



## CHAPTER 5: RECREATION

### 5.1 Introduction

This section describes existing recreation in the study area and potential recreation impacts. The study area includes the project footprint and the surrounding recreational areas that may be affected by construction or operation of the project. Figure 5-1 shows recreational areas within and adjacent to the project footprint. Recreational sites and uses that are accessible from the trail network but outside of the immediate vicinity are also included within the study area and are shown in Figure 5-2.

### 5.2 Affected Environment

#### 5.2.1 Regional and National Recreation Use and Trends

In 2012, the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) conducted a survey of residents of the Seattle-King Region (as defined by RCO) on recreation trends. The survey found the following information about bicycle riding in King County:

- 38% of residents in King County engage in bicycle riding;
- The average bicycle rider does so on 29.1 days a year;
- 27.6% of bicyclists ride on trails;
- 27% of bicyclists ride on roads and streets; and
- 22.5% of bicyclists ride on rural trails.

The survey also found that 78% of King County residents walk without a pet; 44% jog or run; and 44% walk with a pet. Survey respondents with children were asked which activities their children participate in and responded that 49% walk, 29% bicycle, and 27% jog or run. Survey respondents were also asked how they get to recreation areas, and results indicated that 57% walk or jog to recreation areas, and 23% bicycle to recreation areas. The survey information shows that connectivity of multi-use trails like the BGT is a key recreational benefit not only for users of the trail itself, but also for users of other recreational sites who travel to those sites by walking or bicycling (RCO, 2012; City of Seattle, 2014).

Also in 2012, the Sports and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) published a Sports, Fitness, and Leisure Activities Participation Report. The report found that nationwide, walking for fitness was the most common recreational activity, with 110.9 million participants annually. Running and jogging were the second most common activity, with 44.3 million participants. Bicycling on roads or paved surfaces was the fourth most common, with 39.2 million participants. The survey also found that, nationwide, running, jogging, walking for fitness, and bicycling on roads and other paved surfaces are all increasing in participation annually (as cited in City of Seattle, 2014).



Figure 5-1. Recreation Areas in the Study Area



Figure 5-2. Recreation Site Accessible from the Trail Network

### 5.2.2 **Bicycling, Jogging, and Walking in the Study Area**

The Missing Link project would create a multi-use trail segment to be used primarily by bicyclists, walkers, and joggers. Bicycling, walking, and jogging are major recreation activities in the study area. People interested in bicycling, walking, and jogging use the existing segments of the BGT, King County's Regional Trail System (accessed through the BGT), the SDOT bikeway network in Ballard, Shilshole Ave NW to connect the two existing segments of the BGT, and other streets and sidewalks in the area.

The existing BGT is a 19.8-mile long multi-use trail used by walkers, runner, bicyclists, and skaters. Within the City of Seattle, ownership and maintenance of the trail are shared between SDOT and Seattle Parks and Recreation. The trail is owned and operated by King County outside of Seattle. The trail runs in two disconnected segments. The shorter segment runs from Golden Gardens Park in northwest Ballard to the Ballard Locks. The main segment of the trail resumes at NW 45<sup>th</sup> St and 11<sup>th</sup> Ave NW and runs along the Ship Canal to the University of Washington campus, where it turns north and continues until reaching Bothell. User counts and information for the BGT are included in Section 7.2.4 of the Transportation Discipline Report (Parametrix 2016). The report found that pedestrian volumes are approximately 30% of bicycle volumes on the trail. Bicycle volumes are typically higher on weekdays than on weekends, indicating the high number of commuters using the BGT in addition to recreational users.

The Burke-Gilman Trail is part of King County's Regional Trail System, which includes over 175 miles of multi-use off-road trails and over 300 planned miles of trails. Other major trails in the system include the East Lake Sammamish Trail, Sammamish River Trail, and Interurban Trail.

Because it connects the two current end points of the BGT, Shilshole Ave NW is commonly used by people despite the lack of dedicated bicycle lanes or pedestrian facilities. Shilshole Ave NW is an arterial running parallel to the Ship Canal through an industrial area. Trucks use the street to access industrial businesses. Shilshole Ave NW is heavily used by visitors on evenings and weekends for free parking to commercial areas on Ballard Ave NW and NW Market St and to the Sunday Ballard Farmers Market. Throughout the study area, recreational users bicycle on public streets and jog and walk on public sidewalks.

SDOT maintains a 450-mile bikeway network in the city made up of separate pathways, marked streets, and connectors. The BGT is part of this network. The network also includes the NW 58<sup>th</sup> St Greenway and the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave NW Greenway. A greenway is a street right-of-way that, through a variety of design and operational treatments, gives priority to bicyclist and pedestrian circulation and open space over other transportation uses. The treatments may include sidewalk widening, landscaping, traffic calming, and other bicyclist- and pedestrian-oriented features. Among their many functions, greenways create open space opportunities in residential areas that may otherwise lack public open spaces. Neighborhood greenways are designated through neighborhood plans or other City adoption processes.

The NW 58<sup>th</sup> Street Greenway features pavement markings, a traffic-calming "safety island" at the intersection with 15<sup>th</sup> Ave NW, new crosswalks with bicycle-accessible signal buttons, and a widened sidewalk on Seaview Ave NW to allow access to the BGT.

Construction on the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave NW Greenway began in September 2015 and was completed in early 2016. The greenway stretches from NW 90<sup>th</sup> St to the intersection of 17<sup>th</sup> Ave NW and NW Dock Pl, from which it follows NW Dock Pl to Ballard Ave NW. The greenway features new curb ramps, crosswalks, crossing beacons, curb extensions, crossing improvements, natural drainage systems, and vehicle restrictions at various intersections. In addition, the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave NW and NW Dock Pl intersection will be reconfigured.

### 5.2.3 Existing Parks and Recreational Areas in the Project Vicinity

#### ***Major Recreational Attractions in the Study Area***

In addition to City of Seattle-owned parks, the study area includes two major regional recreational sites (the Ballard Locks and the Ship Canal) and the Ballard Avenue Landmark District.

#### Ballard Locks

The Ballard Locks are operated by the Corps to allow boat passage between Lake Washington and Puget Sound and to regulate the water levels in Lake Washington. Recreational boaters travel through the Ballard Locks. The grounds of the Ballard Locks are operated as a park, with walking paths, lawn areas, a visitor's center, viewing windows to a fish ladder, and the Carl S. English, Jr. Botanical Garden. Boat watching is a major visitor use of the Ballard Locks. Visitors can cross the Ballard Locks by foot, and bicyclists and pedestrians often cross the Ballard Locks to travel between Magnolia and Ballard as an alternative to the Ballard Bridge. The Ballard Locks are a major tourist destination for the Ballard neighborhood.

#### Ship Canal

The Ship Canal, which connects Lake Washington to Puget Sound, is used for in-water recreation by boaters, kayakers, paddle boarders, and others. Many marinas are located along the shores of the Ship Canal in the vicinity of the study area.

#### Ballard Avenue Landmark District

Another major recreational activity in the study area is visiting historic areas of Ballard Ave NW. Ballard Ave NW between NW Market St and NW Dock Pl constitutes the historic Ballard Avenue Landmark District. The majority of buildings in the district were constructed from the 1890s to 1940s, and the historic character adds to the recreational quality of the district. The district features restaurants, coffee shops, boutiques, bars, and galleries. The historic aspects of the Landmark District are described in further detail in Chapter 10, Cultural Resources.

#### ***City of Seattle Parks***

The City of Seattle Parks and Recreation operates 430 parks throughout the city, including athletic fields, tennis courts, neighborhood play areas, community centers, off-leash areas, swimming pools, and golf courses. City parks range from pocket parks and neighborhood parks primarily designed for local residents to large parks that attract tourists and visitors from other areas of the city and the region. City parks cover approximately 11% of the city's land area (City of Seattle, 2015). City parks along the alignments of the proposed Missing Link include Bergen Place Park and Marvin's Garden. Other parks in the vicinity of the study area include Ballard Playground and Community Center, Ballard Commons Park, Thyme Patch Park, and Gilman Playground.

#### Bergen Place Park

Bergen Place Park is located in Ballard between Leary Ave NW, 22<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW, and NW Market St. The park features benches, a community information kiosk, and a series of sculptures named "Witness Trees" created by artist Jenn Lee Dixon. The park is named after Bergen, Norway, a sister city of Seattle, and features a plaque in honor of the sister city relationship. Bergen Place Park was dedicated by King Olaf of Norway when it first opened in 1975. Bergen Place Park is frequently used as a location for events held in



Ballard, including the Ballard SeafoodFest, Syttende Mai, and the weekly Ballard Farmers Market (Section 5.2.5).

#### Marvin's Garden

Marvin's Garden is a 0.1-acre park at the corner of Ballard Ave NW and 22<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW. The park features benches, landscaping, and the Ballard Centennial Bell Tower.

#### Ballard Playground

The Ballard Playground and Community Center is located at 26<sup>th</sup> Ave NW and NW 60<sup>th</sup> St. The Community Center features an indoor pool. The playground features fields for soccer and baseball/softball as well as an ADA-compliant play area.

#### Ballard Commons Park

Ballard Commons Park is located at 22<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW and NW 57<sup>th</sup> St. The park is adjacent to the greenway on NW 58<sup>th</sup> St. The park features a skatepark, public art, lawns and benches, and ADA-accessible walkways. The park also features a spray park. The Ballard Branch of the Seattle Public Library and Ballard Customer Service Center (also commonly known as the Neighborhood Service Center) are located across the street from the park. The park was opened in 2005 and is 1.38 acres.

#### Thyme Patch Park

Thyme Patch Park is a small 0.11-acre park on NW 58<sup>th</sup> St near 28<sup>th</sup> Ave NW. The park was built on a vacant property acquired in 1998 to meet the gap in open space identified in the Crown Hill/Ballard Open Space and Recreation Plan (Seattle Parks and Recreation, 2016). The park features a P-Patch community garden, lawn, benches, and walkways.

#### Gilman Playground

Gilman Playground is a large (3.9-acre) park located at 9<sup>th</sup> Ave NW and NW 54<sup>th</sup> St. Amenities include restrooms, an ADA-compliant play area, and a water feature. The park also has a basketball court, an outdoor tennis court, and fields for soccer and baseball/softball.

#### Soundview Playfield, Salmon Bay Park, and Loyal Heights Playfield

The 17<sup>th</sup> Ave NW Greenway ends at Soundview Playfield at NW 90<sup>th</sup> St. Soundview Playfield is a 10.5-acre park owned and operated by Seattle Parks and Recreation featuring two baseball fields, a soccer field, a playground, walking trails, a water feature, and restrooms. The greenway also runs within two blocks of Salmon Bay Park and within three blocks of Loyal Heights Playfield, both owned and operated by Seattle Parks and Recreation. Salmon Bay Park is a 2.8-acre neighborhood park with picnic tables, benches, a playground, and restrooms. Loyal Heights Playfield is a 6.7-acre park featuring the Loyal Heights Community Center, a basketball court, fields for football and baseball/softball, a play area, and restrooms.

#### ***Shoreline Street Ends***

Designated shoreline street ends throughout the Ballard neighborhood provide public shoreline access and views. Some street ends feature piers or boat ramps, while others simply feature a public space adjacent to the Ship Canal providing views of the water. The Seattle City Council adopted Resolution Number 29370

in June 1996 calling for the development of public access improvements to shoreline street ends. SDOT's Shoreline Street Ends Project is working to improve shoreline street ends throughout the city, adding additional public access and recreational opportunities. Street ends within or near the study area are described below.

#### 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW Street End

The 11<sup>th</sup> Ave NW street end features native plantings, a shoreline viewing platform, a bench swing, and birdhouses. These features were installed in spring 2015 through collaboration between SDOT and the University of Washington Landscape Architecture Program.

#### Public Access Ramp at 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW

The 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW street end in Ballard features a free public boat ramp providing access to the Ship Canal. The site has two piers, two launch ramps, handicap parking spaces, and a portable restroom. Unlike other shoreline street ends, the public access ramp at 14<sup>th</sup> Ave NW is owned and operated by Seattle Parks and Recreation.

#### 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW/Dock Pl NW Street End

Shoreline access is also available at a street end on the Ship Canal side of Shilshole Ave NW. The street end is not developed for recreational use, but it is accessible.

#### 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW Street End

SDOT owns an existing pier at the 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW street end. The pier is used for water access and shoreline viewing. The pier is also used for public vessel moorage, which is limited to 2 hours. Moorage limits are enforced by the Harbor Patrol. This site has been proposed for a potential new park called the Threading the Needle Park, would include a pedestrian greenway, restored waterfront beach, upgraded dock, and stormwater gardens. The proposed Threading the Needle Park is currently unfunded.

#### 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW Street End

The 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW street end was recently improved by SDOT to provide enhanced recreational opportunities and fish habitat. The 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW street end features native plantings, water access, a kayak launch, and a basketball hoop.

#### 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW Street End

The 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW street end features a viewpoint with views of Salmon Bay, Magnolia Bluff, and the Salmon Bay Bridge, a railroad trestle bridge built in 1914. The park also features a 17-foot-tall bronze "welcome figure" statue sculpted by artist Marvin Oliver.

#### NW 57<sup>th</sup> Street End

The NW 57<sup>th</sup> street end is accessible from the Burke-Gilman Trail and is the site of an SPU pump station and combined sewer overflow outfall. The site features a staircase down to a small beach area on the shore of the Ship Canal.

### ***Recreation Accessible from the Disconnected Segment of the Burke-Gilman Trail***

The segment of the Burke-Gilman Trail running from the Ballard Locks to Golden Gardens Park is directly adjacent to several parks that are disconnected from trail users using the BGT in other portions of the city and county. As described in Section 5.2.1, 49% of King County residents access recreational areas by walking and 23% access recreational areas by bicycling. Recreational areas accessible from the disconnected segment of the trail include:

- Golden Gardens Park, a major City of Seattle park drawing users from around the city and region. The park is 87.8 acres and features a Puget Sound beach with views of the Olympic Mountains. Amenities at the park include a hand-carry boat launch, picnic sites, fire pits, paths and hiking trails, restrooms, play areas, a basketball court, beach volleyball net, and an off-leash dog area. The park also features a rental facility used for weddings and ceremonies, among other events.
- Northwest 60<sup>th</sup> Viewpoint, a small 0.5-acre City of Seattle park with benches facing Shilshole Bay. Views from the park include Magnolia Bluff, the Olympic Mountains, Bainbridge Island, and Puget Sound.
- Private marinas, including the Shilshole Bay Marina and Shilshole Bay Yacht Club.

In addition, recreational users can cross the Ballard Locks on foot (and hand-carry bicycles across) to access recreation sites on the Magnolia side of the Ship Canal. Commodore Park is directly adjacent to the Ballard Locks and features paths, views of the Ship Canal, and restrooms. The park is 3.9 acres. From the Magnolia side of the Ballard Locks, it is a short walk or bicycle ride to Discovery Park, at 534 acres the largest park in Seattle. Discovery Park is located on the former site of Fort Lawton and features 2 miles of beaches, 11.8 miles of walking trails, the United Indians of All Tribes' Daybreak Star Cultural Center, the West Point Treatment Plant, the historic West Point Lighthouse, the Discovery Loop Trail (a National Recreation Trail), the Fort Lawton Historic District, and the Discovery Park Environmental Learning Center. The Seattle Bicycle Master Plan shows a recommended off-street trail and cycle track that would connect Discovery Park to Commodore Park and the Ballard Locks (SDOT, 2014).

#### **5.2.4 Recreational Events in the Project Vicinity**

Several annual recreational events are held within the study area. In addition, the weekly Ballard Farmers Market is located within the study area.

##### ***Ballard Farmers Market***

The Ballard Farmers Market is a year-round weekly farmers market on Sundays from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. The event is owned and operated by the Seattle Farmers Market Association, a registered non-profit corporation. The Farmers Market is located on Ballard Ave NW between Vernon Pl NW and 22<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW. Each Sunday, Ballard Ave NW is closed to traffic for the length of the Farmers Market. The Farmers Market also uses Bergen Place Park for artisan booths each Sunday.

##### ***Seventeenth of May Festival***

The Seventeenth of May Festival, also known as Syttende Mai, occurs annually in Ballard. The event is organized by the Norwegian Seventeenth of May Committee, a nonprofit organization. The event celebrates the Norwegian Constitution Day holiday. The Seventeenth of May has been celebrated in Seattle since 1889, and the community parade in Ballard has been held annually since 1974. The Ballard event is recognized as the third largest annual Seventeenth of May event in the world (after Oslo and Bergen). The annual event includes entertainment at the Leif Erikson Hall located at 2245 NW 57<sup>th</sup> St, a



music stage at Bergen Place Park at NW Market St and Leary Ave NW, and a parade. The parade route starts at 24<sup>th</sup> Ave NW and NW 62<sup>nd</sup> St and follows 24<sup>th</sup> Ave NW south to NW Market St. The parade then follows NW Market St east to 22<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW, where it turns south to Ballard Ave NW, then continues southeast along Ballard Ave NW to NW Ione Pl.

### ***SeafoodFest***

SeafoodFest is an annual event on the second weekend of July. The first event was held in 1974. Attractions typically include multiple music stages, food vendors, arts and crafts booths, a beer garden, and a big purple slide. Attractions are located along 22<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW between NW 58<sup>th</sup> St and Ballard Ave NW; NW Market St from 24<sup>th</sup> Ave NW to 20<sup>th</sup> Ave NW; Leary Ave NW between NW Market St and 20<sup>th</sup> Ave NW; Ballard Ave NW between NW Market St and 22<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW; and at Ballard Commons Park. Many of the streets featuring attractions are closed to traffic during the event.

## **5.2.5 Relevant Recreation Plans**

### ***Seattle Bicycle Master Plan***

The Seattle Bicycle Master Plan, adopted in 2014 (SDOT, 2014), sets out five goals:

1. Ridership: Increase the amount and mode share of bicycle riding in Seattle for all trip purposes.
2. Safety: Improve safety for bicycle riders.
3. Connectivity: Create a bicycle network that connects to places that people want to go, and provides a time-efficient travel option.
4. Equity: Provide equal bicycling access for all; through public engagement, program delivery, and capital investment.
5. Livability: Build vibrant and healthy communities by creating a welcoming environment for bicycle riding.

Strategy 4.1 in the plan is to “Implement the off-street (multi-use trail) bicycle facility network.” Actions under Strategy 4.1 include:

- 4.1.1: Develop new multi-use trails. Developing off-street bicycle facilities outside the public right-of-way will require additional feasibility analysis and agreements with land owners.
- 4.1.2: Incorporate best practice crossing design treatments into every new multi-use trail project.
- 4.1.3: Develop multi-use trails “etiquette” signs, and other creative means, to educate users traveling along the trail.
- 4.1.4: Assess multi-use trail lighting needs and work with Seattle City Light (SCL) to provide adequate trail lighting.
- 4.1.5: Install wayfinding with all off-street bicycle facility projects.

The Plan includes a bicycle network map, which recommends bicycle network improvements throughout the city, including 32 miles of recommended off-street bicycle trails. The Missing Link is shown as a recommended off-street trail on the bicycle network map. The bicycle network map also shows two recommended off-street trails linking directly to the Missing Link alignment, including a trail segment across the Ballard Bridge connecting to the existing off-street Ship Canal Trail and a trail segment across the Ballard Locks.

The Plan also identifies “catalyst projects,” which are those projects “located at choke points in the network that pose significant challenges to implementation due to physical constraints.” Catalyst projects also “Reduce critical barriers to bicycling by closing network gaps and increase safety by building all ages and abilities friendly bicycle facilities to the maximum feasible extent.” The Missing Link project is specifically mentioned as a catalyst project.

### ***Seattle Pedestrian Master Plan***

The Seattle Pedestrian Master Plan was adopted in September 2009 (SDOT, 2009). The mission of the plan is to make Seattle the most walkable city in the nation. The plan identifies six objectives:

- Objective 1: Complete and maintain the pedestrian system identified in the Pedestrian Master Plan.
- Objective 2: Improve walkability on all streets.
- Objective 3: Increase pedestrian safety.
- Objective 4: Plan, design, and build complete streets to move more people and goods.
- Objective 5: Create vibrant public spaces that encourage walking.
- Objective 6: Get more people walking for transportation, recreation, and health.

The plan includes a map of priority areas for prioritization of infrastructure projects for improving pedestrian conditions, and the study area is shown as a high priority area.

### ***Parks and Recreation 2011 Development Plan***

In 2011, the City of Seattle adopted the Parks and Recreation 2011 Development Plan (City of Seattle, 2011), which identifies goals, objectives, and policies for the park and recreation system and identifies priorities for acquisition and development projects through 2017. The Development Plan includes the 2011 Open Space Gap Analysis, which identifies areas of Seattle that do not meet the City’s goals for parks and open space. The Plan also includes the 2011–2016 Capital Improvement Program, which includes over 100 capital projects at City parks, from minor maintenance projects to major renovation and development of new parks.

In the 2011 Open Space Gap Analysis, Ballard is identified as a Hub Urban Village that does not meet open space goals. The Gap Analysis states that Ballard has one of the largest open space gaps in the northwest sector of the City (along with Fremont and Bitter Lake). The map “Gaps in Usable Open Space in the Northwest Sector” shows that both Leary Ave NW and Ballard Ave NW within the study area are mapped as areas with a gap in usable open space, as is NW Market St to the west of 24<sup>th</sup> Ave NW. Shilshole Ave NW is not included within the Ballard Urban Village.

As part of the Development Plan process, Seattle Parks and Recreation held public meetings, solicited written testimony, and conducted an online survey in 2011. Public feedback indicated that providing more walking trails was one of the four top priorities for outdoor recreation and open spaces, and that walking trails were one of the three park facilities that people felt there should be more of in Seattle (along with sports fields and beach and waterfront land). The Plan also notes that “providing linkages between parks, boulevards, and trails to allow more connections for walking, running, and bicycling, and developing multi-purpose trails like the Burke-Gilman or Interurban trails and completing the ‘missing link’ in Ballard were suggested.”

The Goals in the Parks and Recreation 2011 Development Plan include:

- Goal 1: Provide recreation and learning opportunities by providing and maintaining an adequate balance of parks, open spaces, recreational facilities, and programs tailored to their need to promote respite, socialization, and education.
- Goal 2: Steward Seattle’s parks and open spaces for long-term sustainability by conserving, restoring, and maintaining substantial open space, natural areas, shorelines, and wildlife, and by demonstrating a strong conservation ethic.
- Goal 3: Acquire property for parks and open space to fill the identified gaps in usable open space and to manage future growth and change consistent with the City’s growth management goals and policies as outlined in the City’s Comprehensive Plan.
- Goal 4: Maintain Parks and Recreation’s land and facilities. Emphasize good management and fiscal responsibility by making the most effective use of limited resources, evaluating programs and services, protecting the public interest, being accountable for achieving adopted objectives, and guarding against unrealistic expectations.
- Goal 5: Actively engage and build relationships with Seattle’s diverse population, the Seattle School District, the Seattle Housing Authority, other departments or agencies, and community-based organizations to bring together a range of services in response to neighborhood priorities.

Specific objectives relevant to the Missing Link project include:

- Objective 2.7: Undertake boulevards and trail improvements with consideration for natural and historic resources associated with such facilities and provide special landscaping, signage, or other design elements that reflect the importance of boulevards and trails as a major link in the City’s comprehensive open space system.
- Objective 3.4: In general, priority for the expansion of the open space network shall be given to areas of the city subject to population growth, including urban villages targeted for the largest share of residential growth and those areas not adequately served at present according to the population-based goals for open space.
- Objective 4.3: Coordinate planning and design for park improvements with other City departments.

Additionally, the Distribution Guidelines in the Plan state, “New multi-use trails will be developed in accordance with the Bicycle Master Plan, with a goal of having an interconnected system of primary and secondary trails throughout the city (and as coordinated with Seattle Transportation) as well as a variety of trails within all appropriate parks and green spaces.” The Distribution Guidelines also state that “priority will be given to adding park amenities in underserved areas of the City undergoing population growth, particularly those with expected and actual growth in urban center and urban village locations.”

### ***City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan***

The City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2005 (City of Seattle, 2005). The plan is currently in the process of being updated, and the July 2015 Draft Comprehensive Plan is described below. In addition, portions of the plan were updated during a 2014–2015 amendment process. The 2005 Comprehensive Plan includes two elements relevant to the project: the Urban Village Element and the Neighborhood Planning Element.

### Urban Village Element

The Comprehensive Plan Urban Village Element defines Ballard as a Hub Urban Village. The Ballard Hub Urban Village does not include Shilshole Ave NW or the shore of the Ship Canal; these areas are included in the BINMIC. The Urban Village Element of the plan establishes goals for an Open Space Network, including UVG39, to “Enhance the urban village strategy through the provision of... connections linking urban centers and villages, through a system of parks, boulevards, community gardens, urban trails, and natural areas ... [and] a network of connections to the regional open space system.”

Policy UV53 states that urban villages targeted for the largest share of residential growth will be prioritized for expansion of the open space network. The policy also states that types of open space acquisitions and development will include “critical open space linkages, connectors, and corridors that are highly accessible for active use within or directly serving urban villages, high density and/or high pedestrian, bicycle, or transit use areas” and “open space linkages, connectors, and corridors that are highly accessible for active use serving other high pedestrian, bicycle, or transit use areas.”

### Neighborhood Planning Element

The Comprehensive Plan also includes a Neighborhood Planning Element that sets goals and policies for the Ballard Hub Urban Village. Several goals and policies are relevant to the Missing Link project, including:

- Transportation Goal CH/B-G4: “A transportation system that supports residential, commercial and civic activity in the core of the Ballard and Crown Hill urban villages, and encourages people to use transit and non-motorized transportation modes.”
- Transportation Policy CH/B-P9: “Emphasize accessibility by transit, bicycle and pedestrians in the downtown Ballard area.”
- Recreation & Open Space Goal CH/B-G5: “A neighborhood with open space, parks and recreation sites connected by a network of ‘green links,’ that offer a full range of active and passive recreational opportunities to area residents and visitors, throughout Crown Hill/Ballard.”
- Recreation and Open Space Policy CH/B-P13: “Increase the range of recreation opportunities and types of open space available in the neighborhood. Encourage the development of new facilities, including, but not limited to passive parks, tennis courts, basketball courts, ballfields, play areas, marine and shoreline parks, pedestrian-friendly walkways, trails (including the Burke-Gilman), and gateways.”
- Recreation and Open Space Policy CH/B-P14: “Enhance existing open space and recreation sites and facilities throughout Crown Hill/Ballard.”
- Recreation and Open Space Policy CH/B-P15: “Create opportunities for people to experience the natural environment through the preservation of publicly-owned forested areas, encouraging community gardening (P-patches), and tree planting on private property and in the public right-of-way, and creating access to views and waterways.”

The BINMIC neighborhood plan (as presented in the Comprehensive Plan) does not include policies or goals for recreation or open space.

### ***Draft Seattle Comprehensive Plan***

The City of Seattle is in the process of updating the Comprehensive Plan. A Draft Comprehensive Plan was released in July 2015 (City of Seattle, 2015). In the Draft Comprehensive Plan, Ballard remains designated as a Hub Urban Village, while Shilshole Ave NW remains within the BINMIC.

The Draft Comprehensive Plan includes a set of updated goals and policies. Policies relevant to the Missing Link project include:

- Policy P1.1: Continue to expand the City's park holdings, with special emphasis on serving urban centers and urban villages and areas that have been traditionally underserved.
- Policy P1.3: Provide urban trails, green streets, and boulevards in public rights-of-way as recreation and transportation options and as ways to connect open spaces and parks to each other, to urban centers and villages, and to the regional open space system.
- Policy P1.6: Provide public access to shorelines by using street ends, regulation, or acquisition.

The updated Comprehensive Plan is scheduled to be adopted in 2016.

## **5.3 Potential Impacts**

### **5.3.1 No Build Alternative**

#### ***Recreation Uses***

Under the No Build Alternative, current conditions and trends in the study area would continue. Participation in recreational activities such as bicycling, running, jogging, and walking would continue to increase annually as a result of growth to the Ballard area and trends toward increases in recreational running, jogging, walking, and bicycling (as described in Section 5.2.1). Demand for off-road paved trails for these activities would continue to increase. Recreational sites such as the Ballard Locks and Golden Gardens Park would continue to be disconnected from other segments of the BGT.

#### ***Consistency with Recreation Plans***

The No Build Alternative is not consistent with adopted plans and policies described in Section 5.1.5, which include goals and policies for adding new parks and open space, adding to the local and regional trail network, and, in some plans, specifically building the Missing Link project.

#### ***Trail User Conflicts and Safety Issues***

Bicyclists and other recreational users would continue to use public streets (primarily Shilshole Ave NW) between the existing trail segments, many of which lack sidewalks, do not have demarcated areas for bicyclists and pedestrians, and cross railroad tracks. These streets currently suffer from user conflicts between bicyclists and cars and are known for poor safety conditions for recreational users.

### 5.3.2 Impacts Common to All Build Alternatives

#### **Construction**

##### Impacts to Existing Recreation Uses

Construction of the Missing Link along any of the alternative routes would disrupt existing recreational uses during the construction period, which would last approximately 12 to 18 months. Impacts would occur if roadways or paths providing access to existing recreational facilities were disrupted or if fugitive dust, odors from paving operations, noise, or construction light and glare affect existing recreational facilities. However, because of the short duration of construction at any given location, no significant impacts are expected. In addition, construction in the roadway or right-of-way has the potential to disrupt use of the road for existing recreational uses such as bicycling. Since construction would not disrupt any areas developed specifically for bicycle use, riders could use other nearby roadways during the construction period.

Under all Build Alternatives, construction of the west end of the Missing Link near 30<sup>th</sup> Ave NW could disrupt access to the parking lot and entrance of the Ballard Locks. However, access to the Ballard Locks would be preserved on the west end of the parking lot, and the duration of construction at this location would be relatively short.

#### **Operation**

##### Recreation Uses

The completed Missing Link would be used by many people, including bicyclists, skaters, joggers, and walkers. The Missing Link would improve the recreational experience over existing conditions, under which bicycling, walking, and other recreational activities take place on the sidewalk or in the street. The added mile of trail would likely increase recreational activity in the study area.

Completion of the Missing Link would connect recreational attractions like the Ballard Locks, Golden Gardens Park, and, if an off-street trail or cycle track is completed in the future as described in the Seattle Bicycle Master Plan, Discovery Park to the city-wide and regional multi-use trail system. As described in Section 5.1.1, 57% of King County residents walk or jog to recreation areas and 23% bicycle to recreation areas. Therefore, making these major recreational attractions accessible to bicycles, walkers, and joggers using the BGT would represent a positive impact to recreation. Additionally, each potential alternative routes would directly pass by recreational facilities, opening these recreational amenities to trail users. Each alternative would pass different recreational facilities as described below. The different alternative routes would also pass through different intersections, some of which are signalized. The existing segments of the BGT run through very few signalized intersections (including several on the University of Washington campus and one in the Fremont neighborhood). Signalized intersections require bicyclists and other trail users to stop, and it is generally preferable from a recreational perspective (particularly for bicyclists) to avoid routing multi-use trails through signalized intersections.

##### Consistency with Recreation Plans

Construction of the Missing Link project would be consistent with the 2005 City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan, as well as with the Draft Seattle Comprehensive Plan released in July 2015, by expanding recreational opportunities in the city and in the downtown Ballard area, and by expanding the city's network of trails and connections to open space. Completing the project would also be consistent with the Parks and Recreation 2011 Development Plan by filling in gaps in the open space network in



Ballard and meeting the public demand for additional trails. The Missing Link project is included in the Bicycle Master Plan as a “catalyst project” and would contribute to completion of the bicycle facility network. The project would be consistent with the Seattle Pedestrian Master Plan by improving pedestrian conditions in a high priority area.

### Trail User Conflicts and Safety Issues

By design, multi-use trails accommodate a variety of trail users. Trail user conflicts can result in disruption and negative effects on trail user experiences, as well as potential safety issues. Safety issues are related to the potential for accidents, which can occur on multi-use trails result from such factors as recklessness and irresponsible behavior, poor user preparation or judgment, and unsafe trail conditions. User conflicts occur when there is competition or perceived incompatibility of use by different types of users. Types of conflicts include speed of travel and safety issues. The potential for conflicts between trail users and vehicles is described in Chapter 7, Transportation. While the potential for trail user conflicts and safety issues on the completed Missing Link exists, conditions for users would be safer than under current conditions with no dedicated multi-use trail.

Two factors that influence the safety and the perception of safety of trail users are the width of the trail and the types of intersections trail users need to cross. All Build Alternatives would have an 8- to 12-foot trail width. Alternatives vary in the types of intersections included in the route and in how many of the intersections would be signalized. Signalized crossings increase both safety and perception of safety for recreational users of the trail when it crosses busy intersections. In addition to signalized intersections, several unsignalized intersections in the project area experience high volumes of peak hour traffic. Where the Missing Link crosses these intersections, they could require signalization or some other treatment to improve safety and crossing conditions. Whether or not they were signalized, crossing busy intersections could reduce the perception of safety for trail users. Individual trail users have different levels of tolerance for risk and perceived risk. For example, an experienced adult bicyclist commuter may have a higher tolerance for perceived risk than a bicycling family with young children. The greater the number of high-traffic intersections (particularly unsignalized intersections) along a route, the less desirable it becomes for some trail users. Driveways along the trail route can also increase the perceived risk and reduce the desirability of the route for some trail users. The number of signalized intersections, busy but unsignalized intersections, and driveways along the trail route varies by alternative.

## **5.3.3 Shilshole South Alternative**

### ***Construction***

#### Impacts to Existing Recreation Uses

Shilshole Ave NW is the primary route used by bicyclists traveling between the existing segments of the BGT. Construction of the Missing Link project would likely disrupt and displace bicycle users of Shilshole Ave NW during construction. This impact would be temporary, and other streets in the vicinity, including Ballard Ave NW and Leary Ave NW, could be used by bicyclists during the construction period.

The series of shoreline street ends along the Ship Canal, including the 14<sup>th</sup> Ave NW boat ramp and the public pier at 24<sup>th</sup> Ave NW, are accessible from streets included on the Shilshole South Alternative route, including NW 54<sup>th</sup> St, Shilshole Ave NW, and NW 45<sup>th</sup> St. During construction, it could be more difficult to access these street end parks, and construction activities may be audible and visible to park users. However, construction duration at any one location would be relatively short, and access to street ends would be maintained. It may not be possible to maintain access to the 20<sup>th</sup> Ave NW street end, which is

only accessible from Shilshole Ave NW. However, other street ends would be accessible within four or six blocks distance, so impacts would be minor.

## **Operation**

### Recreation Uses

As described in Section 5.2.3, completion of the Shilshole South Alternative would provide additional recreational opportunities in the project area and would improve recreational connectivity for users of the regional bicycle trail network.

The Shilshole South Alternative would be the most disconnected from commercial areas of Ballard with high pedestrian circulation. Therefore, it would provide a similar recreational experience to existing segments of the BGT. This route would not cross through any intersections that are currently signalized, which would be preferable for trail users, particularly bicyclists.

This alternative would run the closest to the Ship Canal and Salmon Bay. The trail would run within one block of the 14<sup>th</sup> Ave NW boat ramp, the 24<sup>th</sup> Ave NW pier, and the recently developed 28<sup>th</sup> Ave NW street end. The trail would run directly adjacent to the currently undeveloped 15<sup>th</sup> Ave NW street end and the 20<sup>th</sup> Ave NW street end. SDOT's Shoreline Street Ends Program is dedicated to preserving and improving public use of shoreline street ends. This alternative would support that program by increasing access to the street ends.

### Consistency with Recreation Plans

As described in Section 5.2.2, the Missing Link project would be consistent with a variety of recreation plans. However, Shilshole Ave NW and the rest of the proposed Shilshole South Alternative route are not within the Ballard Hub Urban Village in the City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan. The Ballard Hub Urban Village has a variety of goals and policies related to improving recreation and open space. Shilshole Ave NW is mapped within the BINMIC, which does not have any policies or goals for recreation or open space. Although the Shilshole South Alternative would technically be outside of the Ballard Hub Urban Village, it would still meet the recreation and open space goals of the neighborhood by linking the existing trail segments and connecting recreational and open space areas within the neighborhood.

### Trail User Conflicts and Safety Issues

The Shilshole South Alternative route would likely be a preferable route for bicyclists and commuters, as there would be no signalized intersections. The route would cross four unsignalized intersections. Although this route would run through fewer intersections (both signalized and unsignalized) than the Ballard Avenue and Leary Alternatives, it would pass 41 driveways and loading docks. While construction of the Missing Link along the Shilshole South Alternative would greatly increase safety for trail users, some users may choose not to use this trail segment due to the perception of risk from busy intersections and driveways, and prevalence of industrial traffic.

### 5.3.4 Shilshole North Alternative

#### **Construction**

##### Impacts to Existing Recreation Uses

Impacts would be the same as for the Shilshole South Alternative (Section 5.2.3), although disruption to shoreline street end recreational sites would be lower; the route would be an additional block removed from the 28<sup>th</sup> Ave NW and 14<sup>th</sup> Ave NW street ends and would be across the street from the 20<sup>th</sup> Ave NW street end.

#### **Operation**

##### Recreation Uses

The Shilshole North Alternative would provide a similar recreational experience to the Shilshole South Alternative (Section 5.2.3), but trail users who want to access shoreline street end parks would need to cross Shilshole Ave NW, a busy road with only one dedicated crossing point (at NW Vernon Pl). Therefore, this alternative would not provide as much connectivity to existing recreational sites as the Shilshole South Alternative. The route would also run through three or four signalized intersections (24<sup>th</sup> Ave NW and NW Market St; 28<sup>th</sup> Ave NW and NW Market St; NW 46<sup>th</sup> St and 11<sup>th</sup> Ave NW; and potentially a new signal at 17<sup>th</sup> Ave NW and Shilshole Ave NW), which could affect the recreational experience of the trail for bicyclists.

##### Consistency with Recreation Plans

Impacts would be the same as for the Shilshole South Alternative (Section 5.2.3).

##### Trail User Conflicts and Safety Issues

Impacts would be similar to the Shilshole South Alternative (Section 5.2.3), but the route would run through 10 additional intersections. Three of the intersections (24<sup>th</sup> Ave NW and NW Market St; 28<sup>th</sup> Ave NW and NW Market St; and NW 46<sup>th</sup> St and 11<sup>th</sup> Ave NW) are signalized, while the intersection at 17<sup>th</sup> Ave NW and Shilshole Ave NW would likely be signalized. Trail users would be required to turn left at the 24<sup>th</sup> Ave NW and NW Market St intersection. This route would also cross 58 driveways and loading docks, more than would be crossed by the other three Build Alternatives. Individual trail users are likely to have different levels of comfort with the intersections and driveways along each potential Shilshole alternative.

### 5.3.5 Ballard Avenue Alternative

#### **Construction**

##### Impacts to Existing Recreation Uses

Construction of the Ballard Avenue Alternative would impact recreation along the construction route, including Marvin's Garden at 22<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW and Ballard Ave NW, which it would directly pass; and Bergen Place Park at 22<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW and NW Market St, which it would run past on the opposite side of 24<sup>th</sup> Ave NW. Construction would be audible and visible to park users at these parks during the construction period, which would be relatively short at these sites. Construction could also disrupt access to Marvin's Garden for some park users, but the park would remain open during the construction period

and accessible from Ballard Ave NW. Construction of the Ballard Avenue Alternative along 22<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW and NW 56<sup>th</sup> St could be audible from Ballard Commons Park at 22<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW and NW 57<sup>th</sup> St. These impacts would be minor due to the short construction period and because the parks would remain open to the public.

Construction along Ballard Ave NW would be audible and visible to shoppers, diners, and other visitors to the historic Ballard Avenue Landmark District. Construction between NW Dock Pl and 22<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW would be relatively short. The Ballard Farmers Market would continue to be held on Sundays during the construction period. The contractor would be required to contain the construction zone in order to provide unimpeded access to the Farmers Market and to ensure the area is safe and hazard free.

## **Operation**

### Recreation Uses

As described in Section 5.2.3, completion of the Ballard Avenue Alternative would provide additional recreational opportunities in the project area and would improve recreational connectivity for users of the regional bicycle trail network.

The Ballard Avenue Alternative would run through the Ballard Avenue Landmark District, which would provide a different recreational experience than the Shilshole alternatives and other existing segments of the BGT. This route is likely more desirable for pedestrians, particularly those visiting the historic Landmark District for recreational purposes.

Ballard Ave NW between 22<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW and NW Vernon St is currently closed on Sundays for the Ballard Farmers Market, which runs from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. During the Farmers Market, the trail could be heavily congested. It is possible that some bicyclists would continue to ride through the Market. It is likely that walkers and joggers using the trail would continue on the same route through the Farmers Market, contributing to congestion. The Farmers Market is typically very crowded with customers, often with strollers, dogs, and small children. The conflict between the BGT and the Farmers Market would be likely to decrease the recreational experience of both. SDOT would consider options for avoiding this conflict, including detouring the trail around the Market on Sunday, coordinating with the Farmers Market to reconfigure the layout of the Market, or moving the Market to a new location. These options would have the potential to alter the recreational experience of the Farmers Market, the BGT, or both.

The Ballard Avenue Alternative would cross signalized intersections at 11<sup>th</sup> Ave NW and NW 46<sup>th</sup> St; 22<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW and NW Market St; and 28<sup>th</sup> Ave NW and NW Market St. In addition, the route would cross intersections at 15<sup>th</sup> Ave NW and NW 46<sup>th</sup> St and 24<sup>th</sup> Ave NW and NW 56<sup>th</sup> St, which would be signalized as part of the project. Crossing five signalized intersections in a short portion of the BGT would decrease the desirability of this portion of the route for bicyclists and other BGT users and would provide a substantially different recreational experience than provided by existing portions of the trail.

### Consistency with Recreation Plans

As described in Section 5.2.2, the Missing Link project would be consistent with a variety of recreation plans. Unlike the Shilshole alternatives, the Ballard Avenue Alternative would run through the Ballard Urban Hub Village and would meet the recreational goals of that neighborhood.

### Trail User Conflicts and Safety Issues

The Ballard Avenue Alternative is likely to be a desirable trail segment for pedestrians, particularly those visiting the Ballard Avenue Landmark District. An increase in pedestrian use of the BGT along this segment would likely increase trail user conflicts between pedestrians and bicyclists.

During the Farmers Market, BGT users would likely continue along the BGT route through the Farmers Market, creating user conflicts between BGT users and Farmers Market attendees. Particularly if bicyclists choose to ride through the Farmers Market, there could be safety issues as described in Chapter 7, Transportation. While the BGT would not be closed, some trail users would likely use adjacent streets to travel between segments of the BGT to avoid congestion, most likely traveling on Leary Ave NW or Shilshole Ave NW. Bicyclists and other trail users using adjacent roads that are not part of the multi-use trail system would experience lower safety levels than they experience while using the multi-use trail system. This would be particularly true when trail users are diverted from the trail as traffic from cars increases from visitors to the Farmers Market.

The Ballard Avenue Alternative would cross approximately 42 driveways and loading docks, and the route would cross 16 intersections. While five intersections would be signalized (as listed above), some trail users could still perceive risk crossing these intersections, making this portion of the trail undesirable to them.

### 5.3.6 Leary Alternative

#### **Construction**

#### Impacts to Existing Recreation Uses

Construction impacts of the Leary Alternative would be the same as for all Build Alternatives, as described in Section 5.2.2.

#### **Operation**

#### Recreation Uses

The Leary Alternative would provide a different recreational experience than the Shilshole or Ballard Avenue Alternatives. Leary Ave NW and NW Market St are currently major arterials with four lanes of traffic, although both roads along the trail alignment would be reduced to one lane in each direction with a center two-way left turn lane. NW Market St between 22<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW and 24<sup>th</sup> Ave NW is a busy commercial district, but the other portions of the route feature less pedestrian foot traffic. The Leary Alternative route would include eight signalized intersections, the most of any of the alternative routes and substantially more than any existing portion of the BGT, potentially making it a less desirable route for bicyclists and other trail users.

#### Consistency with Recreation Plans

Impacts would be the same as for the Ballard Avenue Alternative as described in Section 5.2.5.

#### Trail User Conflicts and Safety Issues

The Leary Alternative would cross 33 driveways and loading docks, fewer than the other alternatives. However, the Leary Alternative would also cross 13 intersections. While eight of these intersections are

signalized, it is still possible that some trail users would find the route undesirable due to a perceived lack of safety when crossing these intersections. There may be increased trail user conflicts on the portions of the route adjacent to NW Market St as more pedestrians use the trail.

### 5.3.7 Connector Segments

#### **Construction**

##### Impacts to Existing Recreation Uses

Impacts from construction of connector segments would be the same as for all Build Alternatives, as described in Section 5.2.2.

#### **Operation**

Operational impacts associated with connector segments would be the same as for all Build Alternatives, as described in Section 5.2.2. The NW Vernon Street connector segment would require signalization of the intersection of NW Vernon St and Shilshole Ave NW, potentially reducing the recreational quality for some bicyclists but increasing perception of safety for others. Some connector segments would require trail users to make left turns at intersections, such as at 14<sup>th</sup> Ave NW and NW Leary Way; 17<sup>th</sup> Ave NW and NW Leary Way; 20<sup>th</sup> Ave NW and Leary Ave NW; and Ballard Ave NW and NW Market St. These left turns could make these routes undesirable for some trail users due to safety concerns.

## 5.4 Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation Measures

### 5.4.1 Mitigation Common to All Alternatives

The following mitigation measures could be used to minimize impacts on existing recreational activities:

- Utilize construction BMPs such as wetting and covering disturbed soils, washing vehicle tires and undercarriages, and shutting off idling equipment to control fugitive dust and vehicle emissions.

The following mitigation measures could be used to minimize trail user conflicts and enhance safety:

- Install signage indicating limits of the trail right-of-way, trail etiquette, and yield protocols.
- Provide signage warning trail users they are approaching signalized or unsignalized intersections.
- Design the trail to meet applicable accessibility guidelines, including current design standards for curves and sight distance, based on a design speed for the fastest users, bicyclists.

### 5.4.2 Specific Mitigation

For the Ballard Avenue Alternative, SDOT would coordinate with the Ballard Farmers Market to determine the best method of coordinating trail use through the Market.