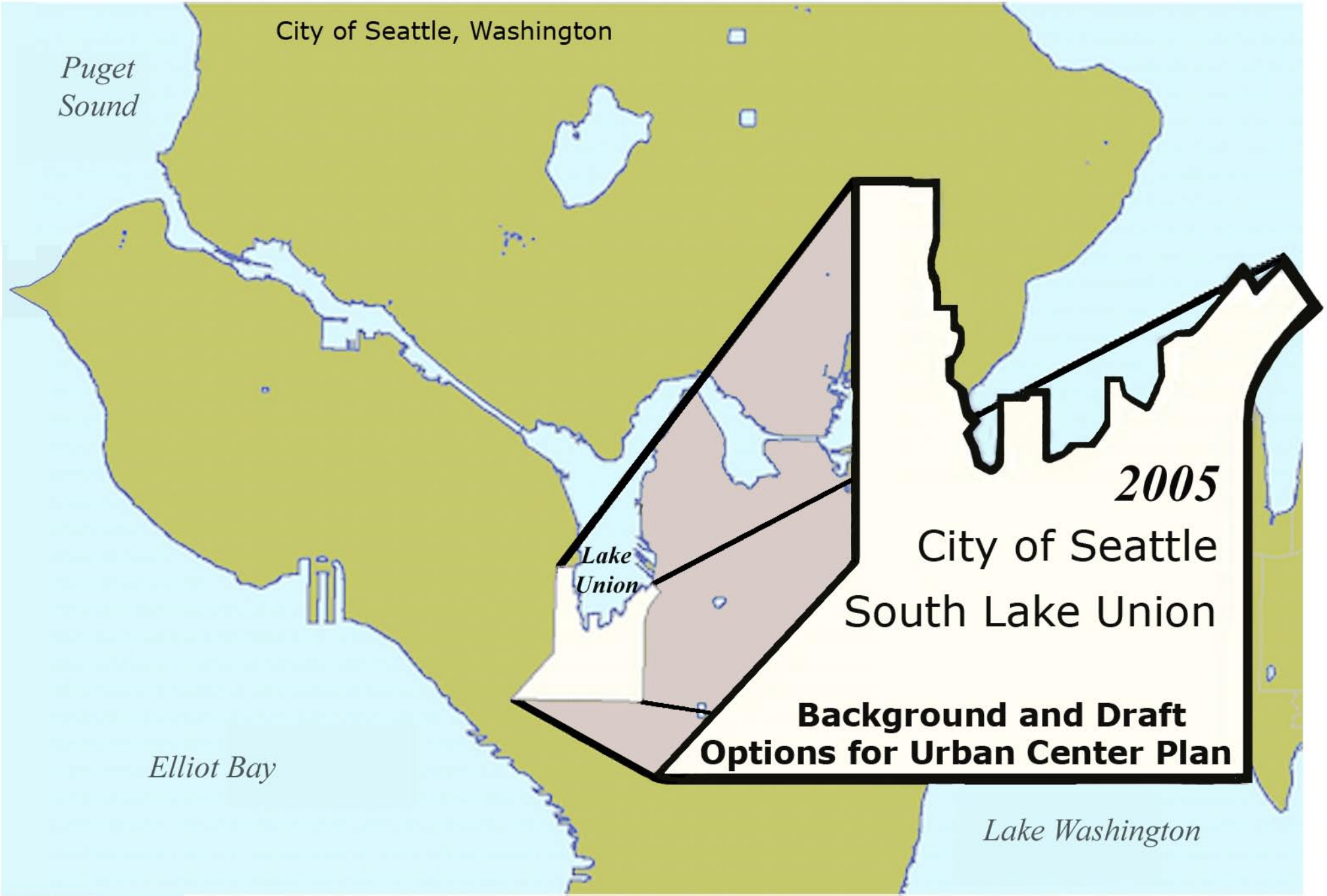


# 2005
# City of Seattle
# South Lake Union

## Background and Draft Options for Urban Center Plan

City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development
University of Washington Department of Urban Design and Planning

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# Introduction to Studio

In January 2005, the City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development (DPD) enlisted the help of first year graduate students in the University of Washington's Department of Urban Design and Planning to assist the City in its long-term planning efforts in South Lake Union. Much has changed in this center city neighborhood since development of the 1998 Neighborhood Plan, and the City has determined that an updated vision is warranted. The graduate students undertook a six month long interdisciplinary planning studio project, guided by the following purposes:

- To examine existing plans and studies for consistency of vision
- To prepare preliminary analyses supporting parallel planning and engineering processes such as the Mercer Street Revisions and the South Lake Union Street Car
- To identify focus areas of opportunity for further research and recommendation in support of the planning process
- To conduct research and analysis in those focus areas, generating strategies for implementation in each area

The students spent the first ten weeks researching existing conditions, both by analyzing current planning documents and through fieldwork. At the end of this period, they prepared existing conditions memoranda identifying areas of opportunity for further research and analysis. Appendix X contains these memoranda as well as a summary of their contents. With direction from the Department of Planning and Development, students then undertook a gap analysis and drafted neighborhood improvement ideas for South Lake Union within eight specific topic areas: Community Identity, Urban Form, Connectivity, Streetscapes, Housing, Green Development, Adaptive Reuse, and the Unnamed Triangle, a 21-block area adjoining South Lake Union. The result of this process is a 200 page document with all their findings, which will serve as the starting point for engaging the community in developing an updated vision for South Lake Union.

In June of 2005, DPD sponsored a neighborhood open house at the South Lake Union Park Naval Reserve Building, where students presented their work to the public in order to generate awareness and gather feedback from community members. Although this event concluded the student's formal involvement, the South Lake Union planning process will continue. The ideas in this document represent strategies that the City and the community together can evaluate, modify, and/or use as starting points for further discussion. It is our recommendation that the city and community use this document as a toolbox as they work to create the best possible future for South Lake Union.

# Introduction to this Report

This report is presented in eight sections. The following summaries briefly describe each of these sections.

## Community Identity

Community identity bonds citizens and drives commerce. South Lake Union's current identity is a patchwork of uses, perceptions and history. Through a focus group led by the Community Identity team, local residents, business representatives, and members of non-profit and social service organizations identified two themes that reflect both the past and the emerging identity of South Lake Union: maritime heritage and sustainability. This section discusses concepts and benefits of community identity and presents the process that the Community Identity team utilized to produce recommendations on community identity and branding implementation strategies for the City of Seattle.

## Green Development

The future large-scale redevelopment of South Lake Union provides an enormous opportunity to improve the area's environment. The Green Development section presents goals and strategies for the City of Seattle to address the environmental sustainability of South Lake Union's stakeholders. This section focuses on the importance of green development within the following areas: water, energy, habitat, material use (waste), built environment and education. Green Development also provides an overview of existing strategies utilized to encourage sustainable development in both Seattle and other U.S. and international neighborhoods.

## Connectivity, Wayfinding and Walkability

Travel into, around, and out of South Lake Union is impeded by its topography, insufficient signage, and scarce services. Improvements are necessary to accommodate the neighborhood's expected growth. This section presents recommendations that enhance the entrances into South Lake Union and facilitate travel within the neighborhood. It also contains the results of a GIS analysis of neighborhood walkability and presents recommendations based on those results.

## Streetscapes

South Lake Union is currently automobile-oriented. Adding pedestrian-oriented amenities will improve the character and vitality of the neighborhood by putting more people on the streets and facilitating local mobility. The streetscapes section presents recommendations that enhance streets and public spaces. Thomas Street and Denny Park are given particular attention.

## Urban Form

South Lake Union's incoming development will greatly affect its urban form. The urban form section consists of three 3-Dimensional models of South Lake Union that visually communicate potential future changes in the neighborhood. One model illustrates the current urban form while the others encompass two different alternatives for accommodating expected growth.

## Housing

South Lake Union's future population is projected to increase by 8,000 households by 2024 (Seattle Comprehensive Plan 2005). Accommodating growth by addressing housing diversity, affordability and ownership is integral to present and future South Lake Union residents. The Housing Section addresses these and related housing issues identified as drivers for neighborhood community development and economic sustainability. The Housing section provides an overview of methods that the City of Seattle and other municipalities currently utilize and a table of organizations (Organizations Matrix) with potential to address the area's housing issues. The housing section also includes policy and incentive recommendations that could be adopted by the City of Seattle to further address future housing issues within South Lake Union.

## Adaptive Reuse

Adaptively reusing buildings will help to preserve South Lake Union's historic character. The Adaptive Reuse section addresses the convergence of the area's heritage with future redevelopment. This report investigates the policies used by Seattle and other cities to promote adaptive reuse and highlights obstacles in order to provide a critical overview of adaptive reuse opportunities within South Lake Union. A third element to this section focuses on a local case study highlighting the adaptive reuse process. A policy recommendation to the City of Seattle that aims to encourage adaptive reuse in Seattle is also identified.

## Triangle Study

There is a 12-block area of land west of South Lake Union bounded by Broad Street, Denny Way and Aurora Avenue. This triangle area is currently under-utilized, but has great potential considering its location between Seattle Center and South Lake Union. This section details three alternative development plans for the triangle, each encompassing four common elements: connectivity, housing, accessibility and mixed use/services.