



Background

The Mt. Baker Station Area hosts a light rail station that provides speedy access to downtown Seattle and Sea-Tac Airport, and soon to Capitol Hill and the University of Washington. A mix of retail, restaurants, light industrial, services, and nonprofits are located here, including Lowe's Hardware and QFC, ethnic and fast-food restaurants, banks, insurance companies, salons, a Pepsi bottling plant and the University of Washington Laundry. Lighthouse for the Blind, Franklin High School and Asian Counseling and Referral Services are among the nonprofit and public institutions serving the area.

The neighborhood, which has always been recognized for its strong cultural diversity, was once known as "Garlic Gulch" for its Italian-American immigrants; other cultural groups include families of Japanese, Jewish, African and Greek ancestry. To this day, the area is recognized and celebrated as among the most diverse in the region.

The Lowe's site was once the location of both Dugdale Park (1913) and Sick's Stadium (1934) and hosted the Seattle Indians and Seattle Rainiers baseball teams, as well as performers such as Elvis and Jimi Hendrix. The Cheasty and Mount Baker Boulevards, which link the neighborhood to nearby communities, are part of the Olmstead brothers' legacy.

While the Mt. Baker Station Area has potential, it is hamstrung by insufficient infrastructure and a lack of population, activity, and identity. Rather than a walkable center with a mix of housing, services, and employment, the area around the station is characterized by vacant lots, car-oriented businesses, parking lots, and traffic. There is no "there" there. However, the area may be starting to see a turning point, with the arrival of Artspace Mt. Baker Lofts in 2014, the proposal for 300 residential units at 25th and McClellan, the 2014 upzone, and the "Accessible Mt. Baker" transportation project to improve pedestrian safety and accessibility.

Process

In 2015, over 30 local stakeholders representing property owners, businesses, nonprofits, residents, and others came together to establish common economic priorities for the Mt. Baker Station Area, reaching consensus on a vision and goals for the area, as represented in this Action Plan. The Action Plan draws heavily on the North Rainier Neighborhood Plan and the associated work done over the past 20 years by community members, volunteers, local organizations, and City staff to build a strong community vision for the Mt. Baker Station Area.

Stakeholders included: Artspace, Buck and Buck, Campadre Coffee, Friends of Mt. Baker Town Center, Lighthouse for the Blind, Mt. Baker Housing, Mt. Baker Community Club, Rainier Valley Chamber of Commerce, Rainier Valley Community Development Fund, Ross Law Advisors, Southeast Effective Development, The Landmark Group, U.S. Bank, University of Washington, Van Gogh Development, Washington Care Center, and Wells Fargo, as well as local property owners and residents.

Vision:

Mt Baker HUB Business Association works to promote an equitable, sustainable and thriving North Rainier Business District.

- A pedestrian-friendly and transit-oriented town center
- An accessible and safe community for all
- Connected neighborhood residential areas
- Strong and diverse businesses
- A Hub for green technology and jobs

The vision for the Mt. Baker Station Area is a pedestrian-friendly, transit-oriented town center that "feels like a place," is accessible and safe for all, and is connected with neighboring residential areas. Critical infrastructure needs have been addressed, allowing new development to take place. The Station Area has a strong identity and thriving, ethnically diverse businesses. New employers have moved to the area, which is becoming a hub for green technology and green jobs. Local businesses, nonprofits, and residents work together to advocate for the District.



Steering Committee

- Aubrey Batchelor, Owner and Manager, Compadre Coffee
- Sue Cary, Resident and Former Board Member, Mt. Baker Community Council
- Susan Davis, Executive Director, Rainier Chamber of Commerce
- Talis Abolins, Friends of Mt. Baker Town Center
- Betsy Hale, local property owner
- Genevieve Hale-Case, urban planning student
- Thomas Harper, President, Van Gogh Development
- Lance Matteson, Executive Director, Southeast Effective Development
- Barbara Oswald, Mount Baker Neighborhood Center for the Arts
- Nicole Perfette, Regional Banking District Manager, Wells Fargo
- Mike Rooney, Executive Director, Mt. Baker Housing
- David Yeaworth, local resident



Key Priorities and Projects

| Cleanliness and Safety | Business Development | Marketing and Promotions | Built Environment | Organizational Development |
|-------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| District cleanup events | Business outreach | Hub Fest | Living Community Challenge | Board, Database, Newsletter |

ACTION PLAN

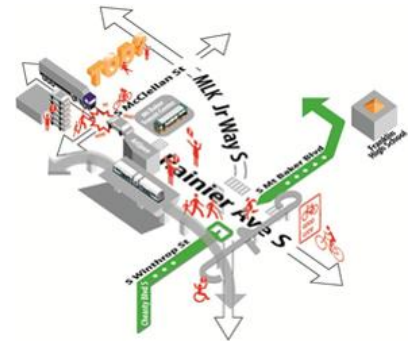
APPEARANCE AND PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT/INFRASTRUCTURE

Objectives: *Advocate for a pedestrian-friendly, accessible, and safe environment that “feels like a place.” Improve pedestrian and bike access to light rail. Enhance physical and emotional connections to neighboring areas, such as East Beacon Hill and Mt. Baker east of 34th Ave. Work with the City to address infrastructure needs that are impeding development.*

Goal 1: Advocate for and support improvements to MLK and Rainier Avenues, including the pedestrian environment.

Potential Action Strategies

- a. Build a coalition and advocate to the City for needed transportation improvements:
 - Reconnect Olmstead Boulevards for better East-West connections
 - A full, robust sidewalk system
 - Improved pedestrian safety for the visually impaired
 - Complete streets that serve all modes consistent with the Accessible Mt. Baker prioritization – walk/bike; transit; freight; passenger vehicles
- b. Promote the Move Seattle Levy (which includes funding for Accessible Mt. Baker)
- c. Develop a parking strategy that supports businesses and customers; conduct surveys to gather data on the problems
- d. Develop a proposal for east–west connector services to improve access and overcome barriers to using light rail related to safety, topography and distance
- e. Ask local businesses to face the street and clean up their front yards.



Goal 2: Advocate for and support public space, green spaces, and corridors/connections to public and green spaces.

Potential Action Strategies

- a. Identify the community’s desired locations for parks and public spaces
- b. Partner with developers, non-profit organizations, and city leaders to bridge the open space gap
- c. Try “tactical urbanism” (low-cost, temporary changes such as pop-up parks) as a way to pilot new approaches to public space
- d. Get involved with new neighborhood design guidelines



Goal 3: Support efforts to clean up contamination and address utilities infrastructure, leveraging the Accessible Mt. Baker project whenever possible

Potential Action Strategies

- a. Assess overall cleanup and infrastructure needs:
 - Soil contamination
 - Stormwater line under QFC. Are there other areas with this problem?
 - High speed internet
- b. Identify resources and sources of funding
- c. Work with King County to improve the Wet Weather Facility

CLEAN AND SAFE

Objective: Improve public safety, the perception of safety, and the cleanliness of the Mt. Baker business district.

Goal 1: Improve public safety

Potential Action Strategies

- a. Plan and advocate for crime prevention strategies in the Town Center
 - Research best practices on crime prevention and public safety
- b. Talk with SDOT about strategies to improve pedestrian safety, especially for the visually impaired (e.g. longer crossing times at intersections)
- c. Consider the implications for public safety and cultural and linguistic diversity when implementing infrastructure improvements and other aspects of this plan

Goal 2: Improve cleanliness

Potential Action Strategies

- a. Organize volunteer cleanups. (Or support/promote existing events)
- b. Ask local businesses to face the street and clean up their front yards.



BUSINESS AND RETAIL DEVELOPMENT/ MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Objective: *Strengthen the Mt. Baker business district identity and brand; Plan, advocate for, and promote small businesses and job creation.*

Goal 1: Raise the profile of the area by defining the district and giving it an identity



Potential Action Strategies

- a. Start identifying as Mt. Baker and not North Rainier (communicate this to City)
- b. Ensure that diversity is part of the identity
- c. Commission a signature art piece
- d. Begin to market the district
 - Use media and social media to spread the word about the district, businesses, and events
 - Design a logo or use the existing logo from the walking brochure
 - Invest in Welcome to Mt. Baker signs/banners



Goal 2: Enhance vibrancy through programs and events as a way to build community, bring in visitors, and improve safety

Potential Action Strategies

- a. Mt. Baker Community club events can be a way to program spaces – get them involved and thinking about this as a part of the boundary
- b. Open Studio events at the Lofts; art installation on vacant lots; art walk
- c. Use the station area and high school as venues to hold community events, such as block party/festivals/food truck rodeos/kid friendly activities
- d. Look into getting a farmers market and/or help existing produce business with issues such as location/parking
- e. Connect to Cheasty Bike Trail

Goal 3: Support a vision of new development that fosters a strong and successful community

Potential Action Strategies

- a. Create an overlay concept that addresses open space, housing, transportation, businesses, and articulates the communities vision for how to manage growth
 - Articulate the area’s value proposition – a hybrid model of light industrial and pedestrian with three primary sectors (light industrial, services focused on residents, and office)
- b. Share the vision and conduct tours with developers, investors, brokers, and City staff
- c. Build off the Othello Corridor market analysis study: Identify what hinders business development, who is interested in redevelopment, current lease terms, and growth sectors that make sense for the area
 - Explore property consolidation and identify owners of vacant and underutilized space
- d. Retain current businesses and recruit new businesses and residents
 - Work to retain ethnic diversity of the businesses, through small business assistance, small affordable spaces like plazas or bazaars, or other strategies
 - Explore business space models such as co-working, makers spaces, and entrepreneurial and learning spaces
 - Connect business owners to City resources and funding sources
 - Support a continuum of housing types at different income levels, including workforce housing

BUSINESS ORGANIZATION

Objective: Bring district stakeholders (business, nonprofits, institutions, and residents) together as a voice to advocate for a transit oriented town center that supports business, residents, and visitors, and adds employment.

Goal 1: Create a strong core organization to advocate for the area with all key stakeholders represented and one acting as the fiscal sponsor.

Potential Action Strategies

- a. Select a Fiscal Sponsor
- b. Work to expand participation, including other property owners, local employers, and businesses and residents
- c. Create and maintain relationships with key City staff, and communicate regularly
- d. Develop a Communication Plan that defines the business district’s audiences (residents, business owners, neighboring organizations, City etc.) and outlines how, when, and why to communicate with each
 - Develop a website
- e. Explore potential boundaries and interest in a future Business Improvement Area

