

August 17, 2004

The pressing need to REVISIT Market St.

The University of Washington has included the vacation of Market Street between 17th and 21st Streets in their master plan. While this may be a reasonable and positive element of the master plan when looking internally at the ultimate campus layout, many developments over the last 10 years point to the need to revisit this issue.

The **NEGATIVE IMPACT** of closing Market St.

- **SAFETY:** Emergency response to victims would be affected by changes to fire and police access routes.
- **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:** Divides Tacoma's Downtown into 2 disconnected areas.
- **PROMOTES CONGESTION & CONFUSION:** Tacoma's natural system of horizontal streets is compromised.

ANALYZING the **PROBLEM** of closing Market St.

1. The city should review cross-town traffic needs in light of the changes that have taken place in the downtown urban grid through the last decade. This has meant a significant change to the flow of traffic, particularly in the north-south direction.
2. Pacific Avenue is a much different "main street" with the light rail line from 25th Street to the transition at 17th Street.
3. The closure of Commerce Street from 17th Street to 21st Street through the University has provided a pedestrian spine to the campus, yet it has shifted traffic flexibility in the area. The addition of the light rail line from 17th Street to 9th Street has also impacted traffic through the City.
4. The closing of Broadway for the convention center has dictated the transition of the pedestrian corridor on Broadway from the Theatre District down to Commerce Street as it reaches the University. This has eliminated a key link from Jefferson into the heart of the City.

5. Jefferson Street has also been compromised by the closure through the park in front of the convention center and the new adjacent hotel. This change has also forced the flow of traffic onto Market Street.
6. The exit from I-705 to 21st Street and Pacific should also be reviewed. The traffic department of the City may not have anticipated traffic through this intersection. It appears that the majority of the traffic is proceeding up 21st Street to the Market/Jefferson intersection, then traveling north on Market Street. Part of this increased traffic needs attention due to the major cross-town arterial represented by 19th Street. How vehicles transition from 21st Street to 19th as part of this arterial traffic movement needs to be part of the solution.
7. Market Street is a major street that ties Center Street and Jefferson at the south end of the central business district (CBD) to St. Helens at the north end of the CBD. If thoughtfully considered in the larger context, Market Street may well be a future important cross-town arterial that ties the neighborhoods together from the South End and Nalley Valley to the North End and the Stadium District. As Market Street links these neighborhoods it travels through the heart of the downtown area.
8. No other street opportunity (such as Fawcett) would tie to Pacific Avenue downhill and Tacoma Avenue uphill. Blocking off Market Street may upset a balance of vehicular and pedestrian linkages through the heart of the City.
9. The City should be proactive with the University of Washington Tacoma in evaluating the Market Street vacation issue in light of all these new dynamics. Sound long range planning should commence in the near future and UWT needs to be part of this process. The possible addition of the Carlton Building to UWT's footprint may also change the picture.
10. The City should encourage UWT to review their master plan with the understanding that the city has changed since this plan was first written as well as updated.
11. UWT should be reminded of their own statement, "unlike more traditional universities, metropolitan universities are to a large extent defined by the communities in which they exist".
12. While a review of the master plan will involve a cost, making changes early in the process may be less expensive than trying to change other elements to mitigate potential adverse impacts.

13. The community, including the Hillside Development Council, the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects, and many others will offer to step forward to be a part of the solution for the betterment of the City and the University.
14. An example such as Portland State University in Portland, Oregon, illustrates how to really become an urban university within a predominately open urban grid of the city. We should aspire and work for such integration and partnership in Tacoma.
15. A change in the opportunity to close Market Street will modify the central element of the "Green Space" in the campus. This concept should be adaptable to "share" the central green space with the whole city and not turn into a cloistered enclave. Safety of students and visitors to the campus and the City should be part of this revised solution.

The City needs to take a proactive role in leading the community to a positive solution for the University and the City. Proceeding with the closure of Market Street without thoughtfully considering all the ramifications may have long term undesired results. This could affect the safety and the economic development of the City. If the closure is the best solution, it will stand the test of close scrutiny.

The City should not do any less. Thank you.

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