

Eastlake

The Eastlake station area has a mix of uses that can potentially support additional transit use and pedestrian activity. Given existing site conditions, several constraints that can impede transit-oriented development must be overcome.

The light rail station site is located on a narrow strip of land between Lake Union and Interstate 5, which cuts off access to the Capitol Hill neighborhood to the east. In addition, the community seeks to preserve affordable housing opportunities and limit new construction in the area. The pedestrian environment is poor because this formerly industrial district remains largely oriented to the automobile. The City can promote transit use and pedestrian activity by encouraging additional mixed use development, managing parking, and improving the pedestrian environment, as well as pedestrian connections to east of I-5.

SOUND TRANSIT ALIGNMENT AND STATION OPTIONS

As an alternative to the Capitol Hill/First Hill alignment, Sound Transit is considering an alignment that runs closer to Lake Union. The alternative alignment runs in a tunnel just east of Eastlake Avenue, with a below-grade station located just south of where Eastlake and Fairview Avenues meet.

EXISTING STATION AREA CONDITIONS

LAND USE AND HOUSING

The single largest land use in the Eastlake station area is single-family residential, which lies almost entirely east of I-5 and is physically isolated from the station site. Industrial uses



Looking north from station site, Interstate 5 on right.

dominate the areas along the shore of Lake Union. Multi-family housing and some office uses are scattered throughout the station area.

Overall, the station area has approximately 335 units of housing (most located in multi-family residential and commercial zones) and includes some converted lofts and infill development in commercial areas. Average net residential density in the station area is approximately 4 units per acre, with multi-family residential densities reaching 12 units per acre.

TRANSPORTATION

The Eastlake neighborhood is dominated by I-5, which inhibits extensive east-west movement through the station area. I-5 creates some dead-end streets east of the freeway, channeling traffic to/from the residential areas around St. Mark's Cathedral to Howe Street, just north of the station area. Consequently, most pedestrian and auto traffic moves in a north-south direction through the neighborhood.

- *Highway Traffic.* Although I-5 passes through the neighborhood, there is only one highway access point in the area, Lakeview Boulevard just south of Blaine. On and off-ramps are located to the north and south of the station area.
- *Auto Access to Adjacent Neighborhoods.* Auto traffic passes through the station area along Lakeview Boulevard and Eastlake Avenue, providing access to neighborhoods in the Capitol Hill neighborhood and the University District to the north, as well as to Seattle Center and Downtown to the south.
- *Pedestrian Corridors.* Fairview Avenue provides for recreational pedestrian movement in the north-south direction. Streets in the east-west direction also connect Fairview Avenue with Eastlake Avenue. There are several stairs/walkways that connect the Eastlake neighborhood with Capitol Hill.

Community Issues

Based on the results of neighborhood surveys and planning workshops, transportation is a high priority for community members. Eastlake Avenue is the main thoroughfare between the University District and Downtown, subjecting the neighborhood to heavy traffic. About half of the Eastlake neighborhood land is covered by public rights of way, including city streets and I-5. Additional bus service is sought as a way to help manage traffic. Pedestrian safety is another major concern. Specific community issues include:

- *Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety.* Signal, crosswalk and lane changes to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety.
- *Improved Transit Service.* If express buses are routed through the Eastlake neighborhood, they also should serve Eastlake. However, the community would prefer it if new express routes did not travel through Eastlake at all.

Eastlake Station Area – Existing Conditions, 1997¹	
Population	438
Employment	1,202
Median Household Income (1996)	\$ 45,391
<i>Residential Land Use</i>	
Total Dwelling Units	335
Density ²	
Single-family Zones	2.1
Multi-family Zones	11.7
<i>Commercial Land Use</i>	
Total Floor Area (sq. ft)	874,260
Retail/Service	39,467
Office	315,991
Floor Area Ratio (FAR) ³	0.27
¹ Within a ¼-mile radius of station location.	
² Dwelling units per net residential acre in specified residential zones. Residential units in non-residential zones are excluded.	
³ Ratio of non-residential space per net acre of commercial and industrial land use.	

Concerns about Light Rail

The proposed light rail alignment has generated considerable controversy in the community. Specific concerns, as presented in the *Eastlake Tomorrow Options Guide* include:

- *Eastlake Avenue Alignment.* Light rail should not be on the surface of Eastlake Avenue, where it would significantly harm existing businesses and neighborhood livability and exacerbate traffic and parking problems.
- *Ship Canal Alignment.* The community opposes a light rail (or monorail) bridge crossing over the Ship Canal and light rail tunnel openings in the Eastlake neighborhood, both which could significantly harm property values and add noise.
- *Traffic and Pressure for Upzoning.* The community opposes a light rail station in Eastlake if there are not strong protections against increased traffic and rezoning for commercial development.

1995 Metro Six-Year Plan

The Eastlake area is already an important transit corridor, with King County’s *1995 Six-Year Transit Development Plan* targeting Eastlake for improvements in transit services and facilities over the next several years.

Eastlake is designated an employment target area, and as a result, will experience improvements in transit service. Thirty-four (34) employment target areas throughout the Seattle region are identified and slated for improved peak-hour service, both for fixed routes and flexible routes (Strategy S-4).

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE NETWORK

Pedestrian accessibility is a key issue in the Eastlake station area. The station site is located beneath and adjacent to the elevated structure of Interstate 5. When redevelopment does occur in this area, it will likely be along Eastlake Avenue.

Interstate 5 and the hillside to the east (under the elevated freeway) would act as tremendous physical and psychological barriers, separating the eastern and western portions of the station area.

The *Eastlake Tomorrow-Draft Approval and Adoption Matrix* recommends the implementation of an “Eastlake Avenue Pedestrian District Overlay” to promote a pedestrian-supportive environment along the Eastlake Avenue corridor.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The *Eastlake Tomorrow Options Guide* seeks improved pedestrian connections and facilities throughout the neighborhood, recognizing that the current environment is predominantly oriented to the automobile. Infrastructure improvements called for in the *Options Guide* include:

- Pedestrian safety features, such as signal improvements and sidewalks;
- Park and open space improvements, including the development of “green streets;” and
- Business area improvements, including improved bus shelters, street trees, and sidewalk art.

URBAN DESIGN FEATURES

The urban character of the Eastlake station area is varied:

- *Commercial and Industrial Uses.* Development in the area is mostly small-scale commercial, with the larger scale Zymogenetics research facility immediately to the west. Marinas and marine industrial uses dominate the shore of Lake Union.
- *Transitional Strip Development on Eastlake Avenue.* To the immediate east is the transitional strip development of Eastlake Avenue, a strongly vehicular corridor that links the University District to Downtown. Recent redevelopment has occurred along Eastlake Avenue north of the station area, creating a successful commercial and residential node. This trend is continuing, with development moving southward along Eastlake Avenue into the station area.
- *Interstate 5 and Capitol Hill.* The Eastlake Avenue strip is bound to the east by the hillside and elevated structure of Interstate 5. In the right-of-way under the Interstate, the steep hillside rises almost 300 feet in one-eighth of a mile eastward through St. Mark’s Greenbelt and Capitol Hill’s mansion district.

Visual Landmarks

Visual landmarks in the station area include Lake Union, a massive refurbished power plant (now the Zymogenetics research facility), and Interstate 5, which hovers 100 feet above the station site.

Views

Views to the west of the station area are attractive, featuring Lake Union in the foreground and Queen Anne Hill and the Space Needle beyond. The view to the east is obscured by the underside of the Interstate.

RECENT MARKET TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

MARKET CONDITIONS

Compared to the markets for commercial office and retail, the Eastlake residential market is the strongest. Residential vacancy rates have been below 1.5%, and residential land prices have been increasing at about 8%. Despite showing more moderate growth than residential development, commercial development in the neighborhood continues to grow. Older warehouse and industrial buildings are currently being converted into office space. The low office vacancy rate in the station area has led to office rents that are among the highest in the Seattle region outside of Downtown.

Eastlake Station Area – Market Conditions¹	
Rents and Vacancy Rates	
Apartment Rents (sq. ft.)	\$ 1.25
Apartment Vacancy Rate	3.9%
Office Rents (sq. ft.)	\$ 21.42
Office Vacancy Rate	3.2%
Trends in Land Prices²	
Commercial Lots	5.0%
Single Family Lots	5.6%
Multi-family Lots	7.0%
Active Permit Applications	
Housing Units	0
Commercial Space (sq. ft.)	0
¹ Within a ¼-mile radius of station location.	
² 1985-95 average annual increase, based on sales prices recorded by King County Assessor and reported by zone category.	

RELATIVE STRENGTH OF DEVELOPMENT MARKETS IN THE EASTLAKE STATION AREA

Because the Eastlake housing market is strong, it is expected to have the strongest potential for development in the station area compared to other types of development. Office development will be more moderate, partly because less expensive rents can be found in other non-downtown commercial areas. Retail development is seen as having low potential, since the area has few existing retail uses and because the station area itself has relatively low population and employment bases.

From the Interstate westward, redevelopment potential is high, as current uses tend to be run-down and sites are underutilized. The land under the Interstate is mostly vacant, and would be well suited for carpool or vanpool parking.

To the immediate east of the Interstate, along Lakeview Boulevard, there is a strip of older single family houses intermixed with newer multiple family residences. These small houses may have redevelopment potential. The rest of the hillside is institutional, or stable single family residential uses.

Eastlake Station Area – Relative Market Strength¹	
	Ranking (5 high, 1 low)
Housing	3
Retail	1
Office	2

¹ Indicates relative strength of market type of station area, compared to other potential station areas. Ranking is based on rents, employment levels, vacancy rates, land values, recent development activity, stakeholder interviews, field observations, and other information.

EXISTING PLANS AND ZONING

PLANNING CONTEXT

Portions of the Eastlake station area (on the alternative alignment) are included within both the Eastlake Residential Urban Village and the South Lake Union Hub Urban Village. The station area includes industrial uses along a portion of the Lake Union waterfront, Interstate 5 right-of-way, and a portion of a predominantly-residential area in the Capitol Hill neighborhood uphill and to the east of I-5.

ZONING

Zoning in the Eastlake station area establishes bands of land uses between the commercial and industrial uses of the lakefront and the single-family uses east of Interstate 5. The lakefront itself is zoned IG1, which allows most general industrial uses. Immediately east of the IGI zones is a layer of commercial zones (including C1 and C2) which allows general commercial uses typically of a large scale and oriented to automobiles. In addition to providing opportunities for commercial development, the C1 and C2 zones serve as a buffer between the lakefront industrial uses and residential uses to the east.

Immediately east of the commercial zones is a series of multi-family zones. The Interstate 5 right-of-way is zoned L2. Areas east of the freeway are zoned SF5000, which permits low-density single-family residential uses.

Eastlake Station Area – Potential Development Under Current Zoning Regulations¹		
	<i>Commercial (sq. ft)</i>	<i>Residential (units)</i>
Existing Development	874,260	335
Additional Potential Development under Current Zoning Regulations ²	656,422	947
TOTAL	1,530,682	1,282
¹ Within a ¼-mile radius of station location.		
² Potential development capacity is based on City of Seattle GIS database and Scenario 2 in the “Zoned Development Capacity” background paper.		

NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN ISSUES

The *Eastlake Tomorrow-Draft Approval and Adoption Matrix* recommends the promotion of a pedestrian-supportive environment along the corridor. According to the *Eastlake Tomorrow Options Guide*, maintaining the existing neighborhood character, including its scale of development, is a neighborhood goal.

The *Eastlake Tomorrow Options Guide* recommends mandatory design review for projects in Low-rise 1 and 2 and commercial zones (for projects that also require environmental review) to help preserve the traditional scale and character of the neighborhood. The guide also proposes adoption of an “Eastlake Facade and Storefront Character” design guideline.

STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

The neighborhood has expressed strong opposition to the alternative alignment that brings light rail to their neighborhood at street level. While some of the opposition relates to the noise, view, and neighborhood character impacts associated with an elevated line, others op-

pose the potential negative impacts of a station on surrounding land uses. Some do not want a more intensely developed commercial area and want to moderate residential growth, while preserving the neighborhood’s affordable housing.

Most of the impacts of concern to the neighborhood would be substantially reduced by the new tunnel configuration being studied by Sound Transit, with a station south of the Eastlake station area. However, this alternative would not provide direct service to the Eastlake neighborhood. Concerns about light rail include the following:

- *Loss of Industrial Uses.* “The area around the station has some heavy industry (e.g. the shipyard, propeller factory). But the character is slowly changing to office use because land prices are lower than downtown.”
- *Loss of Affordable Housing.* “Inexpensive housing is being lost along with the diversity of the neighborhood.”
- *Environmental Impacts of Light Rail.* “Our biggest concerns about the Eastlake alignment are noise, loss of privacy, and view blockage.”

STATION AREA DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

AVAILABLE OPPORTUNITY SITES

The Eastlake station area has 51 parcels and almost 12 acres of land available for development. These represent vacant and underutilized parcels. The greatest number of acres of opportunity sites are located in commercial areas east of Eastlake Avenue and in single-family residential areas east of I-5. Development east of the I-5, however, would not be expected to use the Eastlake station due to poor access.

Eastlake Station Area – Opportunity Sites by Zoning Designation¹		
	<i>Parcels</i>	<i>Acreage²</i>
L-3	6	0.80
SF 5000	9	3.59
L-1	3	0.46
LDT	6	1.21
L-2	11	1.61
CI-65	14	3.43
CI-40	2	0.51
TOTAL	51	11.60
¹ Within a ¼-mile radius of the station location.		
² Based on City of Seattle GIS database.		

Zoning for Opportunity Sites

Most opportunity sites are found in C1-65, lowrise, and single-family zones. A variety of commercial development is allowed in the commercial zones in the vicinity of the station area. Single-family residential development may help fill in areas throughout the single-family residential zones. Although there are opportunity sites available in L2 zones, they generally hug the eastern side of I-5, and their proximity to it may make them undesirable for development.

DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS

The relatively large parcels in the station area (average 0.25 acres in commercial zones and 0.45 acres in single-family residential zones) are conducive to development. In addition, the neighborhood has an excellent location that may attract investment. Lake Union is an attraction, and the neighborhood is situated between attractive neighborhoods, including Capitol Hill, the University District, and Downtown.

Nevertheless, the overall configuration of land uses in the Eastlake neighborhood makes development somewhat difficult. In particular, I-5 brings noise and air quality impacts. It also cuts off Eastlake from Capitol Hill, detracting from the neighborhood's locational benefits. Moreover, the presence of I-5 limits the neighborhood to a narrow strip of developable land.

Pedestrian-oriented and mixed use development, in particular, is likely to be constrained by the existing zoning, which does not allow for neighborhood commercial uses or mixed use development that would otherwise support transit.

STATION AREA FORECASTS

Three different forecasts were developed for the new population, employment, dwelling units, and commercial floor area that will be added to the station area by 2020:

1. "Without light rail transit;"
2. "With light rail transit, but without supportive land use policies;" and
3. "With both light rail transit *and* supportive land use policies."

POPULATION AND HOUSING

The PSRC Trends forecast projects an additional 162 dwelling units in this station area, while the *Comprehensive Plan* Extrapolation forecasts nearly 800. There are no permit applications pending (at the time of this writing), although a hotel is under construction along Lake Union. An additional 200 dwelling units is projected, which is slightly above the PSRC forecast. With "light rail only," the station area will grow by 210 units housing 315 new residents by 2020.

EMPLOYMENT AND COMMERCIAL FLOOR AREA

The two forecasts range between 129,000 and 119,000 square feet of new commercial floor area over the next 20 years, with a probable baseline of 120,000 square feet of new commercial space (10% retail and 90% office). The office market will be driven in part by biotechnology firms interested in proximity to the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center and Zymogenetics and the amenities of Lake Union. A light rail station is expected to encourage a total of 126,000 square feet of new office/retail space and add 420 new employees to the area by 2020.

LAND USE IMPACTS OF LIGHT RAIL

The land use impacts of “rail without supportive policies” will likely be an increase in office uses within the station area on the order of 5%. More than half of the station area is isolated from the station site by Interstate 5, limiting opportunities for transit-oriented development in the station area.

LAND USE IMPACTS OF LIGHT RAIL WITH SUPPORTIVE POLICIES

The potential development strategies for the Eastlake station area focus on providing incentives in the zoning code for mixed use transit-oriented development and developing a parking management plan. Since the station is a fairly strong neighborhood commercial market, any economic and financial assistance should be limited to providing affordable housing. These strategies, combined with expedited permitting and SEPA clearance for transit-oriented development projects, could boost the development of opportunity sites to approximately three-quarters of their zoned capacity. This level of development would add an additional 100 dwelling units to the area. Supportive strategies could also boost the office and retail uses by approximately 10% beyond what is in the “rail only” forecast.

Eastlake Station Area – Market Forecasts, 1997-2020¹				
	<u>1997</u>	<u>1997-2020 Growth</u>		
		<i>Without LRT</i>	<i>With LRT Only</i>	<i>LRT and Supportive Policies</i>
Population	438	300	345	450
Dwelling Units	335	200	210	300
Employment	1,202	400	420	470
Commercial Floor Area ²	874	120	126	140

¹ Within a ¼-mile radius of the station location.

² Square footage (in thousands); includes commercial, industrial and institutional space, but excludes Sound Transit facilities and public facilities.

POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

The overall approach for the Eastlake station area is to ensure that new development is supportive of transit and pedestrian activity. However, the area is not seen as being able to accommodate high-density commercial or residential development, primarily because land constraints and community opposition preclude extensive changes in the area's urban form. Small-scale infill development and conversions of warehouses to offices and residences, however, can be regulated to optimize transit and pedestrian use. The overall development strategy for the Eastlake station area can be summarized as follows:

- *Pedestrian Environment.* Rezoning from C to NC would encourage pedestrian-supportive, small-scale commercial development. Auto-oriented uses could be limited to provide opportunities for pedestrian-oriented development. Establishment of a POZ and improved linkages to other neighborhoods could also help enhance the pedestrian environment.
- *Parking Management.* Shared parking opportunities could help limit the overall amount of parking and encourage transit use. An RPZ may potentially be considered for this neighborhood.

The table on the next page shows high-priority and recommended actions for the Eastlake station area. Because the local real estate market is strong, it may not be necessary to use economic assistance, development partnerships, or pilot projects to stimulate development. Coordination with METRO will help obtain the desired transit connections from the Eastlake station to adjacent neighborhoods.

Potential Development Strategies: Eastlake (II)

Strategy	Potential Action	Comments
Land Use Tools	●	<i>Establish POZ; rezone C-65 to NC-65; provide affordable housing incentives; and establish limitations on auto-oriented uses.</i>
Pedestrian Network	●	<i>Improve linkages to neighborhoods adjacent to station.</i>
Parking Management	●	<i>Promote shared parking opportunities. RPZ may be needed adjacent to the station.</i>
Economics/Financial Assistance	?	<i>Establish funding mechanisms to help finance affordable housing.</i>
Regulatory Process	?	<i>Provide expedited review/SEPA clearance for TOD projects.</i>
Local Transit Service	○	<i>Coordinate local service needs with METRO; provide express bus service with stop at station and at one other key location along Eastlake Avenue.</i>
Development Partnerships	?	<i>Explore opportunities for neighborhood business support.</i>
Pilot Projects	?	<i>Support pilot project for affordable housing.</i>

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|---|--|
| <p>✓ = Supportive Policy/Program in Place</p> <p>● = High Priority Action</p> <p>○ = Recommended Action</p> <p>? = Further Study Required</p> | <p>TOD = Transit-Oriented Development</p> <p>POZ = Pedestrian Overlay Zone</p> <p>RPZ = Residential Parking Zone</p> |
|---|--|

South Lake Union

The South Lake Union station site is located in the midst of commercial, light industrial, and waterfront-related uses. The pedestrian environment is particularly poor because this area is still oriented to the automobile. Busy streets and exclusive automobile rights-of-way interrupt pedestrian activity.

The City can promote transit use and pedestrian activity in this station area by encouraging additional mixed use development, managing parking, and improving the pedestrian environment, especially by providing pedestrian connections to adjacent neighborhoods.

SOUND TRANSIT ALIGNMENT AND STATION OPTIONS

After leaving the Eastlake station, the Lake Union alternative alignment runs in a retained cut next to I-5, becomes elevated near the Mercer/I-5 on-ramps and continues elevated along the south side of Mercer Street, entering a tunnel at Broad Street. The South Lake Union station would be in an elevated structure that is proposed to be located near East Mercer Street and Terry Avenue North.

EXISTING STATION AREA CONDITIONS

LAND USE AND HOUSING

Most acreage in the South Lake Union station area is in warehouse and large-scale retail use. Public facilities, office uses, parking, and industrial uses also occupy a large percentage of



Heavy traffic on Mercer Street near Interstate 5.

land. These low-intensity uses reflect the traditional character of South Lake Union as an industrial and commercial district, oriented predominantly to auto circulation. The recent introduction of retail uses reflects the adaptive reuse of older industrial and warehouse structures for new purposes.

The station area has little residential development overall. Average net residential densities total less than 1.5 units per acre. Several new residential projects have recently been built (some with densities reaching 15 units per acre or more) or are proposed for the station area.

TRANSPORTATION

The South Lake Union station area is predominantly oriented to automobiles. Mercer and Valley/Broad are prime points of access to and from I-5 and are often choked with traffic. Fairview is a strong north/south vehicular route through the area that also sees heavy traffic volumes during commute times. Westlake Boulevard, 9th Avenue, and Dexter Avenue are all three or four lanes wide.

There are no main pedestrian routes through the station area, and commercial land uses provide abundant surface parking and convenient auto access. Westlake Boulevard provides a direct connection to Downtown.

South Lake Union Station Area – Existing Conditions, 1997¹	
Population	144
Employment	3,307
Median Household Income (1996)	14,732
<i>Residential Land Use</i>	
Total Dwelling Units	118
Density ²	
Single-family Zones	N/A
Multi-family Zones	N/A
<i>Commercial Land Use</i>	
Total Floor Area (sq. ft)	3,047,370
Retail/Service	823,321
Office	311,001
Floor Area Ratio (FAR) ³	0.84
¹ Within a ¼-mile radius of station location.	
² Dwelling units per net residential acre in specified residential zoning zones. Residential units in non-residential zones are excluded.	
³ Ratio of non-residential space per net acre of commercial and industrial land use.	

- *Highway Access.* Mercer Street provides a direct link to I-5, attracting traffic from Downtown, Seattle Center, and Queen Anne. Fairview Avenue also provides I-5 access via the Eastlake neighborhood.
- *Auto Access to Adjacent Neighborhoods.* Auto traffic can enter and exit the area from several directions and, therefore, there is convenient movement of traffic between Downtown and neighborhoods on either side of Lake Union. To the north, Westlake Avenue connects to the Queen Anne neighborhood, and Eastlake Avenue connects to Capitol Hill and the University District. To the south, these streets link to the Downtown area.

Community Issues

The *South Lake Union Scope of Work* lists issues of concern regarding transportation in the neighborhood. Traffic congestion and parking are major concerns, while the community is uncertain about how to respond to light rail. Specific issues include:

- *Traffic Congestion.* Whether physical solutions to the Mercer Corridor congestion should be pursued;
- *Parking.* Whether a parking study should be undertaken;
- *Response to Light Rail.* The level of planning that should be focused on the alternative light rail alignment or on the monorail;
- *Access Constraints.* How to improve north-south access through the neighborhood.

1995 Metro Six-Year Plan

The South Lake Union station area is already an important transit corridor, with King County's *1995 Six-Year Transit Development Plan* targeting South Lake Union for improvements in transit services and facilities over the next several years.

South Lake Union is designated an employment target area, and as a result, the area will receive improved transit service. Thirty-four (34) employment target areas throughout the Seattle region are identified and slated for improved peak-hour service, both for fixed routes and flexible routes (Strategy S-4).

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE NETWORK

Pedestrian activity in the South Lake Union station area is low. The area lacks any real destination, so the majority of traffic passes through the area during the weekday commute. However, because of the area's low density, commuter traffic originating in the area is low for such a large area. The pedestrian environment is uncomfortable, with many sidewalks in poor repair and little vegetation to soften stark building facades. Concerns about personal safety also detract from the area's pedestrian appeal.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Park space and pedestrian facilities/connections are priorities to the community. According to the *South Lake Union Scope of Work*, the City adopted a plan for South Lake Union park, but full funding was never authorized. Among other items, the *Scope of Work* listed development of South Lake Union Park and designation of “green streets” as desired improvements in the station area.

URBAN DESIGN FEATURES

The South Lake Union station area is something of an anomaly. Sandwiched between along Downtown and Lake Union, the area has great potential, but current uses include a mix of commercial, industrial, warehouse buildings and a small amount of tourist development the lake. Buildings are low-density (usually only 1 or 2 stories high), and many are in poor condition. At night the area is deserted, except for a large homeless population. Recent rezoning in the Cascade neighborhood will help to revive this former residential community.



New housing in the Cascade neighborhood

Visual Landmarks

Major visual landmarks in the vicinity of the station area include Lake Union, Denny Park, and the climbing atrium of the REI Flagship store. Other visual landmarks are cultural icons, such as the Lincoln “Toe Truck” and the neon “gas flame” sign on the roof of the Puget Sound Energy building.

Views

Site lines down the north/south streets in the station area afford views of Lake Union and the Wallingford neighborhood beyond. The Space Needle stands as a sentinel to the west.

RECENT MARKET TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

MARKET CONDITIONS

Compared to the commercial office and retail markets, the South Lake Union residential market is strong. Apartment vacancy rates have been below 1.5%, and residential land prices have been increasing at about 8%. Similarly, permit activity shows greater current investment in residential development than commercial.

Commercial development has not stagnated, however. Despite showing more moderate numbers than for residential development, there are still signs of healthy commercial growth in the South Lake Union station area. Older warehouse and industrial buildings are being converted into office space, and office rents are some of the highest in the Seattle region outside of Downtown (due, in part, to the low vacancy rates).

South Lake Union Station Area – Market Conditions¹	
Rents and Vacancy Rates	
Apartment Rents (sq. ft.)	\$ 1.25
Apartment Vacancy Rate	3.9%
Office Rents (sq. ft.)	\$ 21.42
Office Vacancy Rate	3.2%
Trends in Land Prices²	
Commercial Lots	5.0%
Single Family Lots	7.0%
Multi-family Lots	5.6%
Active Permit Applications	
Housing Units	229
Commercial Space (sq. ft.)	4,000
¹ Within a ¼-mile radius of station location.	
² 1985-95 average annual increase, based on sales prices recorded by King County Assessor and reported by zone category.	

RECENT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Redevelopment potential in the South Lake Union station area is very high, given the area’s proximity to Downtown/Lake Union and the fact that sites are generally underutilized. There is interest in redevelopment; with potential projects including the following:

- *South Lake Union Park.* A significant activity node focused on maritime heritage may be developed at South Lake Union Park; and
- *University of Washington.* The University of Washington has expressed interest in area properties for uses related to the Burke Museum, the Leroy Hood project, and the UW Advanced Technology Initiative.

RELATIVE STRENGTH OF DEVELOPMENT MARKETS IN THE SOUTH LAKE UNION STATION AREA

Housing and office development have the greatest potential in the South Lake Union station area. Existing residential and commercial rents suggest that the local market can support additional development. The proximity of the neighborhood to Downtown, Lake Union, and Seattle Center all contribute to making the area an attractive place to live. Retail uses have less potential for development, since the area has few existing retail uses and because the station area still has relatively low population and employment bases.

South Lake Union Station Area – Relative Market Strength¹	
	Ranking (5 high, 1 low)
Housing	3
Retail	2
Office	3
¹ Indicates relative strength of market type of station area, compared to other potential station areas. Ranking is based on rents, employment levels, vacancy rates, land values, recent development activity, stakeholder interviews, field observations, and other information.	

EXISTING PLANS AND ZONING

PLANNING CONTEXT

The South Lake Union station area (on the alternative alignment) is located within the South Lake Union Hub Urban Village. South Lake Union is predominantly a commercial area, with many small businesses and light industrial uses. New housing development is changing the Cascade neighborhood to the east of Fairview Avenue. The station area is dominated by vehicles traveling to/from I-5 via the Mercer Corridor and abundant surface parking.

ZONING

The South Lake Union station area is zoned predominantly for commercial uses. Parcels along Lake Union are zoned almost exclusively C2, and C1 zoning is found in the southwestern part of the station area. Commercial zones primarily allow for larger-scale, auto-oriented commercial uses, although all of the mixed use housing in the station area (outside the Cascade neighborhood) has been in C zones. This zoning is consistent with the area’s current function and orientation to the automobile.

Despite the area’s predominant C zoning, parcels along Westlake Boulevard are zoned for NC3, which includes standards for more pedestrian-oriented development. The Seattle Cascade Mixed zone located on the eastern edge of the station area allows great flexibility in terms of allowable land uses. It does not allow heavy manufacturing, high-impact industrial, and certain auto-oriented uses.

South Lake Union – Potential Development Under Current Zoning Regulations¹		
	<i>Commercial (sq. ft)</i>	<i>Residential (units)</i>
Existing Development	3,047,370	118
Additional Potential Development under Current Zoning Regulations ²	3,435,324	1,676
TOTAL	6,482,694	1,794
¹ Within a ¼-mile radius of station location.		
² Potential development capacity is based on City of Seattle GIS database and Scenario 2 in the “Zoned Development Capacity” background paper.		

NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN ISSUES

The South Lake Union Plan is in the very early stages of development. No rezones are included in the *Scope of Work*, which states that the existing zoned development capacity has more than sufficient reserve to accommodate the *Comprehensive Plan* goals. The scope also includes statements expressing interest in preserving historic structures and developing methods “to preserve and perpetuate the existing character” of the area. The South Lake Union Plan will evaluate proposals for historic preservation and maintenance of urban character.

STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

The South Lake Union community would like to increase opportunities for living and working in the neighborhood, while retaining the area’s traditional commercial and light industrial activities.

STATION AREA DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

AVAILABLE OPPORTUNITY SITES

The South Lake Union station area has 36 parcels and more than 9 acres of land available for development. These represent vacant and underutilized parcels.

Zoning for Opportunity Sites

Most opportunity sites are found in the C1, SCM, and NC3 zones, which permit a variety of development. Commercial development is allowed in the commercial zones in the vicinity of the station area, including office and auto-oriented uses. The NC3 zone allows for more pedestrian-sensitive land uses, and in the zones with 85' height limits, there are FAR incentives for mixed use development. The Seattle Cascade Mixed (SCM) zone allows a wide variety of uses, prohibits heavy manufacturing and certain auto-oriented uses, and requires specific design standards for new structures. These regulations suggest that some mixed use development is possible in the station area.

DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS

The relatively large parcels in the station area (most parcels are 0.25 acres in size or more) are conducive to development, particularly commercial development. In addition, the neighborhood has an excellent location that may attract investment. Lake Union is an attraction in itself, and the neighborhood is situated adjacent to Downtown and Seattle Center.

Nevertheless, existing land uses have created a precedent for low-intensity auto-oriented development, and the preponderance of these uses in the area may encourage similar development that seeks the same types of site design. Zoning regulations in the SCM/R zone restrict large-scale commercial development and auto-oriented uses, but the C1 and NC3 zones still allow such uses. As a result, pedestrian-oriented and mixed use development in the station area may be constrained, despite the provisions for more compact development in the SCM zone.

STATION AREA FORECASTS

Three different forecasts were developed for the new population, employment, dwelling units, and commercial floor area that will be added to the station area by 2020:

1. "Without light rail transit;"
2. "With light rail transit, but without supportive land use policies;" and
3. "With both light rail transit *and* supportive land use policies."

South Lake Union Station Area – Opportunity Sites by Zoning Designation¹		
	<i>Parcels</i>	<i>Acreage²</i>
NC3-65	1	0.22
NC3-85	6	1.63
SCM 75	1	0.15
SCM/R 55/75	13	3.35
C1-85	15	3.86
C2-40	14	11.28
C2-65	17	9.31
C2-85	3	0.76
IC-65	8	5.52
TOTAL	65	36.08
¹ Within a ¼-mile radius of the station location.		
² Based on City of Seattle GIS database.		

POPULATION AND HOUSING

The PSRC Trends forecast projects an additional 224 dwelling units in this station area, while the Comprehensive Plan Extrapolation forecasts 1,101 new units. There are currently 229 units in the permit pipeline, and Fortune Development recently announced plans for new projects at 9th and Harris that would add 330 units. An additional 600 dwelling units are projected, which is midway between the two forecasts. With “light rail only,” the station area will grow by 630 units in 2020, which will add 945 residents to the area.

EMPLOYMENT AND COMMERCIAL FLOOR AREA

The PSRC and City forecasts are very close in their estimates of new commercial floor area over the next 20 years so the average of 730,000 square feet of new commercial space was selected. The mix is expected to be approximately 10% retail and 90% office, given the strong interest in locating biotechnology and other high technology firms in the area.

LAND USE IMPACTS OF LIGHT RAIL

The land use impacts of “rail without supportive policies” will likely be an increase in office uses within the station area on the order of 5%. These office uses may tend to cluster in the area of the light rail station, but the overall level of development is not anticipated to alter substantially. Demand for office uses is already strong in the area due to the proximity of Lake Union, Downtown Seattle, and the University of Washington.

LAND USE IMPACTS OF LIGHT RAIL WITH SUPPORTIVE POLICIES

The potential development strategies for the South Lake Union station area focus on providing incentives in the zoning code for mixed use transit-oriented development (with an increased emphasis on housing) and developing a parking management plan. City-owned land on Mercer Street also provides some opportunities for development partnerships. The location of a rail station and expedited permitting would strengthen the demand for housing in this area. If the zoning allowed more housing, there is the potential for an additional 320 units beyond the “rail only” forecast. These strategies also could boost office and neighborhood retail uses by 10%, adding close to an additional 100,000 square feet of floor area.

South Lake Union Station Area – Market Forecasts, 1997-2020¹				
	<i>1997</i>	<i>1997-2020 Growth</i>		
		<i>Without LRT</i>	<i>With LRT Only</i>	<i>LRT and Supportive Policies</i>
Population	144	900	945	1,425
Dwelling Units	118	600	630	950
Employment	3,307	2,430	2,560	2,800
Commercial Floor Area ²	3,047	730	767	840

¹ Within a ¼-mile radius of the station location.

² Square footage (in thousands); includes commercial, industrial and institutional space, but excludes Sound Transit facilities and public facilities.

POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

The overall approach for the South Lake Union station area is to ensure that new development is supportive of transit and pedestrian activity. However, the area is not seen as being able to accommodate high-density commercial or residential development, primarily because existing land uses are lower density. Small-scale conversions of warehouses to offices and residences and infill development, however, can be regulated to optimize transit and pedestrian use. The overall development strategy for the South Lake Union station area can be summarized as follows:

- *Mixed Use.* Loft development can create a mixture of residential and office uses in the area.
- *Pedestrian Environment.* The station area can be made more supportive of pedestrians. Rezoning from C to NC or TOC would encourage small-scale commercial development with better pedestrian connections and facilities. Auto-oriented uses could be limited to provide opportunities for development oriented to pedestrians. Green streets and pedestrian facilities could help enhance the pedestrian environment.
- *Shared Parking.* Shared parking opportunities could help limit the overall amount of parking and encourage transit use.
- *Rezoning.* IC zoning prohibits housing. The development emphasis in the South Lake Union station area would be on concentrating employment activity or housing on

City-owned land. This approach would generally be consistent with the goals of the neighborhood, which opposes more housing (at least west of Fairview Avenue). The “Cascade” zoning beginning one-half block east of Fairview Avenue is an example of a transit-oriented zone because it has no density limits or parking requirements for residential use. Design standards are built right into the regulations. Such provisions provide for the type of flexible development that would favor transit use.

The table of potential development strategies on the next page shows high-priority and recommended actions for the station area. Because the local real estate market is strong, it may not be necessary to use economic assistance or pilot projects to stimulate development. However, use of City-owned land for a station-related development project has strong potential.

Potential Development Strategies: South Lake Union (12)

Strategy	Potential Action	Comments
Land Use Tools	●	<i>Rezone C2-40 to NC3-65 or TOC and establish POZ around station; provide incentives for live-work in NC3 zones.</i>
Pedestrian Network	●	<i>Develop “green streets” with pedestrian features; improve pedestrian linkages to adjacent neighborhoods.</i>
Parking Management	○	<i>The Neighborhood Plan notes that a parking study is needed.</i>
Economics/Financial Assistance	?	<i>Further planning needed.</i>
Regulatory Process	○	<i>Provide expedited review/SEPA clearance for TOD projects.</i>
Local Transit Service	○	<i>Good north/south bus service exists, but east-west improvements are needed.</i>
Development Partnerships	●	<i>Leveraging City-owned land on Mercer Street is a real opportunity.</i>
Pilot Projects	?	<i>Further planning needed.</i>

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| <p>✓ = Supportive Policy/Program in Place</p> <p>● = High Priority Action</p> <p>○ = Recommended Action</p> <p>? = Further Study Required</p> | <p>TOD = Transit-Oriented Development</p> <p>POZ = Pedestrian Overlay Zone</p> <p>RPZ = Residential Parking Zone</p> |
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