

South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan

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South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan

Preface

What a Plan for South Lake Union Will Accomplish.

- **Perpetuate the role of the neighborhood in the City.**

South Lake Union has served as a commercial and light industrial support area to the City since the late 1800's. It has played a vital role in providing services and material that are utilized by downtown businesses and surrounding neighborhoods. This plan speaks to the continuance of that role through emphasis on provision of a stable and supportive environment for business while fostering a diversity of compatible uses.
- **Recognize the longstanding commitment of many area businesses and property owners.**

South Lake Union is characterized by numerous businesses and property ownerships that date back several generations. They have shown a commitment to South Lake Union through their continued presence. They have insisted on an open and inclusive planning process and hopefully will be recognized for the guiding hand they have offered.
- **Recognize the mix and diversity of use.**

South Lake Union has never been and does not want to be a monoculture. It has seen some of the first businesses in Seattle and, in Cascade, contains one of the City's oldest neighborhoods. As it has evolved, it has seen subtle change that has added to, but never dominated, the character of the neighborhood.
- **The plan can end uncertainty.**

South Lake Union has been subject to several major proposals in the recent decades that have cast a cloud over businesses and development opportunities. By making a definitive statement on the future of the neighborhood and supporting that future with appropriate policy and capital programs, the area will flourish.
- **Lay a foundation for long term development**

South Lake Union contains heavily traveled transportation corridors for surrounding neighborhoods and is the location of what maybe the City's last major shoreline park development opportunity. The City owns significant undeveloped parcels it has held pending long-term decisions on Mercer Corridor congestion and development of South Lake Union Park. The Plan's recommendations integrate a Mercer Corridor plan that addresses congestion issues within the resources of the City and supports development of South Lake Union Park and Maritime Heritage Center.
- **The plan can provide new opportunities.**

South Lake Union has the land-base and unique physical relationship with its surroundings to continue to provide new opportunities for business, recreation and, to a lesser degree, housing. The neighborhood "has done this successfully in the past, and with thoughtful planning, can continue this role well into the next century.

South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan

Executive Summary

The South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan has evolved out of a process which has seen **extraordinary commitment** by area businesses, property owners and residents. They have been able to **define** those aspects of community development that need attention to perpetuate the **health** and vitality of this diverse neighborhood. They chose to focus on three components: Neighborhood Character, Parks and Open Space and Transportation. **Key recommendations in these focus areas are highlighted below. The full description of all recommendations is contained in Appendix A.**

Neighborhood Character

With a healthy respect for the **past**, the Plan makes recommendations for moving South Lake Union into the **future** with purpose and **character**:

- . Develop and adopt design guidelines for the distinct sub-areas **within the** neighborhood which encourage **future** developments to **reflect** their surroundings.
- . Revise certain aspects of the land use code that are eroding neighborhood continuity and jeopardizing the working **environment**.

Parks & Open Space

The **Plan contains a strong recommendation** to pursue development of **South Lake Union Park** and to acquire and develop other needed open space:

- . Adopt a revised South Lake Union Park Master Plan that features our maritime heritage **while** providing for general open space needs and **waterfront** access.

- Complete Cascade Playground and purchase the privately owned **Denny Playfield** as a new Seattle Park.

Transportation

The South Lake Union Plan recommends the following two key strategies for **transportation needs**:

- A package of smaller, focused improvements to the **Mercer/Valley** corridor which benefit circulation and access without major property **acquisition** or disruption.
- Pursuit of a comprehensive parking study to **address** the needs of the various sub-areas of the neighborhood.

'South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan

Plan Development

Lake Union is a designated Hub Urban Village under Seattle's 1994 Comprehensive Plan. As such, it was eligible for funding to develop a neighborhood based plan. Planning for the area was delayed, however, as the City considered the prospect of creating a major urban park, "The Commons," in the heart of the neighborhood and revising zoning and circulation systems in conjunction with the park. Funding for the park and approval for an area master plan was placed before the voters in 1995.

The South Lake Union Planning Organization (SLUPO) was formed in September, 1995 by several community members to discuss the future of the South Lake Union area after the initial vote on the Seattle Commons proposal failed. SLUPO was formed for the purpose of achieving common ground amongst community members on either side of the Seattle Commons issue.

Approximately 80 individuals representing a range of interests in the area attended the first meeting in September, 1995. At this meeting, a core group of 35 volunteers was identified and invited to be part of the initial membership of SLUPO.

The South Lake Union Planning Organization took a brief hiatus during a second vote on the revised Seattle Commons proposal in Spring, 1996. After the election, significant stakeholders in the South Lake Union area were invited to participate in the re-forming of SLUPO.

Currently, the participants in SLUPO number over 100 members. Members represent the Cascade Neighborhood Council, the South Lake Union Roundtable, South Lake Union Business Association, area property owners, Center for Wooden Boats, Maritime Heritage Foundation, Cascade Area Business Council, Northwest Seaport and architects working on historic preservation.

The South Lake Union Planning Organization based its neighborhood planning process on past planning work in the area. Committee members have sponsored or participated in a significant number of South Lake Union planning activities in the past. Outcomes and products of these activities provide valuable background for South Lake Union neighborhood planning. These include the following

- South Lake Union Roundtable (Fall, 1996 to present)
- South Lake Union Park Planning Study (1987)
- South Lake Union Neighborhood Planning survey (questionnaire & results by SLUPO, 1996)
- South Lake Union historic building inventory
- Dozens of transportation studies for Mercer Street, Denny Way, the Seattle Center and Westlake Avenue North

In addition, the South Lake Union Planning Organization recognizes the Cascade Neighborhood Council's efforts on the following:

- Cascade Sustainability Forums
- Cascade Neighborhood visioning workshops
- Sustainability Guidelines

Focused Scope of South Lake Union Neighborhood Planning

Based on prior planning activities, the South Lake Union Planning organization has built on past work by focusing on a few issues where there is broad stakeholder consensus. There is general acceptance of the South Lake Union HUB Urban village designation package. SLUPO has reviewed the City's projected growth estimates as part of the Phase II planning process. Minor changes in the designation may occur as a result of adjustments to shared boundaries with adjoining Villages and Centers or as a result of recent changes in zoning for the Cascade Neighborhood.

South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan

Issues to be Addressed:

- Completion of South Lake Union Park along Lake Union shoreline and identification of other potential green spaces
 - Transportation and circulation
 - Neighborhood character
 - Participation in neighborhood design/planning efforts
 - Character treatment of arterials
- ecologically sound development and life-styles and promotion of ecologically sound business practices consistent within the regulatory environment.
 - ease of transportation for all modes within and through the area,
 - a variety of open spaces serving the needs of the area and the city, with emphasis on Lake Union, the continued preservation thereof for a wide range of uses, and

Planning Direction: Efforts of the South Lake Union Planning Organization leading up to Phase II Planning have included development of a mission statement, development of a vision of what the planning area will become and identification of issues of highest concern as determined through community surveys and a public workshop.

Mission: To develop a comprehensive long-range plan for the South Lake Union Hub Urban Village which enjoys broad support of primary stakeholders and addresses residential, commercial, transportation, and open space issues, and which will establish long-range regulatory predictability for future development of the area.

Vision: The future of the South Lake Union Planning Area will be characterized by

- a pervasive human scale ambiance consistent with a vital, aesthetically pleasing, safe, and energetic neighborhood which embraces a dynamic intermixing of opportunities for working, living and playing, and
- retention of a significant element of the area's commercial activities, including opportunities for business growth,
- a full spectrum of housing opportunities,

• a sensitivity to the area's history and historical elements, and

• coordination with plans of adjacent neighborhoods.

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History of South Lake “Union

South Lake Union is situated in an area that has long played a vital role in Seattle’s history. A trail used by Native Americans connected the south end of Lake Union with Seattle’s harbor. The Lake was referred to by Native Americans as “Xa’ten” (Little Lake) or “Terms Chuck” (Little Water). Lake Washington was considered the Big Water. Native Americans had trails leading from the different lakes to Elliott Bay and the Duwamish River, which was a center for the Duwamish people. Early European settlers found several Indian camps on the shoreline near Westlake. Originally Lake Union was about one-third larger than it is today. A small bay extended inland to Mercer Street and a stream lay in and around Boren Avenue.

David Denny, one of the original Seattle pioneers, was the first white settler on the lake. His land claim of 1853 extended from Mercer to Denny Way. With the pioneers came industry, one of the first was logging. The formerly weeded area was quickly cleared. With the arrival of the first sawmill came the beginning of the lake’s, filling. Mills dumped sawdust into the water, covering the small bay at the Southwest corner of the lake.

The tract of land north and west of David Denny’s was claimed by Thomas Mercer (another original settler); Thomas Mercer is supposed to have named Lake Union, hoping that someday this lake would join Lake Washington and Puget Sound.

The Cascade community, one of the original Seattle residential communities, is the eastern flank of the neighborhood, further east is the I-5 Freeway, which now separates the neighborhood from Capitol Hill. To the west lies a mixture of newer buildings, Aurora Avenue (Highway 99), and Seattle Center.

Properties within South Lake Union display a unique architecture of the working 1920’s. Warehouses were built for manufacturing, storage and service. Some of Seattle’s first reinforced concrete structures

were built in South Lake Union, and one can clearly view the transition from brick, timber framed buildings to concrete and brick structures. Also prevalent are numerous examples of post and beam construction which have proven to be very adaptable to reuse. Buildings display a refreshing variety of decoration, including excellent examples of terra cotta, ornate brick patterns, and multi-pane industrial windows.

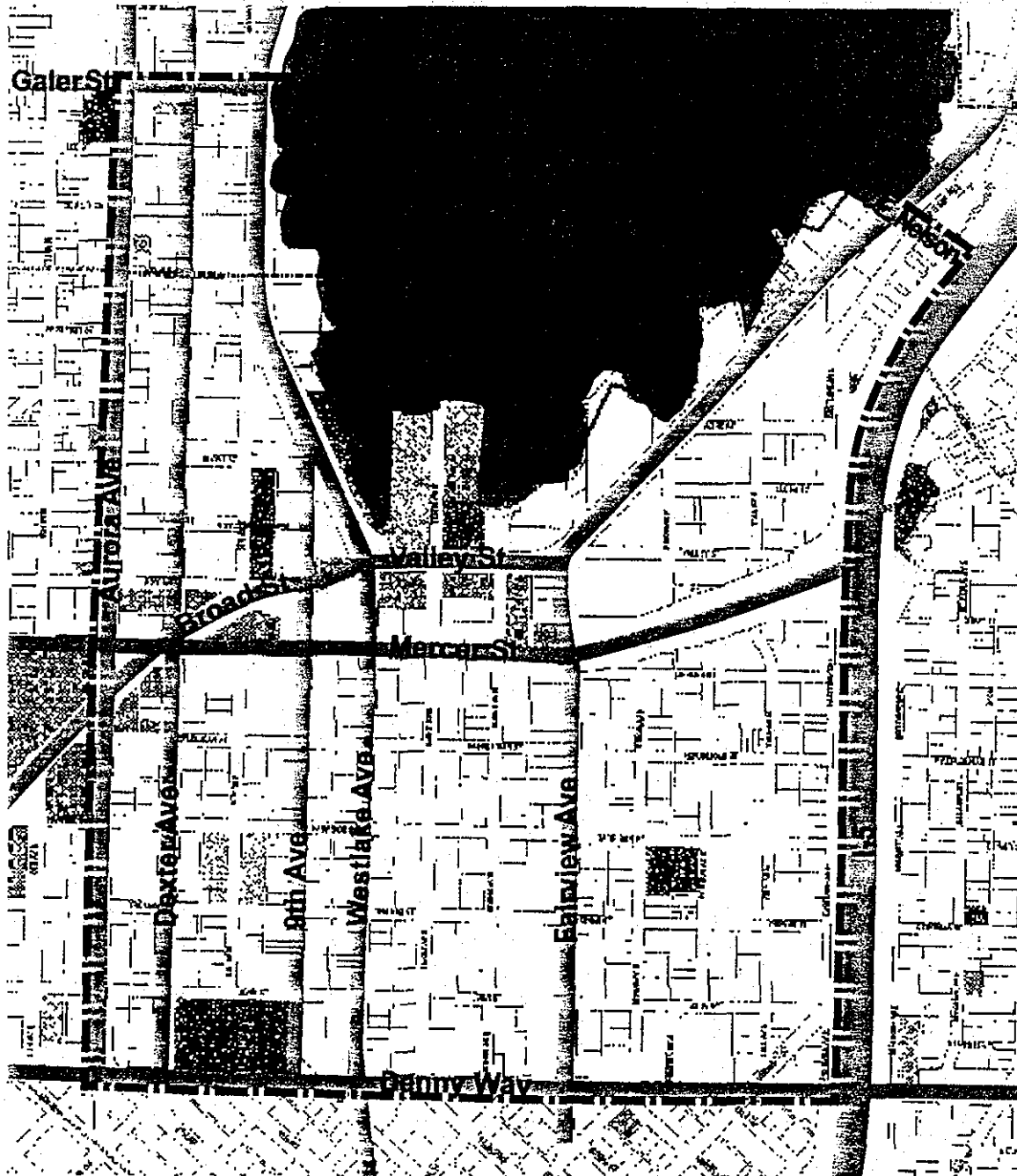
South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan

Existing Conditions

Planning Area

The planning area will consist of the area outlined in the map below (Figure 1). The area is bounded by

Interstate 5, to the east, Denny Way to the south, Aurora Avenue to the west and the Lake Union shoreline to the north (up to Galer and Ward Streets).



Planning Area ———

South Lake Union Planning Area

Figure 1

South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan

Selected Background Planning Information - South Lake Union

The planning area is approximately 446 acres in size, and at the time of the 1990 census contained 461 households, yielding a density of 1 household/acre. Employment level in the planning area was at 15,230 for a job density of 34 jobs per acre. Growth planning goals for the planning area, as contained in the 1994 Comprehensive Plan, included an increase of 1,700 households by 2014 and an additional 4,500 jobs by 2014. This would yield densities of 4.8 households per acre and 44 jobs per acre, respectively.

Existing zoned development capacity indicates more than sufficient reserve to accommodate Comprehensive Plan goals. There is zoning capacity for an additional 4,700 housing units and up to 26,500 additional jobs in up to 8 million square feet of commercial space.

The planning area includes areas zoned for light-industrial, commercial and residential development. The zoning in many areas allows a broad mix of uses, including housing. Areas abutting the shore of Lake Union are subject to special shoreline regulation.

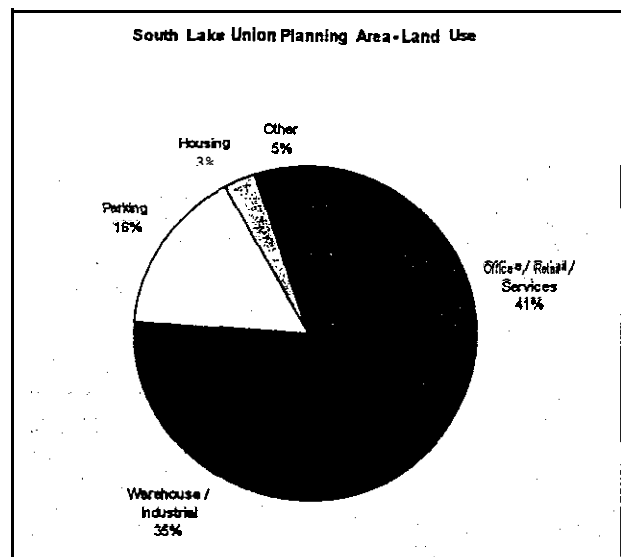
Twelve blocks in the center of the area are zoned Industrial Commercial (IC) to accommodate a mix of industrial and commercial activities, including high technology research and development uses. The northeastern tip of the area also includes zoning for industrial activity (IG-1 and IC), and generally promotes commercial and industrial activity oriented to the water.

The area east of Fairview and south of the Mercer access ramp to I-5, which includes the Cascade neighborhood, has been recently rezoned Seattle Cascade Mixed (SCM) and Seattle Cascade Mixed/Residential (SCM/R). Both of these zones allow mixed use, but the SCM/R zone includes special provisions to encourage residential development.

The remainder of the area is zoned for commercial development. The commercial zoning (NC3) along Westlake Avenue, Denny Way and the triangular area west of Aurora Avenue promotes pedestrian-oriented development, while elsewhere commercial zones (C1 and C2) accommodate auto-oriented and more intense commercial activity,

Height limits in the area range from 35 feet to 125 feet, with most areas in the 65-foot to 85-foot height range. Generally, heights are highest at the southern edge of the area abutting downtown, and decrease moving northward to the lake, with the lowest height areas along the shoreline.

Within the South Lake Union Planning Area, Office-Retail/Services are the dominant land uses. Combined, they account for approximately 41% of the developed land. Close in total kind area is the category of Warehouse/Industrial which occupies 35%. The combined residential categories of single family, multifamily, duplex/triplex, and other housing occupies only 3% of the surface area and 5% of the surface area hosts other land uses that occupy relatively small percentages of land and are categorized as open space/public facilities, entertainment, and unknown



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Neighborhood Character

In defining the character of South Lake Union, it is difficult to avoid using the terms *multifaceted*, *complex*, *historic* and *working community*.

South Lake Union is significant for the consistent role it has played in Seattle's history. It is one of few places left in the City where the mix of uses commonly found in a turn-of-the-century city still exist. Residences coexist with small manufacturing and/or service businesses. Scale is a critical factor. Businesses are housed in two-to four-story structures, which relate to an existing street grid relying on vehicular access.

The mix of varied uses is demonstrated through current occupants of the area that include a large computer network firm, a cancer research center, the City's oldest park and one of the oldest car dealerships, studio space for artists, the State's largest newspaper, a major bakery and a Russian Orthodox church. South Lake Union is a focal point for Seattle's photographic services and the wholesale florist industry. This complexity of use is further reflected along the south shore of Lake Union. Kenmore Air's seaplanes share the waterfront with South Lake Union Park, the Center for Wooden Boats, private moorage, restaurants, and marine oriented service industries.

Congruous to this mixed-use character is the idea that different areas within South Lake Union can be defined through land usage. For example, the Cascade District is mainly a mixture of business and residential, supporting many housing types and social services. Westlake and its vicinity comprise the core of the historic industrial/commercial area. Waterfront uses are defined by the fact that they are dependent on, or are enhanced by, Lake Union.

Affordable Housing: South Lake Union has developed as an area for affordable housing.

Cascade neighborhood has been the primary recipient of affordable housing *through* private and public subsidies. Since the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan in 1994 South Lake Union has seen permits issued for 244 units of affordable housing, and permits have been submitted for 185 additional units. This brings the total units permitted and submitted for permitting to 429. This level satisfies the entire Comprehensive Plan 20 year period.

An additional aspect of housing that requires consideration (in conjunction with adjacent neighborhoods on Lake Union) relates to development and control of "live-aboards" and water-related housing.

Social Services: Social services in the South Lake Union planning area are numerous, particularly in the Cascade neighborhood. A report on social services analyzed by zip code indicates that there are 78 wide-ranging social services within the 98109 zip code which is comprised of East and Lower Queen Anne and South Lake Union. A comparative analysis of Denny Triangle/Belltown (98121) and Eastlake/Lower capital Hill (98102) finds that 49% of all available social services are located in 98109.

Development Trends: Over the last twenty-five years, Lake Union's shoreline has seen a dramatic shift in land use away from traditional maritime and water-dependent industry to commercial, retail and restaurant development. Additional trends include the location of biotechnology firms and professional services southeast of Lake Union, as well as mixed-use commercial and residential development along Dexter and Westlake Avenues.

Existing development in the planning area is fairly low-density. There are several sites that are developed far below their zoned capacity, including a significant number of surface parking lots and some vacant lots.

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Parks and Open Space

There are three parks in the planning area. The heavily wooded Denny Park, Seattle's oldest public park, is centrally located at Denny Way and Ninth Avenue. Denny Park is approximately 4.7 acres and is the current site of certain administrative functions for the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation. Cascade Playground, located in the heart of the Cascade neighborhood, is over 2 acres in size. The playground has had improvements completed for the grounds and play equipment and provides informal recreation space for school children and area residents. The park also includes many other uses, such as a community P-Patch and benefits from a highly supportive volunteer effort.

The third park in the planning area is South Lake Union Park. In 1991, the South Lake Union Park Master Plan was adopted for the development of a park at the south end of Lake Union. The Master Plan called for a 12-14 acre facility that would accommodate maritime activities and passive park and recreation space. To date, park improvements have been partially completed on approximately 5.5 acres of land. The remaining portion of the designated site is currently owned by the United States Navy and is expected to be surprised in the Fall of 1998, at which time the City would have the first option for purchase. Existing park uses are illustrated on the following page (Figure 2).

For its current population South Lake Union has adequate acreage of park space but lacks any active space suitable for adult level pick-up games. A playfield at the corner of Denny Way and Westlake Avenue, developed as part of the "Commons" proposal, is privately owned and subject to development. Currently, in the highly urbanized area surrounding the South Lake Union planning area, there is a lack of significant open space.

Transportation and Traffic

General Background: Transportation has played a major role in the development of the South Lake Union Neighborhood. It has helped by providing excellent access to area businesses and also drawn attention to traffic conditions due to the congestion that occurs on local arterials. Acting somewhat as a crossroads as well as a gateway to Seattle and major regional attractions, the arterials in South Lake Union are often taxed beyond their original intent. South Lake Union itself is a major traffic generator of vehicular trips due to the auto oriented nature of businesses in the area and a major recipient of pass-through trips owing to its connection to regional links (I-5 and Aurora) for surrounding neighborhoods and activities (e. g. Seattle Center). Within the neighborhood, all traffic is handled on conventional city streets, a few of which are designated as arterials. The City has studied the situation over the past three decades, pursuing various plans aimed at addressing what was believed to be the problem. To date, no solution has surfaced which meets the combination of traffic needs, financial constraints and local support.

South Lake Union has a well developed system of arterials and local streets. East/west traffic is served by two corridors, Denny Way along the neighborhood's southern boundary and the Mercer/Valley corridor at the south end of Lake Union. Denny Way connects to I-5 southbound and serves not only South Lake Union but also Lower Queen Anne, Denny Triangle, Belltown and the Waterfront. The Mercer/Valley couplet connects to both North and South I-5 and serves Queen Anne, Magnolia, Fremont, portions of Ballard, Denny Triangle and Belltown and is one of two options to get around Lake Union. Both of these corridors are extremely congested and operate at or beyond capacity several hours a day and during major Seattle Center events.

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South Lake Union Park

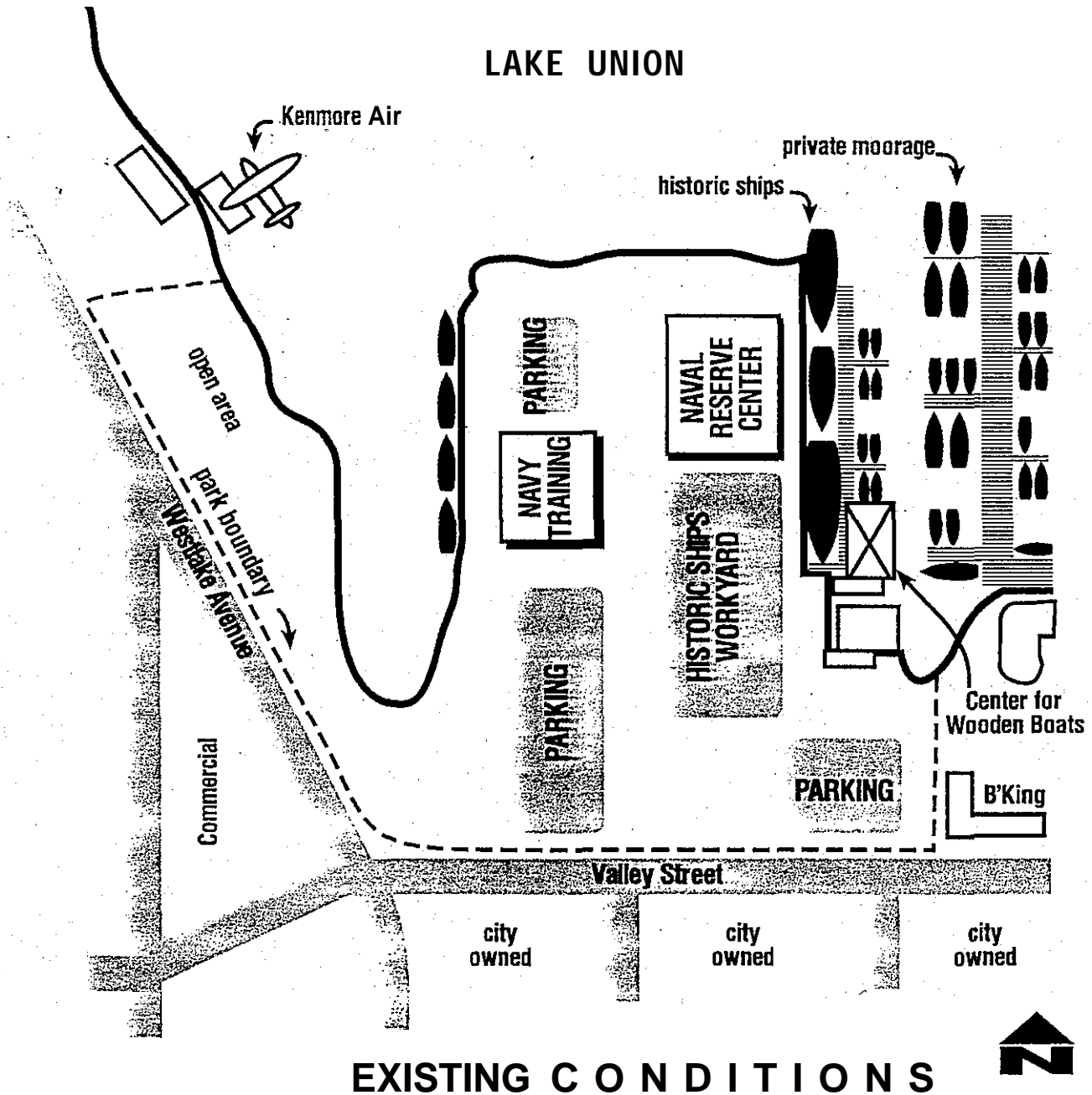


Figure 2

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North/south traffic is somewhat better served owing in-part to the parallel flows of I-5 and SR99 (Aurora) and in part to the fact that four arterials carry internal flows. The Dexter Avenue corridor carries traffic and bicycles from downtown to the north end of Queen Anne and is generally free-flowing. Westlake Avenue and 9th Avenue (one-way couplets) also seines from downtown to North Queen Anne and, except where they cross Mercer, are generally free-flowing. The Eastlake corridor is on the eastern edge of the neighborhood and connects from downtown to Eastlake and the University District. It is generally free-flowing. The fourth corridor, Fairview Avenue, connects from downtown to Eastlake and is impacted at crossings with Denny Way and Mercer Avenue. Congestion around the Mercer ramps to I-5 is the most problematic situation.

Traffic growth will undoubtedly continue on streets in South Lake Union. This will not occur so much due to new development, as the service area is generally built out, but rather to redevelopment as less intensive uses are replaced by more intense uses. This will occur in South Lake Union, as well as, Lower Queen Anne, Denny Triangle and Belltown.

Transit has not been a significant factor in serving trips to and from South Lake Union. While several routes do traverse the neighborhood, they are not coordinated to serve the neighborhood. Until recently parking has always been available and probably served as a disincentive to transit use.

Parking: Parking dynamics vary widely within the neighborhood, and it has only been in the past few years that a noticeable problem has surfaced. South Lake Union has enjoyed free on-street parking and benefited from numerous low cost surface parking lots scattered throughout the neighborhood. The first area to feel the pressure was the Waterfront where numerous successful area restaurants and businesses have taxed the limited supply. The second area to

feel the pressure was Cascade, where a recent zoning change allows residential development to be constructed without any parking requirements. This has upset the delicate balance that existed between area businesses and residents as they shared the available parking supply. Now there is extreme competition for parking that is detrimental to area businesses.

Elsewhere, in the greater neighborhood, surface parking lots are being converted for new development as South Lake Union experiences the development boom in Seattle. These lots serve mainly employees of the area businesses. In the absence of any strategy to replace the lot spaces or provide alternate access, it is unclear what business decisions will be made to address this situation. What is becoming apparent is the hardship being placed on area businesses and customers as they compete for fewer and fewer parking spaces and remain underserved by transit.



Neighborhood Character

Perpetuate the role and dynamic quality of the neighborhood

- Develop specific design guidelines for all of South Lake Union and each defined subarea of South Lake Union
- Land use and character preservation of South Lake Union

South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan

Planning Process

The South Lake Union Neighborhood Character Subcommittee was formed from the South Lake Union Planning Organization and developed a historic and design interest in South Lake Union. Issue statements for neighborhood character were developed as follows:

- **Special Historic Consideration** – An interest exists in the historical past of the neighborhood, and includes the possibility of endorsing pursuit of a special historic character designation for the Westlake District following further study of implications and understanding of control over the process and continuing rights of the property owners.
- **Neighborhood Character** – A high level of support for preserving the basic character of the district has been acknowledged. There is a strong desire to keep the area friendly for small business and light industry, but a degree of diversity also should be achieved.
- **Neighborhood Districts** – The South Lake Union Planning Organization supports the character of current land uses through the development of sub-planning areas. Subareas identified in South Lake Union are Cascade, which supports a mix of commercial, housing and social services; Westlake which represents the historic commercial core, and the Waterfront, encompassing South Lake Union Park and all existing water dependent activities around South Lake Union. Major traffic corridors that will play a significant role in future development of South Lake Union and adjoining neighborhoods are Denny Way and Aurora Avenue. Both of these corridors have development potential that will dramatically alter their present character.
- **Social Services** – Recognition has been expressed that South Lake Union has a responsibility to accommodate its share of social service activities. Current data indicates that this share has been achieved, and that no additional City-funding for new

social service facilities should be used in this neighborhood without extensive neighborhood input

- **Housing** – The South Lake Union area has sufficient capacity to accommodate housing-goals set forth in the Comprehensive Plan and will continue to have a residential component. Further residential growth needs to balance with a desire to maintain a mix of non-residential uses. A diversity of housing types is desired and must include the provision of affordability.
- **Zoning Refinement** – While it is understood that basic zoning in the South Lake Union Planning Area is not an issue in Phase II planning, there is a need to review existing zoning for any aspect of the code (e.g. parking requirements, affordability, setbacks, height limits, etc.) that may need refinement to reflect planning goals.

Discussion of: Key or Integrated Planned Activities for Neighborhood Character.

The ideas/recommendations found in this section reflect the outcome of the neighborhood character planning process. Development of key activities reflects recommendations that are proposed to occur immediately following acceptance of the South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan as further described in the Approval and Adoption Matrix appended hereto for reference.

Design Guidelines

South Lake Union neighborhood plays an important role in the richness of the City of Seattle. Land uses in this planning area are a functional mix of commercial and light industrial with small areas of residential. Implementing Design Guidelines for neighborhood character allows South Lake Union to set the tone for preserving the existing diverse uses. General guidelines developed for all of South Lake Union should complement and promote the existing diversity of the neighborhood. It is important for South Lake Union to have a dense, compact feel that is sensitive and complementary to the existing

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use and scale of buildings. Therefore, design guidelines should provide incentives for in-6.11 development consistent with parking needs for the area. Guidelines need to also address the prospect of housing next to light-industrial/commercial through careful siting, building material usage, scale and the provision of buffers.

Neighborhood Districts

The South Lake Union Subcommittee for Neighborhood Character acknowledges that there are distinct areas within South Lake Union planning area that require special considerations when addressing the issue of character. The subcommittee recognizes five planning areas (see Planning Area Boundaries map, Figure 3, on the next page). Refinement and adoption of subarea boundaries must occur as design guidelines are developed. The South Lake Union Subcommittee of Neighborhood Character makes the following recommendations for each subarea:

A) **Waterfront District**-This area adjacent to Lake Union, including the new park and extending into the neighborhood shall develop a set of design recommendations supporting an "industrial maritime" theme for use in public developments and encouraged for private developments. Historical maritime elements such as boats, fittings, charts, maritime industrial equipment, maritime industrial shed buildings (1900-1930) with their use of metal siding and brick warehouses with their heavy timber framework provide the basis for an "industrial maritime" theme, and should be encouraged of private development in this zone. Design of public right-of-way will also be subject to these standards..

Public access, pedestrian friendly access to Lake Union and preservation of existing view corridors to the water are issues that have helped define the need for design guidelines. Design guidelines are to incorporate thematic lighting, pedestrian crossing paving, and street furniture, as well as pedestrian oriented landscaping. Consideration should also be given to how new cul-

tural facilities could be included to complement the character and uses in the Waterfront District

B) **Westlake District**-Consider establishment of a conservation district in this area intended to preserve its commercial/industrial character represented by the existing 3-4 story buildings of brick and concrete with open bay floors, window detail, etc.. Establishing a conservation district is a necessary step in allowing for the provision of incentives that would insure preservation of the existing commercial/industrial character. Transfer of development rights could be obtained for buildings and would relieve properties of development pressure and rising tax assessments and preserve current commercial uses. Management of the conservation district would be proposed as a neighborhood representative board with the following incentives and restrictions

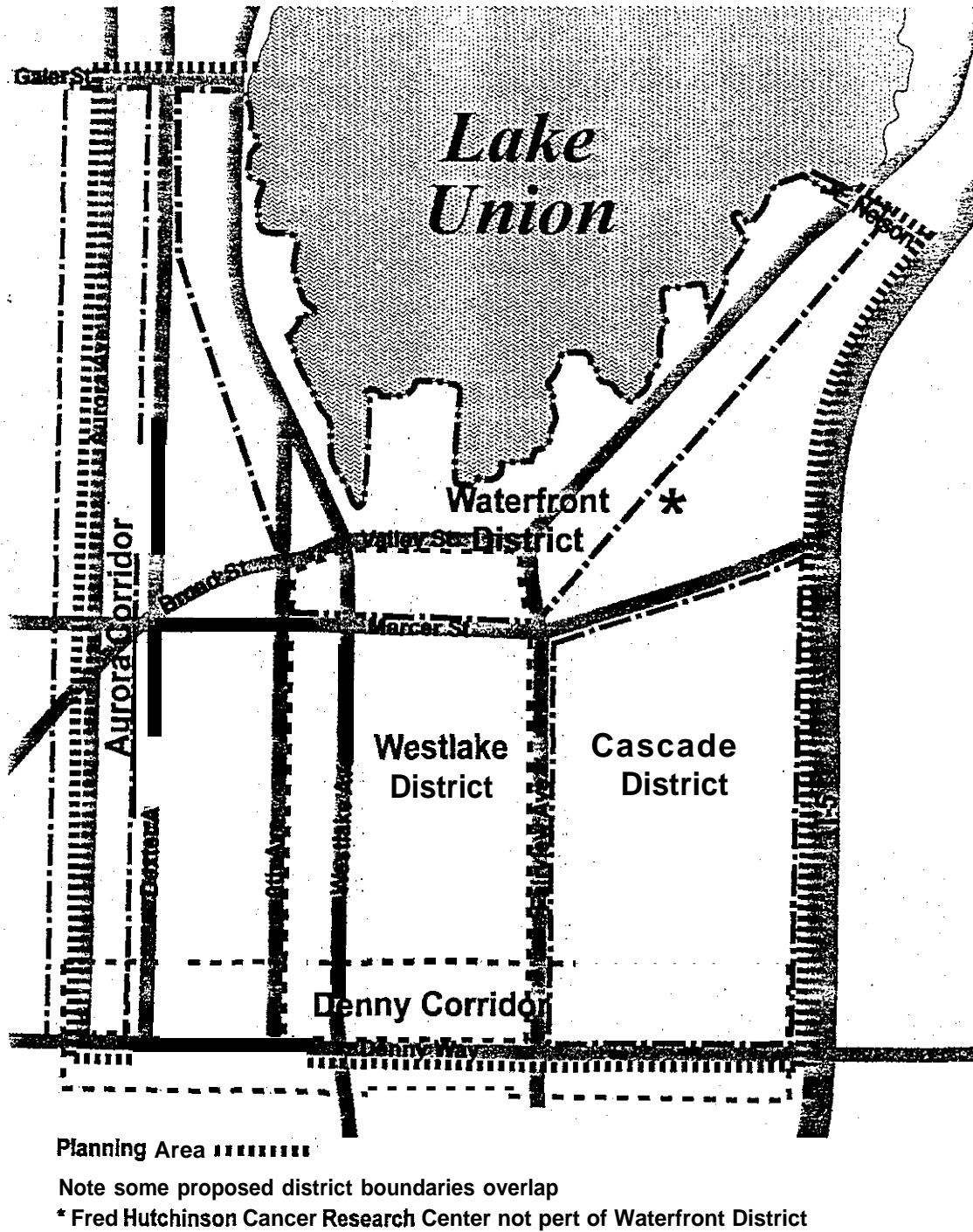
Incentives

- 1) Transfer of development rights (TDR) for older buildings to allow their preservation
- 2) Building code relief for energy, parking & land use
- 3) Grants for seismic and ADA code mandated building upgrades
- 4) Property tax-freeze on improvements for ten years (special valuation)
- 5) Property tax reduction on land value assessment
- 6) Small lot incentives for vacant lots in subarea
- 7) Below market rate building rehabilitation loans

Restrictions

- 1) Review of construction projects (new and additions/renovations) in the subarea by the neighborhood representative board
- 2) Demolition ordinance requiring a new project proposal for a site slated for demolition of an existing historically significant structure.
- 3) Propose design guidelines for new development in this subarea considering such elements as setbacks, window styles, building materials, street trees or other vertical amenities, signage, etc.

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South Lake Union Planning Area Boundaries

Figure 3

South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan

Review Board Structure

A board could be composed of neighborhood property owners and residents as an oversight committee for the conservation district. Organizational structure of the board is yet to be determined.

C.) Cascade District-Recommendations for the Cascade subarea include reinstatement of parking requirements for new residential development, review and possible revision of overall district parking requirements and an evaluation of housing studying the balance of housing by income category. Guidelines encouraging market rate housing and participation in the development of a citywide process for siting of social services is proposed. Also recommended for the Cascade subarea is the review and modification of the industrial zoning along the east side of Fairview Avenue so as to provide comfortable relationships between industrial and commercial uses and adjacent allowable industrial uses. These recommendations are intended to supplement existing goals from the Cascade Neighborhood council.

D) Denny Corridor-Currently the block adjacent to Denny Way has the highest height limits in the South Lake Union Planning Area. Given the traffic volume along Denny Way, it has been targeted as a receiving district for TDR's from the Westlake subarea. Working with the Denny Triangle planning committee it may be possible to set up Denny Triangle (south side of Denny Way) as a possible TDR receiving area.

E) Aurora Corridor-This is another area that could receive TDR's from the conservation district in the Westlake subarea. This area serves as a buffer to the South Lake Union planning area and could handle greater commercial and residential density as it abuts a major transportation artery (Aurora Avenue North).

Character Defining Tools

In addition to the development of design guidelines, recommendations have emerged that address character preservation and underscore the role of the neighborhood. Taken as a package, these recommendations form a second key activity for the

neighborhood. Zoning refinements, and/or modifications, for all of South Lake Union that relate to and promote the character for new light-industrial/commercial development and housing include:

- A) Adjustment of the mixed-use balance between commercial and housing uses in the C1 and C2 zones in South Lake Union with the recommendation that a minimum floor-area-ratio (FAR) of 1.5 floors of commercial be established in these two zones. FAR requirements would be graduated upward and respond to increased height limits of underlying zoning.
- B) Suspension of any further City funded social service facilities in the neighborhood until citywide siting process is in place and neighborhood review process defined.
- C) Remove Design Review process from purview over land use waivers.
- D) Review I C zoning to see how cultural uses could be allowed and made compatible with traditional uses.

Other Considerations for Neighborhood Character

In the near term, it is proposed that new housing projects of 20 units or more require 5% of the units be affordable housing at 80% of Seattle's median income level.

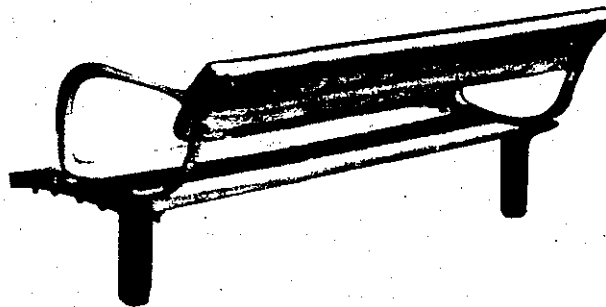
Longer-term considerations include preparation and adoption of corridor plans for Denny Way and Aurora Avenue North. The plans are proposed to recognize the importance of these corridors as gateways and recipients of intense future development. Another longer-term consideration is the establishment of concurrency requirements for housing units constructed in excess of the 1,700 target housing units specified under the City Comprehensive Plan. Concurrency requirements may include contribution to parks and open space, transportation (especially transit) and community facilities. In addition to concurrency requirements, consideration should be given to additional increases (beyond those in the basic recommendation) in base level commercial FAR for projects in the C1 and C2 zones.



Parks & Open Space

Emphasize development of South Lake Union Park

- Provide open space in combination with maritime heritage
- Define uses for existing buildings in South Lake Union Park
- Provide both transient and historic ship moorage
- Design bulkheads, piers, and shoreline for maximum public access
- Incorporate natural features and Native American Long House and Canoe House
- Emphasize pedestrian and transit access including pedestrian overpass of Valley
- Provide limited parking north of Valley; primary parking in structure south of Valley



South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan

Planning Process

The South Lake Union Parks and Open Space Subcommittee was formed from the South Lake Union Planning Organization and has concentrated its efforts on refining programming for South Lake Union Park as well as to determine open space needs and develop directives to meet those needs. Issue statements describing findings made by the parks and open space subcommittee include

Meeting Open Space Goals: The comprehensive Plan of 1-w-set an open goal of 1 acre per 100 residents. To find ways to meet this goal, the Subcommittee for Parks and Open Space began to look at creative solutions such as vest pocket parks, utilizing rooftops as green space and designating certain streets as “green streets” that are targeted for planters, street trees and hanging gardens. P-patch garden space and a potlatch trail connection were considered as were passive and active open space needs. Incentives to private developers for creating publicly accessible open space are also considered in meeting the open space goal.

Revisiting/Revisions to Use 1991 *South Lake Union Park Master Plan:* The Parks and Open space subcommittee found consensus among SLUPO members to build upon the 1991 Plan and to treat South Lake Union Park as a neighborhood amenity with regional attraction that promotes maritime heritage. The program for South Lake Union Park provides for active and passive use areas and the preservation/restoration of natural areas. Shoreline access, parking, increased hard edges and clearly defined uses also figured prominently in design considerations. The Subcommittee also came to the early realization that the entire Lake should be considered part of the Park. As such, preservation of the visual character of the Lake and its water quality and habitat functions should be preserved.

Further considerations included support for the Maritime Heritage Museum and community meeting space in the Armory building preservation of view corridors. public access to the water, the

development of a consistent maritime theme; and an evaluation and determination of moorage needs both short and long term, including historic ship moorage.

South Lake Union Park is also seen as one end of a “cultural corridor” extending from the Lake to Seattle Center that could contain uses such as museums and educational facilities. Special consideration needs to be given to the City owned property south of Valley Street to assure that new development complements and supports South Lake Union Park

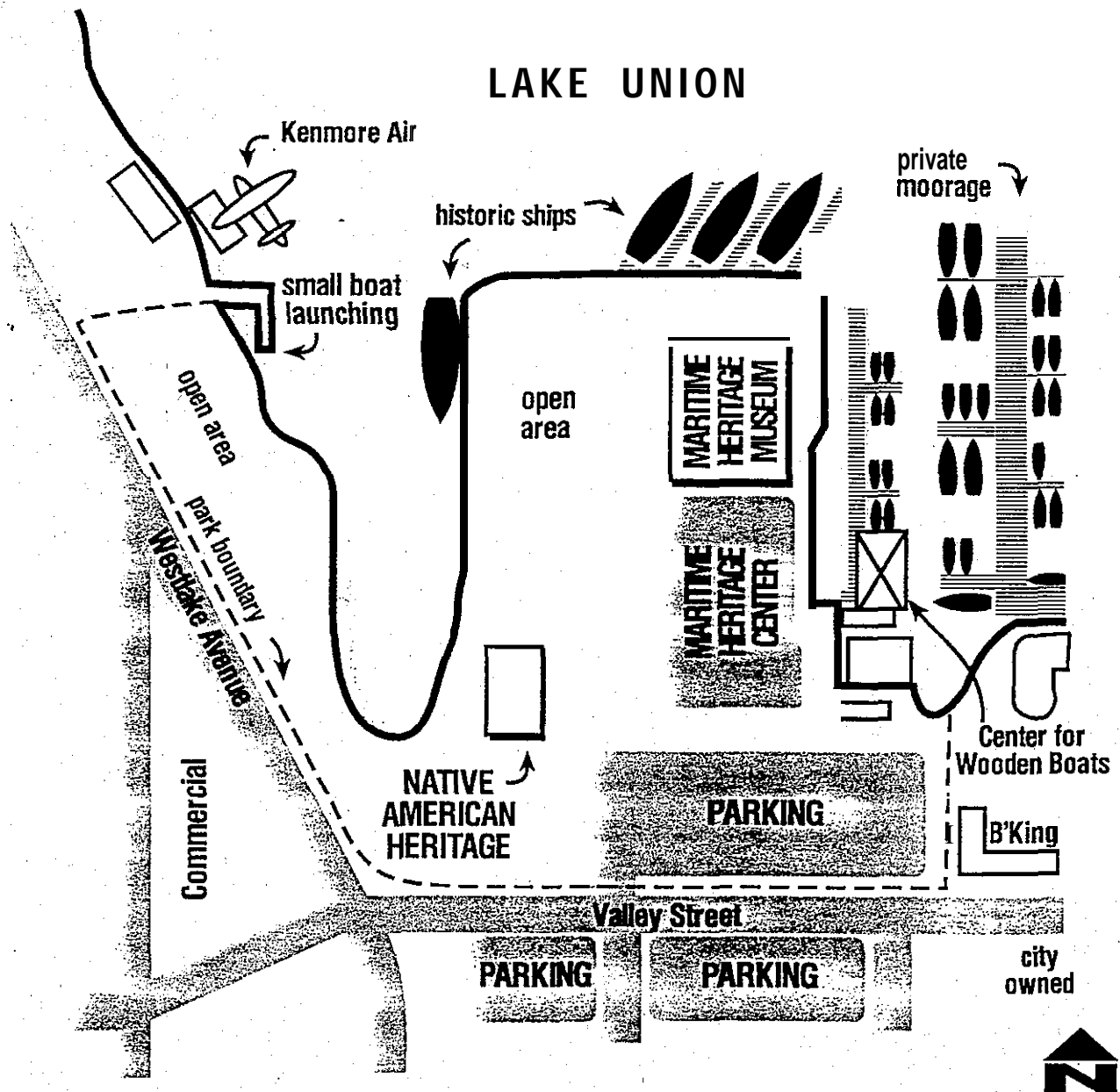
Discussion of: Key or Integrated Planned Activities for Parks and Open Space

The ideas/recommendations found in this section reflect the outcome of the parks and open space planning process. Development of key characteristics reflect recommendations that are proposed to occur immediately following acceptance of the Neighborhood Plan.

Refinements made to the 1991 South Lake Union Park Master Plan reflect the key activities for parks and open space. Categories arrived at through the planning process and recommended for an updated Park Master Plan include

Programmatic Design: Uses within the park will be designed in such a manner that areas of different uses are clearly delineated and not in competition with each other. The proposed uses are illustrated in the design concept drawing following this page (Figure 4). The western half of the park uplands remain primarily unprogrammed open space and the eastern half is designated as active space for the Maritime Heritage Museum (in the current Armory Building) and the Maritime Heritage Center. Also located to the east is The Center for Wooden Boats. The Native American Long House and Canoe House are located on the western side of the park to complement the restored natural arms and the proposed potlatch trail connection. Considerations of needed space, activity

South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan



REVISED SCHEMATIC SOUTH LAKE UNION PARK

Figure 4

South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan

level and type, and the type of needed access to the water all factored into the programming of the park.

Thematic Elements: Maritime thematic elements are strongly advocated within the park and along access routes to the park. The entrance should be clearly delineated through the use of elements that reflect the character and uses within the park. The design material palette should include colors that reflect the moods of Lake Union. Brick or colored cement is recommended for crosswalk/sidewalk use. Historical maritime elements such as boats, fittings, charts, and maritime industrial equipment should be used for areas in and leading to the park. Thematic lighting, park furnishings and the use of maritime elements should complement design guidelines for the conservation district of Westlake and the Waterfront district.

Passive and active areas of the park are laid out with a division of the two usage types generally along Terry Avenue. Natural areas are preserved on the west side of the park. Removal of the Naval Training Center and the existing parking lots on the west side of the park will allow space for the proposed passive activities. The Training Center has been identified as being potentially suitable for interim use until development of the park would require its removal. Active areas include the Maritime Heritage Museum and community uses in the current Armory building, the Maritime Heritage Center, The Center for Wooden Boats on Waterway 4 and limited parking. These activities are all proposed for the east side of the park.

Waterfront: Provision of transient public docking is planned for as is the designation of a water taxi stop. Historical ships would be moored at the north end of the existing site with a restored historic vessel located at the entrance of Waterway 3 as a flagship for maritime activities proposed within South Lake Union Park. Small craft public launching is proposed in Waterway 3 at the terminus of the northwest park boundary. The Center for Wooden Boats would occupy Waterway 4.

Pedestrian: Pedestrian access to different activities within the park is considered in the proposed design including access to safely view some of the boat repair facility activities at the Maritime Heritage Center. Pedestrian access to the park and the shoreline are maximized in the proposed plan. Pedestrian crossings at Valley and Westlake shall be subject to design guideline consideration as is the proposed pedestrian bridge(s) over Valley Street. Support is also expressed for the Potlatch Trail concept linking South Lake Union to the Seattle Center and Elliott Bay by the most direct route.

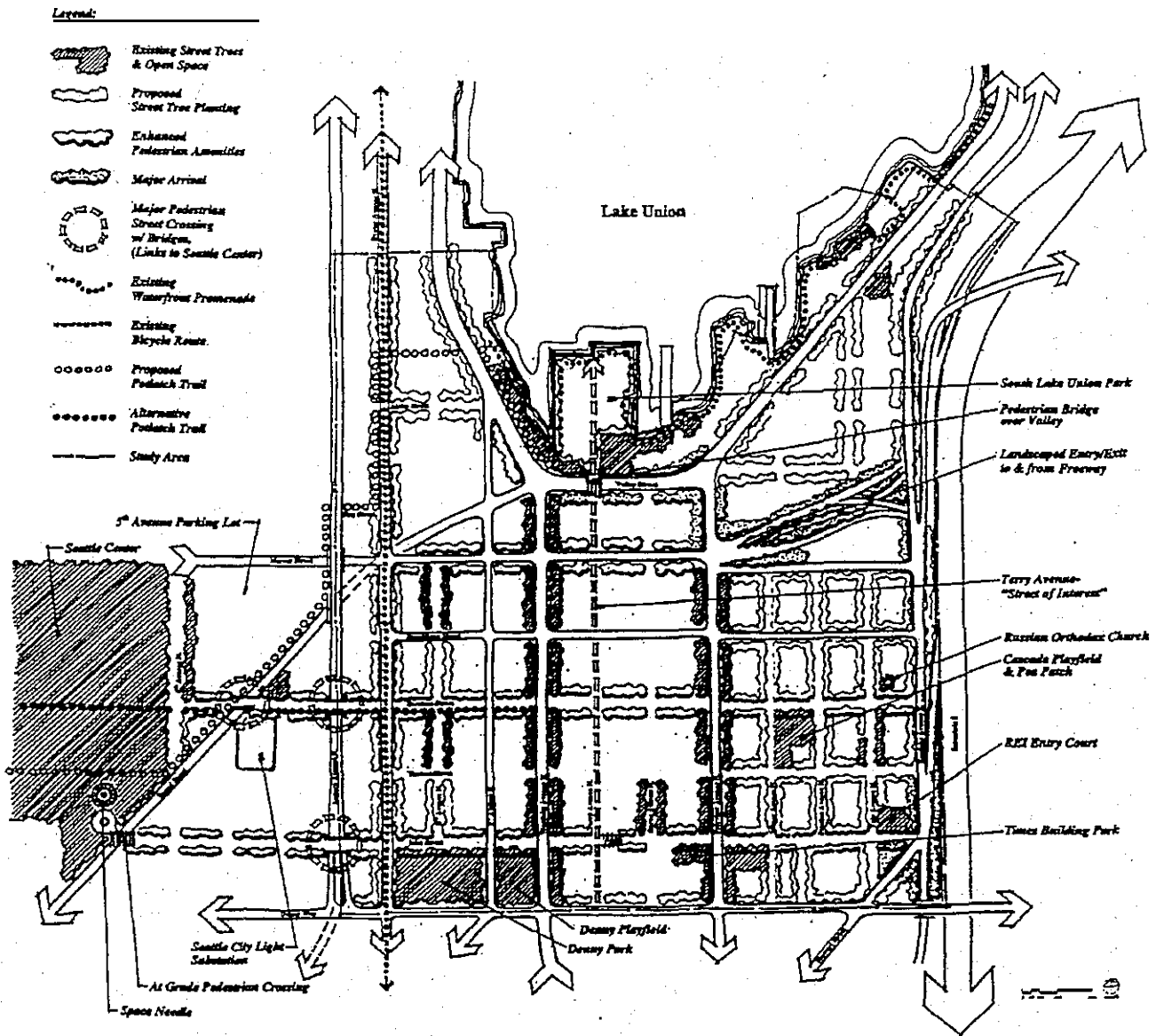
View: Preservation of views to the water is an important planning consideration for the promotion of the South Lake Union Park. View corridors to the water are to remain and be enlarged to draw people into the park. Consistent visual images are proposed through the use of thematic elements in design guidelines. Visual clues of park ties (e.g. the moorage of a historic ship at the head of Waterway 3) will help promote the park as a neighborhood/regional destination.

Parking: The current auto orientation of the South Lake Union planning area necessitates the provision of adequate parking facilities for both daily park usage and special events. Limited parking north of Valley Street is proposed to preserve park space for activities. Parking south of Valley Street could be provided via a parking structure that includes a pedestrian access bridge over and/or an at grade crossing of Valley Street. Possibilities exist for joint development of the parking structure with other uses.

Other Considerations for Parks and Open Space

In the near term, efforts to meet the open space goal set by the Comprehensive Plan of 1 acre of open space per 100 residents includes the implementation of the Cascade Playground Master Plan, the acquisition of Denny Playfield or equivalent size parcel in the immediate area as active open space, the

'South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan



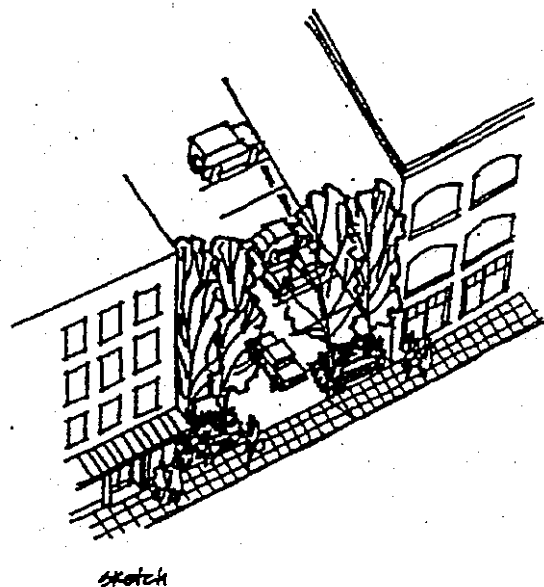
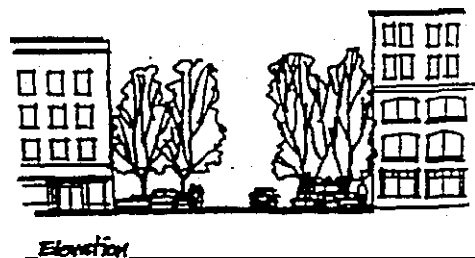
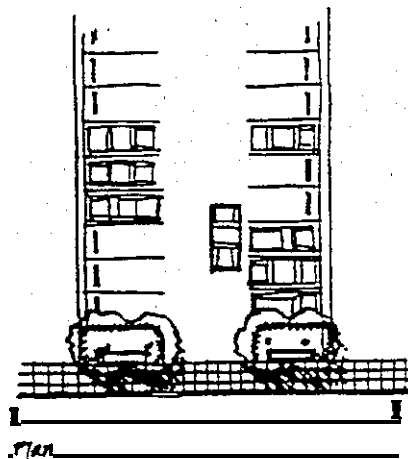
Overall Open Space Plan

Figure 5

South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan

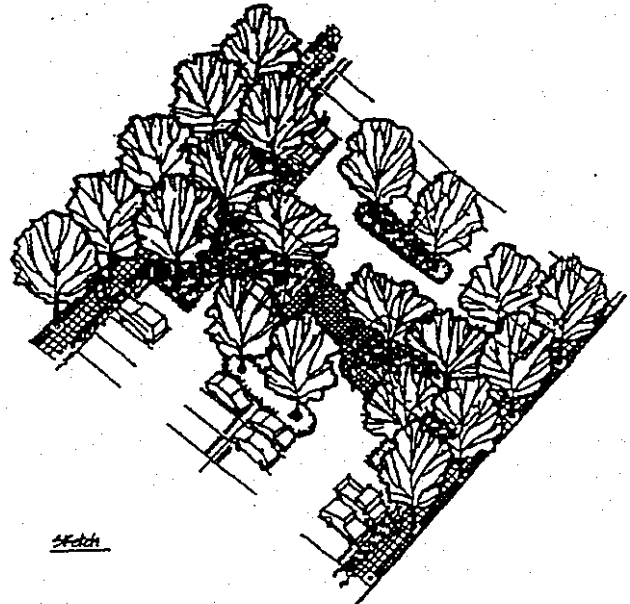
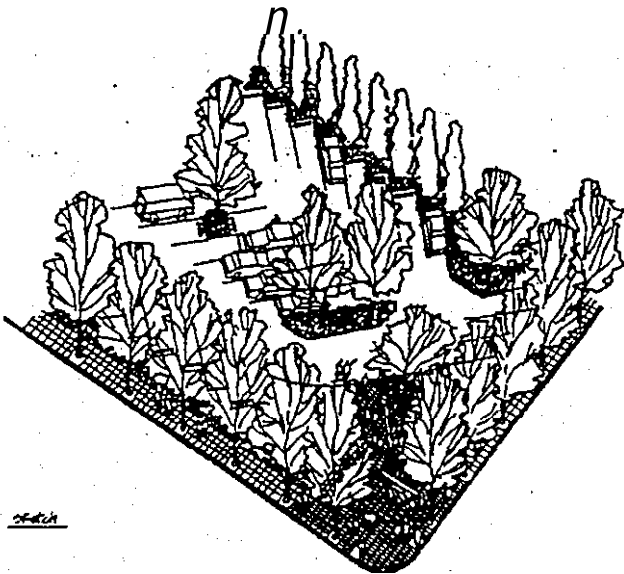
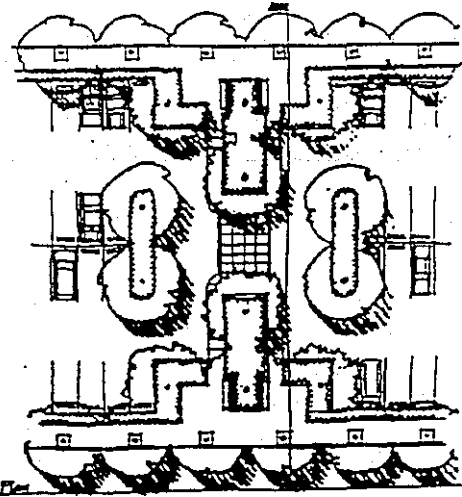
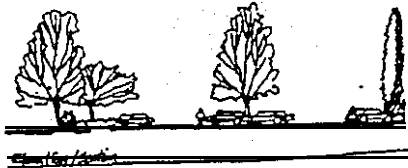
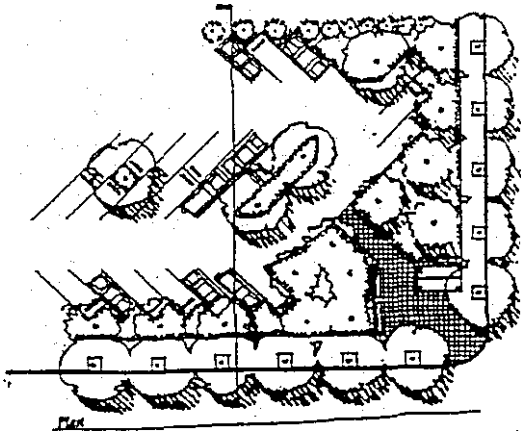
recommended relocation of Park Administrative Offices from Denny Park and possible community use for the building and the provision of a pedestrian streetscape strategy and "green street" designation as a character statement for South Lake Union. An overall open space plan is shown on Figure 5.

Longer term proposals to meet the open space goal include the development of guidelines and action strategies for supplemental open space. Possibilities include, rooftop landscaping, street ends at lake Union, P-patches, odd lots and comers, and special features (e.g. the red brick road, portals etc.). Also a longer term proposal is the development of a density bonus incentive strategy for the provision of pocket parks as part of future development. Several examples of how these smaller open spaces could be integrated into future development are shown on the attached examples.



Parking Lot Between Two Buildings

'South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan



Corner/Edge Treatment
of Parking Lot

Mid-block Landscape Treatment
of Parking Lot

Transportation

- Develop system wide improvements for the Mercer/Valley corridor including support of the South lake Union Park Master Plan
- Conduct parking study and develop parking plan for South Lake Union

South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan

Planning Process

The South Lake Union Transportation Subcommittee was formed from the South Lake Union Planning Organization and has concentrated efforts on identifying issues related to circulation, parking and transit.

Background: Transportation recommendations developed, by the SLUPCOM Transportation Committee address a wide range of issues and needs in the neighborhood including circulation, parking and transit. Two recommendations represent key activities that will assist the neighborhood in managing future development. The first key activity involves the development of a set of improvements for the Mercer/Valley corridor that can be accomplished as a package or independently. Such improvements would be in lieu of any major, grand expressway type scheme to deal with traffic in the corridor.

The second key activity involves the development of a comprehensive parking study for the neighborhood. Parking dynamics vary considerably throughout the neighborhood and need to be evaluated in sufficient detail to assure that both the problems and potential solutions are properly identified.

Discussion of Key or Integrated Planned Activities for Transportation

Mercer/Valley Corridor: The South Lake Union Plan places high emphasis on addressing traffic issues in the Mercer/Valley corridor. Through numerous discussions and much observation and analysis, it has become clear that achieving resolution on an approach to Mercer/Valley traffic produces benefits in many areas including:

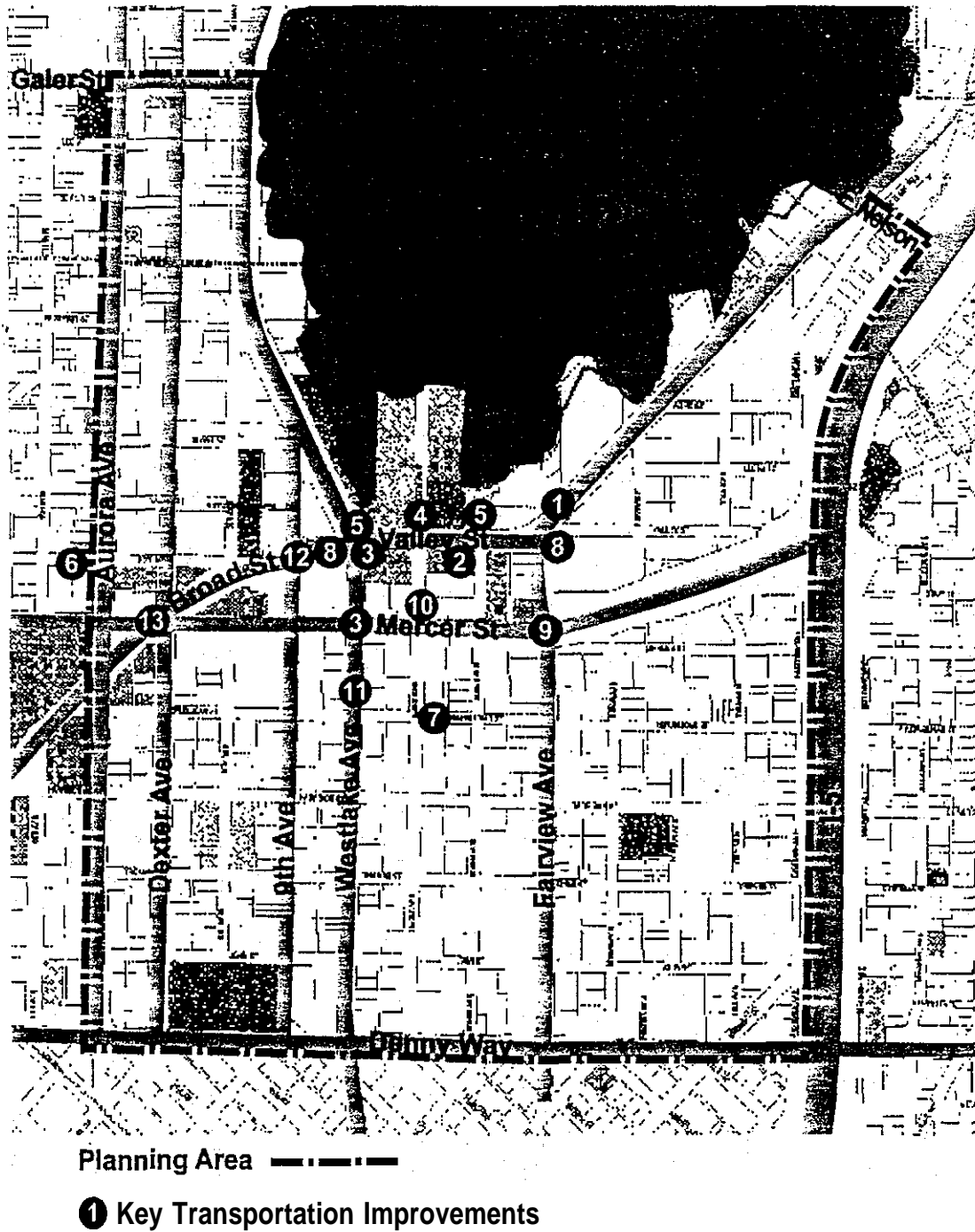
- . Improvement of access to local businesses.
- . The ability to access South Lake Union Park.

- The removal of uncertainty over the properties purchased for the Bay Freeway proposal.
- The ability to provide streetscape improvements in the corridor to address visual and pedestrian needs, and
- The provision of better regional access for properties along the southeast side of Lake Union,

The extensive analysis of the corridor also produced the understanding that a “cross-town” expressway in this corridor did little to address the actual traffic dynamics; was excessively expensive and disruptive, and should be dropped from further consideration as a transportation need. The analysis did produce a set of recommendations that can be implemented individually and incrementally without major disruption to the neighborhood or excessive cost. These recommendations and their location in the neighborhood (see numbers on Figure 6 on the following page) include:

- Reconstruction of the Valley/Fairview intersection to reduce the westbound left turn angle (1).
- Improve lane definition and rework signage on Valley for westbound traffic (2).
- Improve streetscape on both Mercer and Valley Streets by providing new sidewalks, street trees, street and pedestrian scale lighting and appropriate street furniture (3).
- Construct a pedestrian bridge over Valley Street (probably at Terry Avenue) to connect the proposed parking structure south of Valley with South Lake Union Park (Note: a second pedestrian over-crossing was discussed by the Parks and Open Space committee to better serve the south end of Lake Union)(4).
- Reinforce pedestrian at-grade crossings on Valley Street at Fairview and Westlake Avenue (5).
- Construct a Roy Street undercross or overcross of Aurora for vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians.

South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan



Recommended Transportation Improvements

Figure 6

South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan

Consider other at-grade signalized crossings of Aurora (6).

- Reserve Republican Street as a local east/west business arterial making necessary improvements (e.g. signals at 9th and Westlake) to support this use (7).
- “Encourage METRO to have highly visible transit stations at Fairview/Valley and Westlake/Valley intersections to provide alternative access to South Lake Union Park and waterfront businesses (8).
- Study the feasibility and funding options for a grade separation of the Mercer/Fairview intersection. Feasibility to be determined within six months of plan adoption and funding option twelve months thereafter if project is feasible (9).
- Study adding a signal at Terry Avenue and Mercer Street, and Terry Avenue and Valley Street. Encourage pedestrian access to South Lake Union Park and waterfront businesses via Terry Avenue (10).
- Develop street scape program for Westlake and 9th Avenue (11).
- Study feasibility of adding a left turn signal from eastbound Broad Street to northbound Westlake Avenue North (12).
- Study feasibility of connecting traffic more directly from eastbound Broad Street to Mercer (13).

Pm-king: Planning area parking has become a high-priority issue, not only for South Lake Union Park and waterfront activities, but for the planning area as a whole. On-street parking is heavily utilized to serve business customers and visitor parking needs. In the Cascade neighborhood, on-street parking is over 90% occupied during most hours of the day. A huge portion of employee parking throughout the neighborhood is supplied in off-street lots currently dedicated to, parking. These lots, however, are gradually disappearing as the properties redevelop into more economically productive uses. Therefore, a high priority recommendation is for the city to conduct a comprehensive parking study of the planning area, and to devise a long range parking program. The study should evaluate the desirability/

feasibility of creating a South Lake Union Parking Authority to develop and manage parking resources in support of area businesses and activities.

An immediate priority is to revisit the zoning code for the Cascade neighborhood. It was recently revised to virtually eliminate any requirements for the provision of off street parking for residential development. As part of plan adoption, this must be revised to reinstate parking requirements at least similar to those of surrounding areas north of Denny Way.

Other Considerations for Traffic/Transportation

The South Lake Union Plan supports a comprehensive analysis of Dermoy Way corridor. This corridor is a major east/west arterial that links the central waterfront, Lower Queen Anne, the Regrade, Denny Triangle, South Lake Union and Capital Hill. It has never received a thorough analysis to see how it can serve future development in its tributary area or serve for access to abutting properties.

The neighborhood understands and supports the need for additional transit service. Development of a balanced approach between auto and truck access and transit service will be necessary to assure the vitality and prosperity of the neighborhood into the future.

Additional near term and longer term traffic and transit improvements are contained in the Approval and Adoption Matrix. Further analysis of the Mercer/Valley corridor is contained in Attachment “A”.

South Lake Union Neighborhood' Plan

Attachment A - Transportation Analysis

Transportation and Traffic

General Background: South Lake Union is a major traffic generator of vehicular trips due to the auto oriented nature of businesses in the area and a major recipient of pass-through trips owing to its connection to regional links (I-5 and Aurora) for surrounding neighborhoods and activities (e.g. Seattle Center). Within the neighborhood, all traffic is handled on conventional city streets, a few of which are designated as arterials.

East/west traffic is served by two corridors, Denny Way along the neighborhood's southern boundary and the Mercer/Valley corridor at the south end of Lake Union. Denny Way connects to I-5 southbound and serves not only South Lake Union but also Lower Queen Anne, Denny Triangle, Belltown and the Waterfront. The Mercer/Valley couplet connects to both North and South I-5 and serves Queen Anne, Magnolia, Fremont, portions of Ballard, Denny Triangle and Belltown and is one of two options to get around Lake Union. Both of these corridors are extremely congested and operate at or beyond capacity several hours a day and during major Seattle Center events.

North/south traffic is somewhat better served owing in part to the parallel flows of I-5 and SR99 (Aurora) and in part to the fact that four arterials carry internal flows. The Dexter Avenue corridor carries traffic and bicycles from downtown to the north end of Queen Anne and is generally free-flowing. Westlake Avenue and 9th Avenue (one-way couplets) also serves from downtown to North Queen Anne and, except where they cross Mercer, are generally free-flowing. The Eastlake corridor is on the eastern edge of the neighborhood and connects from downtown to Eastlake and the University District. It is generally free-flowing. The fourth corridor, Fairview Avenue, connects from downtown to Eastlake and is impacted at crossings with Denny Way and Mercer Avenue. Congestion around the Mercer ramps to I-5 is the most problematic situation.

Traffic growth will undoubtedly continue on streets in South Lake Union. This will not occur so much

due to new development, as the service area is generally built out, but rather to redevelopment as less intensive uses are replaced by more intense uses. This will occur in South Lake Union, as well as, Lower Queen Anne, Denny Triangle and Belltown.

Transit has not been a significant factor in serving trips to and from South Lake Union. While several routes do traverse the neighborhood, they are not coordinated to serve the neighborhood. Until recently parking has always been available and probably served as a disincentive to transit use.

Parking Parking dynamics vary widely within the neighborhood, and it has only been in the past few years that a noticeable problem has surfaced. South Lake Union has enjoyed free on-street parking and benefited from numerous low cost surface parking lots scattered throughout the neighborhood. The first area to feel the pressure was the Waterfront where numerous successful area restaurants and businesses have taxed the limited supply. The second area to feel the pressure was Cascade, where a recent zoning change allowed residential development to be constructed without any parking requirements. This has upset the delicate balance that existed between area businesses and residents as they shared the available parking supply. Now there is extreme competition for parking that is detrimental to area businesses.

Elsewhere," in the greater neighborhood, surface parking lots are being converted for new development as South Lake Union experiences the development boom in Seattle. These lots serve mainly employees of the area businesses. In the absence of any strategy to replace the lot spaces or provide alternate access, it is unclear what business decisions will be made to address this situation

Mercer/Valley: When Interstate 5 through downtown Seattle opened during the mid- 1960s, Mercer Street west of I-5 took on a whole new service function. It became the regional access connection to/from I-5 for

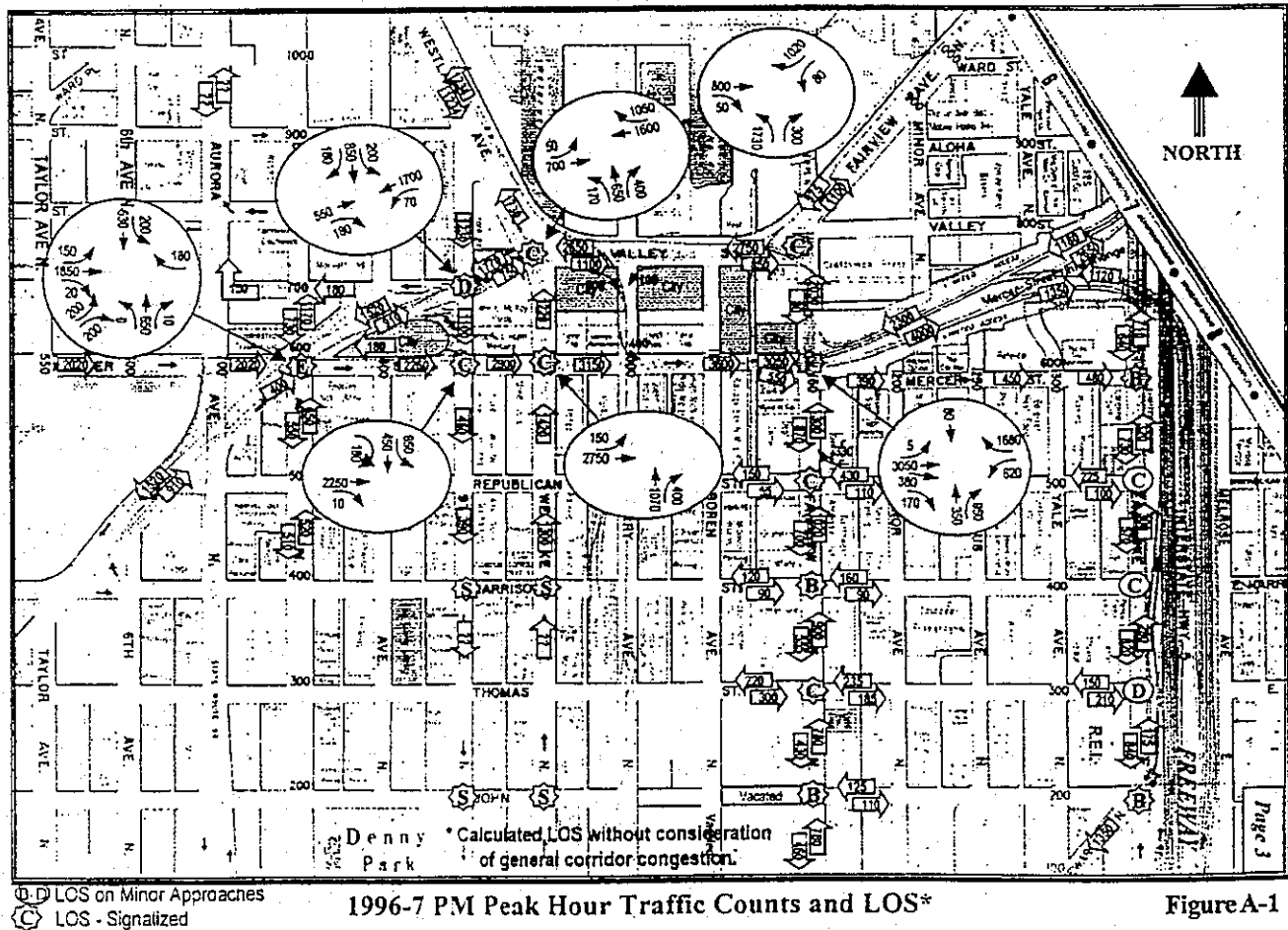
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Queen Anne Hill, the lower Queen Anne business district, and the new Seattle regional recreational center site that evolved from the 1962 World's Fair. But a major corridor improvement was in the making - known as the Bay Freeway. The Bay Freeway would provide an expressway connection between I-5 and a planned extension of the Alaskan Way Viaduct - then known as the Northwest Expressway to Ballard and beyond.

As planning for the Bay Freeway dragged on over tie, an interim improvement was implemented that resulted in the Mercer/Valley-Broad "couplet" that still operates today. Attempts to implement the Bay Freeway concept, in whole or in part, have failed including scaled back version contained in the "Commons" proposal of 1994/95. Subsequent studies appear to have failed to accu-

rately redefine the fiction of the Mercer traffic corridor. The prevailing belief has been that the primary corridor function is to carry traffic between I-5 and areas west of Aurora Avenue - most notably the Seattle Center, Queen Anne, and Denny Regrade areas (via Broad Street in the latter case). There is also a belief that Aurora Avenue needs to be connected to I-5 via the Mercer corridor. These functions in fact do not constitute the majority of existing traffic use of the I-5/Mercer Street ramp system.

To understand the existing traffic functions of the Mercer-Valley corridor, one must first look at traffic counts and turning movements in the corridor service area. Figure A-1 below illustrates average weekday PM peak hour traffic counts as best they can be assembled and adjusted from recent studies in the area. This set of



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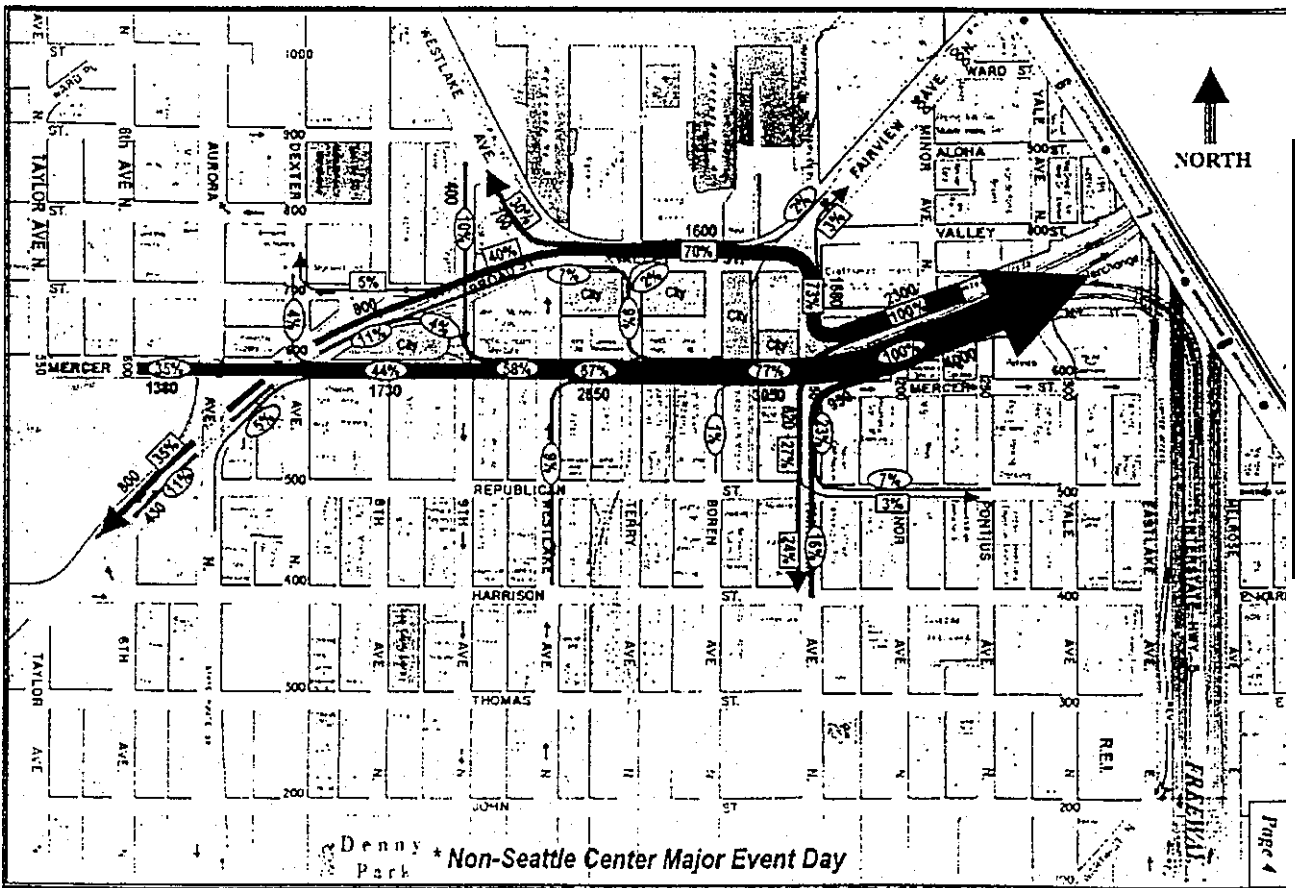
counts does not appear to reflect any major event activity at Seattle Center during the 4:30 to 5:30pm peak hour.

During the peak hour, traffic flow is predominantly eastbound to I-5, with a total peak hour count of 4,000 vehicles on the I-5 on-ramps. The count on the Mercer Street undercrossing of Aurora Avenue is about 2,000, about one-third of which is not destined for I-5. The count on the Broad Street undercrossing is 910, less than half of which is destined to I-5.

An estimate of PM peak hour traffic flow to/from the I-5 ramps is illustrated on Figure A-2 below. This estimate was prepared from a study of traffic turning movements along Mercer and Valley Streets.

The eastbound flow patterns may be largely characterized as trips from the corridor service area business and employment uses to homes elsewhere in the region; whereas westbound traffic flow would be characterized as trips from employment locations elsewhere to corridor service area homes.

It is estimated that less than half of all PM peak hour eastbound trips to the I-5 on-ramps come from west to Aurora Avenue (35% via Mercer, 11% via Broad). The balance of eastbound trips on the Mercer and Broad Street undercrossing of Aurora has destinations of Westlake Avenue N, Fairview Avenue N, Mercer Street to Eastlake Avenue, and within the South Lake Union community. The greater proportion of the I-5 on-ramp trips come from businesses in the South Lake Union and Denny Triangle community areas.



PM Peak Hour 1-5 Ramp Traffic Access/Distribution Patterns*

Figure A-2

South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan

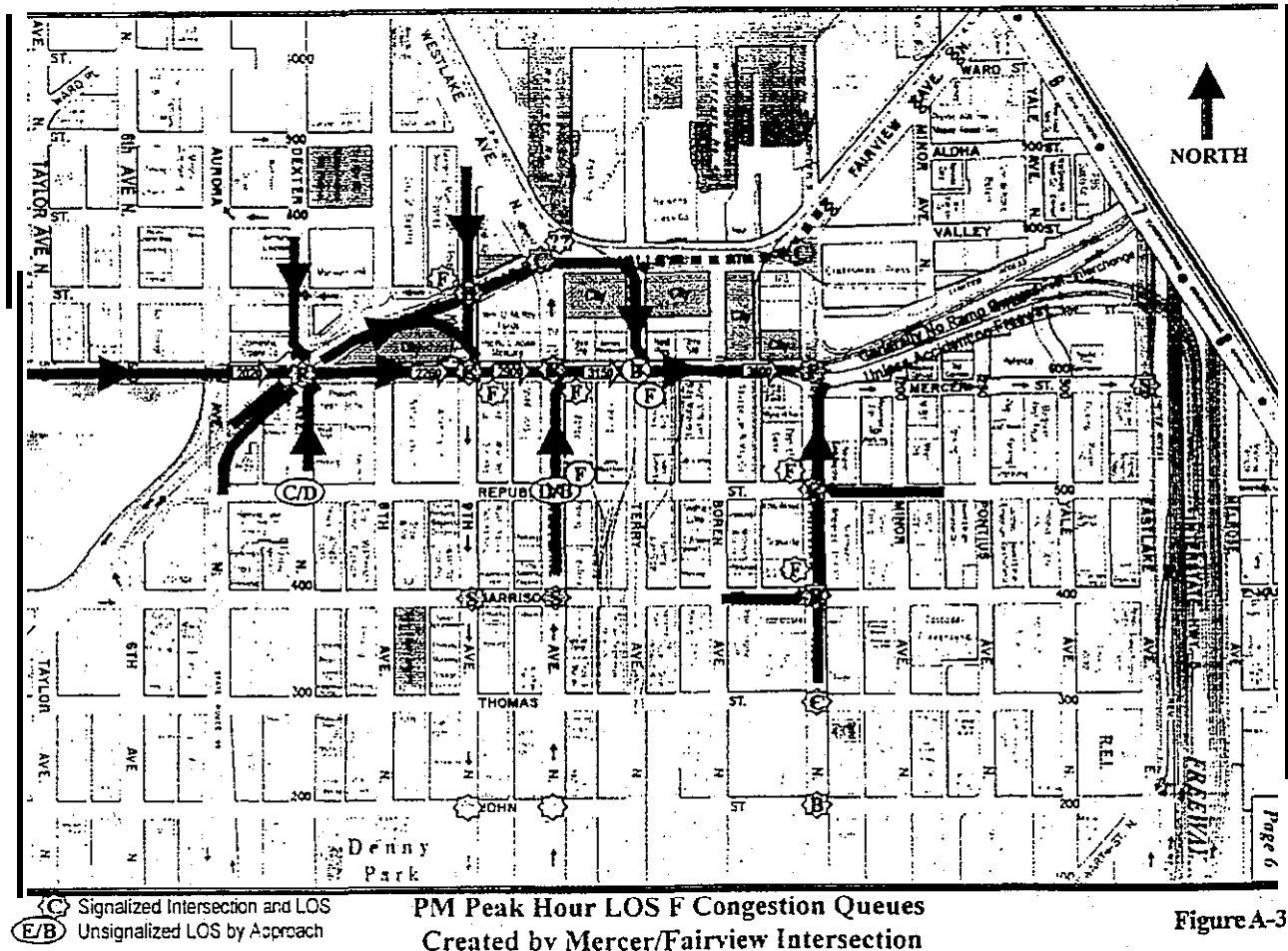
Westbound traffic volumes have an even less expected distribution pattern. Only about 35% are destined to areas west of Aurora - in the Mercer/Broad corridors. Another 30-70 orient northwest along Westlake Avenue. Some, of course, have destinations along Westlake Avenue. But the majority likely have some very diverse destinations in North Queen Anne, Magnolia, and perhaps even to Fremont and as far northwest as Ballard.

The current Mercer situation is a combination of severe eastbound traffic congestion along Mercer Street during afternoon hours, coupled with the convoluted routing of westbound traffic via Valley and Broad Streets.

The primary eastbound traffic "bottleneck" is the intersection of Mercer and Fairview. Figure A-3 below

illustrates the traffic queues and congestion along Mercer Street and its approaches caused by the intersection. The Mercer/Fairview and Mercer/Dexter intersections are calculated to operate at LOS C or better, if not influenced by the traffic backups from the Mercer/Fairview intersection. But traffic backups from the Mercer/Fairview intersections caused these intersections to appear to operate at LOS F.

The Mercer/Fairview intersection bottleneck also causes long backups south along Fairview Avenue - often extended south to Harrison Street and beyond. Hence, the Fairview intersections with Republican and Harrison frequently appear to be operating at LOS F, rather than their calculated LOS of C and B respectively. A similar situation occurs for the intersection of Republican and Westlake.



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The intersection of Mercer/9th Avenue is often blocked, or partially blocked, by Mercer traffic; and, though signal time serving the 9th Avenue approach can be adequate, the Mercer traffic queues do not provide sufficient traffic “acceptance space.” Southbound 9th Avenue traffic operations are hampered by the crossover movement from Broad to Mercer. This combination of events often causes 9th Avenue traffic queues to block, or partially block, the 9th Avenue/Valley intersection. It also causes some eastbound traffic on Broad Street destined to I-5 to make the crossover at Terry Avenue. The Mercer/Terry intersection is not signalized; therefore eastbound traffic on Mercer does not respect intersection clearance laws. This causes the Mercer/Terry intersection to operate at LOS F; and it results in some “very testy situations” caused by motorists on the Terry Avenue approach. This whole combination of events often causes traffic backups in the outer eastbound lane of Broad Street west to its Aurora Avenue underpass or beyond.

Without resolution of the conditions causing backups on the Mercer/Valley couplet in the area from the I-5 ramps to 9th Avenue, access to and egress from South Lake Union Park and properties in the immediate corridor area will be difficult.

Through convoluted routing via Valley and Broad Streets as an opposing direction “couple” to Mercer Street, the westbound corridor traffic flows remarkably well—for those familiar with its operation. However, it does pose a number of traffic “weaving” and lane-change problem from the junction of the I-5 NB and SB off-ramp to Westlake Avenue. This problem is exacerbated by the 90-degree turns at Mercer/Fairview and at Fairview/Valley which limit driver foresight of lane choice decisions that must be made after each turn.

Once reaching the Valley/Westlake intersection, traffic destined to areas south of Seattle Center find reasonably straightforward paths via Broad Street. However, traffic to north Seattle Center and upper/

lower Queen Anne have more convolutions to negotiate—an exit to 5th Avenue at Harrison, right-turn to north on 5th Avenue across Mercer Street to Roy Street, then west on Roy Streets as the continued reverse direction “couple” with Mercer Street. When this traffic movement is exacerbated by traffic to an early evening major event at Seattle Center, it creates backups from the 5th Avenue/Harrison intersection onto Broad Street (as noted above). It further congests the 5th Avenue/Mercer “crossover” intersection obstructing both directions of east-west traffic flow through the Mercer corridor.

Summary

Mercer/Valley Observations

- The existing traffic patterns along the Mercer corridor do not fit the former Bay Freeway paradigm, which was to devise an improvement that primarily serves traffic volumes between I-5 and areas west of Aurora. The majority of existing I-5 access trips via the Mercer ramps has origins or destinations east of Aurora Avenue.
- The primary existing bottleneck of eastbound traffic flow on Mercer Street is the Mercer/Fairview intersection. Nearly two-thirds of all traffic affected by this bottleneck is traffic with origins and/or destinations east of Aurora Avenue in the South Lake Union planning area and Denny Triangle areas.
- If a capacity improvement were to be made at the Mercer/Fairview intersection, the eastbound traffic choke point would move west to the Mercer/Dexter intersection. This would alleviate traffic congestion within the South Lake Union planning area, but not allow an appreciable increase in peak hour eastbound traffic volumes from west of Aurora Avenue (via Mercer Street).
- Because of the congestion to I-5 north from the

South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan

Denny corridor for traffic from the Denny Re-grade area (see Global Considerations below), an improved connection from eastbound Broad Street to eastbound Mercer would be desirable.

- Westbound traffic flow and operations from the I-5 off-ramps to the Valley/Broad Street corridor could be improved by reconstruction of the Valley/Fairview intersection to improve the majority westbound traffic movement from Fairview Avenue to Valley Street, together with lane sign-irrgimprovements.
- Westlake traffic flow from Valley Street to Seattle Center and the lower/upper Queen Anne communities could be vastly improved by a straight-through connection across or under Aurora Avenue from Valley Street to Roy Street.
- The high traffic volumes on both Mercer and Valley Streets create a great impediment to north-south bicycle and pedestrian access to South Lake Union Park and the Marine Heritage Center; centered along Terry Avenue. Park parking is anticipated to expand on the south side of Valley Avenue. Therefore, improvements to facilitate north-south pedestrian circulation across Mercer and Valley Streets is highly desirable.

“Global” Traffic Considerations

Traffic using the Mercer/Valley corridor is significantly influenced by the I-5 ramp configurations at Stewart/Olive/Howell. From I-5 north, traffic flows into the Denny Triangle Regrade areas via the reversible roadway; but the Olive on-ramp is a poor complement to the I-5 northbound mainline roadway. Over the course of a whole weekday, inbound flow from I-5 north via Stewart totals 19,300 vehicles, versus only 9,300 in the outbound (return) direction. The majority of this traffic imbalance shifts to the Mercer corridor. Consequently, eastbound traffic flow in the

Mercer/Valley corridor is much higher than westbound traffic flow.

Currently the Mercer on-ramps to I-5 are relatively tie-flowing east of Fairview, except when accident situations cause either direction of I-5 to be fully congested. Northbound traffic volumes on I-5 northbound capacity north of the CBD is the section of I-5 between Mercer and SR-520. The flow capacity of this segment of I-5 is reduced by the well-known “Mercer/Roanoke weave”. If the traffic “weave” between the I-5 mainline left-side Mercer on-ramp and the SR-520 off-ramp could be resolved, I-5 may be able to permanently accommodate the northbound traffic “feed” from the Mercer Street corridor, or any improvements thereof. This issue should be included in the TransLake Study that is now getting underway under direction of the WSDOT.

The Howell/Yale intersection is a major point of congestion for traffic approaching the I-5 southbound on-ramp and the I-5 northbound on-ramp to the reversible roadway via Howell street and Yale Avenue. Denny Way, – the only parallel of I-5 access alternative to the Mercer/Valley corridor – is highly congested. Any further studies of the Mercer/Valley corridor should also include the Denny Way corridor, and the I-5 Stewart/Howell/Olive I-5 access system.

Another not quite so apparent global issue for the Mercer/Valley corridor is access to the Alaskan Way Viaduct from the Seattle Center/Queen Anne area, and access to I-5 and I-90 from the Alaskan Way Viaduct. The 1,985 South Lake Union Land Use and Transportation Plan offered some suggestions that should be revisited. The crossovers between the Alaskan Way Viaduct and I-5 at Royal Brougham and Spokane Streets should be given priority attention in the North Duwamish Transportation Study that is (currently underway?) through joint sponsorship of the City of Seattle and the Port of Seattle.

South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan

Part of the Bay Freeway paradigm has been to improve the connection between Aurora Avenue and I-5 via the Mercer corridor. From *the north on* Aurora Avenue, there is a crossover opportunity in the N. 45th/50th Street corridor. South of N. 40th Street there is no further southbound traffic access to Aurora Avenue that would desire crossover at Mercer Street. North of the Royal Brougham/1st Avenue ramps to the Alaskan Way Viaduct, the only other access to Aurora Avenue (via the Broad Street tunnel) is from Western Avenue immediately west of the tunnel. Any traffic destined to I-5 at this access point could alternatively use Broad Street, if a better connection from Broad Street and Elliott Avenue already exists. However, an improvement of the southbound traffic movement from Elliott Avenue to the Alaskan Way Viaduct is desirable.