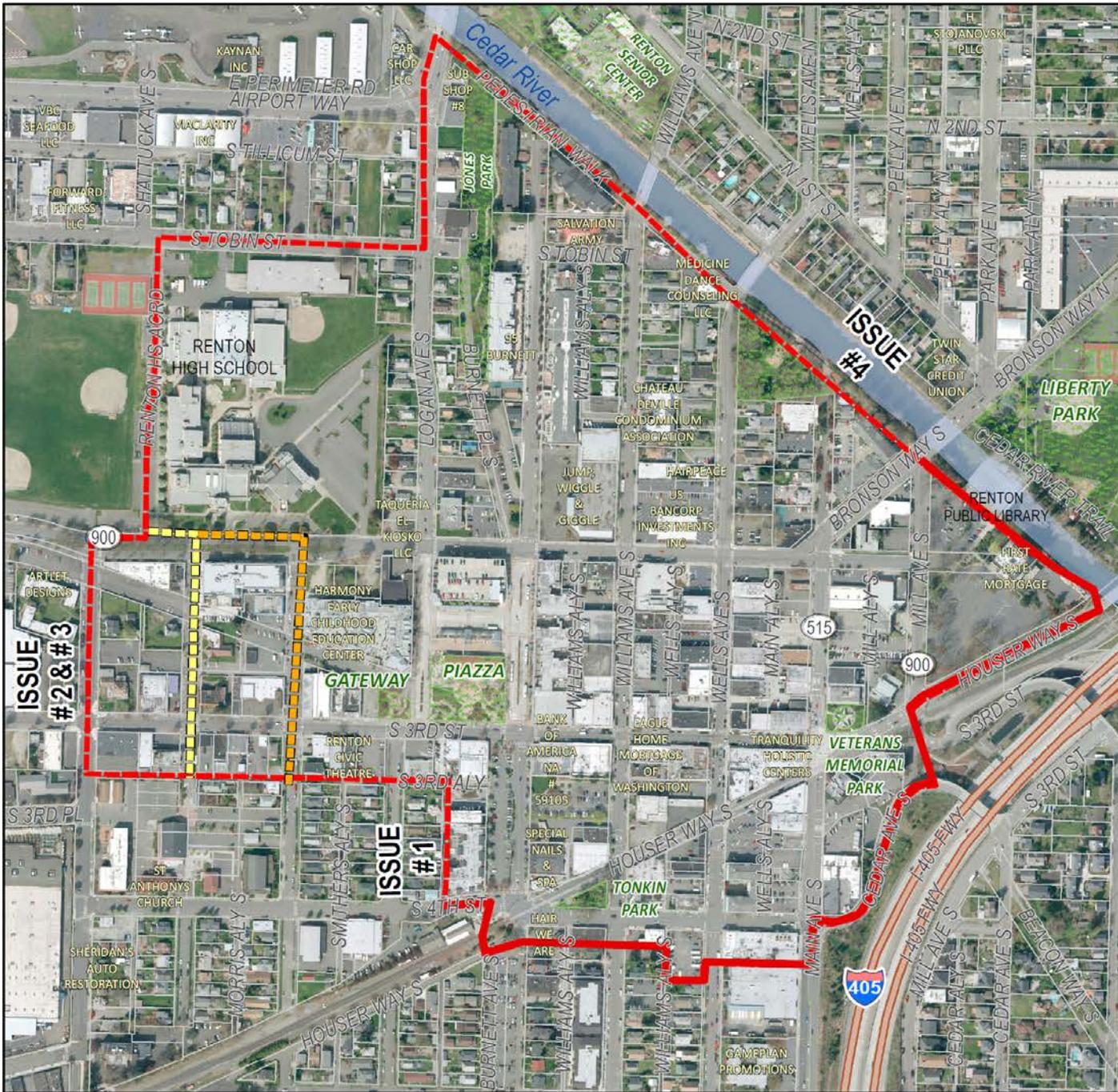
South 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Chateau de Ville and Jones Park



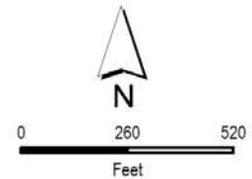
South 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Library and old City Hall

The final page is a summary map identifying the staff recommended boundary and issue areas.

# Mapping Downtown



 Downtown Boundary Options



Date: 10/31/2013

Community & Economic Development

C. F. "Chip" Vincent, Administrator/Planning Director  
Adriana Abramovich, GIS Analyst



Path: H:\CED\Planning\GIS\GIS\_projects\doctel\_items\2013\Property Maintenance\Mapx\Mapping Downtown 8x11\_Nov2013.mxd