

# Rainier Valley Square

The Rainier Valley Square shopping center would be the focal point of a the Rainier Valley Square light rail station and could include a new, transit-oriented neighborhood commercial uses, mixed use, moderate-density housing. Infill development can create a more compact urban form without altering the character of existing development in the station area.

## **SOUND TRANSIT ALIGNMENT AND STATION OPTIONS**

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There are five possible Columbia City station locations under review. Depending on the alignment selected, one or two of these stations will be built. One of these would be located near South Charlestown Street and Rainier Avenue South (the “Rainier Valley Square” station). The proposed site for this station is adjacent to the Rainier Valley Square shopping center, which is separated from Rainier Avenue by a large parking lot. The shopping center contains a grocery store, pharmacy, bank and several small chain establishments.

## **EXISTING STATION AREA CONDITIONS**

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### **LAND USE AND HOUSING**

Single-family uses cover the largest amount of land area in the Rainier Valley Square station area, followed by retail uses and vacant parcels. Retail uses are located predominantly along



*The Rainier Valley Square shopping center at Rainer Avenue and Andover Street.*

Rainier Avenue South, with the largest shopping center being Rainier Valley Square. Residential neighborhoods, mainly consisting of single-family residences, are located to the west and east of this commercial area. Genesee Park provides the largest contiguous open space in the area.

The Rainier Valley Square station area is a very low density area, with an average net residential density of 4.4 units per acre. Single-family uses in the station area are typically 6 units per acre, and multi-family uses are approximately 8 units per acre.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

The major transportation corridor in the Rainier Valley Square station area is Rainier Avenue South, which provides a direct link to Downtown, Renton, and other neighborhoods in the Rainier Valley. Major arterial streets are generally not oriented to pedestrian travel, although the compact street grid in the eastern portion of the station area provides opportunities for walking.

<b>Rainier Valley Square Station Area – Existing Conditions, 1997<sup>1</sup></b>	
Population	1,230
Employment	1,340
Median Household Income (1996)	\$ 37,831
<i>Residential Land Use</i>	
Total Dwelling Units	449
Density <sup>2</sup>	
Single-family Zones	6.0
Multi-family Zones	7.8
<i>Commercial Land Use</i>	
Total Floor Area (sq. ft.)	508,930
Retail/Service	193,016
Office	31,916
Floor Area Ratio (FAR) <sup>3</sup>	0.12
<sup>1</sup> Within a ¼-mile radius of station location.	
<sup>2</sup> Dwelling units per net acre in specified residential zones. Residential units in non-residential and downtown zones are excluded.	
<sup>3</sup> Ratio of non-residential space per net acre of commercial and industrial land use.	

### ***Community Issues***

The *Columbia City/Hillman City/Genesee Draft Interim Planning Report* includes a Transportation Improvement Program calling for pedestrian safety and access, bicycle safety and circulation, traffic-calming, an evaluation of commercial parking, and coordination with King County METRO to enhance local transit service and light rail connections.

The community wants the light rail station design to facilitate good connections to the neighborhood and conducted a community forum on this issue in summer 1998.

### ***1995 Metro Six-Year Plan***

Rainier Avenue South is designated a major consolidation corridor, meaning that bus service along the corridor will be consolidated to improve efficiency. Savings from the efficiency improvements will be reinvested in the subareas where the savings are generated. In addition, bus frequencies along the Rainier Beach-Downtown core connection, which uses Rainier Avenue South as a primary corridor, will be increased. More convenient transit connections to downtown – the City’s central transit hub – suggests that residents will be able to make connections to other parts of the city more quickly and easily.

These strategies are consistent with the Plan’s overall objective to improve Metro’s service structure. Routes are consolidated, bus frequencies are increased, and transit hubs of various size provide quick, easy transfers.

## **PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE NETWORK**

Pedestrian movement across Rainier Avenue South is difficult, although there are several pedestrian crossing locations. The station site lacks east/west street network connections to MLK, Jr. Way South and to the Beacon Hill neighborhood.

## **URBAN DESIGN FEATURES**

The Rainier Valley square light rail station is situated at the bottom of the valley along Rainier Avenue South and between Beacon Hill and the ridges separating it from Lake Washington. In this area, Rainier Avenue is primarily residential with commercial activity along the arterial. The area immediately around the station site is a major neighborhood commercial center that generally serves the Rainier Valley.

### ***Visual Landmarks***

The most prominent visual landmarks in the area are the garden community layout of Rainier Vista.

### ***Views***

There are no significant scenic views in or from the Rainier Valley Square station area.

## **RECENT MARKET TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY**

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### **MARKET CONDITIONS**

The Rainier Valley Square station area has relatively low rents for residential development and residential vacancy rates of approximately 6%, suggesting that the residential housing market currently has low-rent housing available. However, recent trends in land prices for multi-family housing suggest that housing prices and rents are increasing. While the area may be relatively affordable for housing, its affordability is attracting new residents and, therefore, increasing the value of properties.

There has been little commercial development overall in the station area, although there is an increasing trend in commercial land prices. This suggests that commercial properties may be able to support additional development in the near future. In addition, the Rainier Valley Square shopping center is an established retail use that can potentially support additional space.

<b>Rainier Valley Square Station Area – Market Conditions<sup>1</sup></b>	
<b>Rents and Vacancy Rates</b>	
Apartment Rents (sq. ft.)	\$ 0.71
Apartment Vacancy Rate	6.0%
Office Rents (sq. ft.)	N/A
Office Vacancy Rate	N/A
<b>Trends in Land Prices<sup>2</sup></b>	
Commercial Lots	8.2%
Single Family Lots	7.2%
Multi-family Lots	4.5%
<b>Active Permit Applications</b>	
Housing Units	0
Commercial Space (sq. ft.)	0
<small><sup>1</sup> Within a ¼-mile radius of station location.</small>	
<small><sup>2</sup> 1985-95 average annual increase, based on sales prices recorded by King County Assessor and reported by zone category.</small>	

### **RECENT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS**

There has been little recently. Currently proposed development projects include Rainier Valley Square Phase II, a 200,000 square foot commercial redevelopment project on Rainier Avenue between Charlestown and Spokane Streets. If approved, the project would include 88 new units of multi-family housing, built by the local nonprofit organization, Southeast Effective Development (SEED).

Redevelopment opportunities in the Rainier Valley Square station area include potential infill housing sites in the portion of the station area located between Rainier Avenue South and the Rainier Vista development. Redevelopment of Rainier Vista would significantly improve the aesthetic character of the area.

**RELATIVE STRENGTH OF DEVELOPMENT MARKETS IN THE RAINIER VALLEY SQUARE STATION AREA**

Retail development has the strongest relative market potential in the station area. The Rainier Valley Square shopping center attracts enough customers potentially to support additional retail development.

<b>Rainier Valley Square Station Area – Relative Market Strength<sup>1</sup></b>	
	Ranking (5 high, 1 low)
Housing	2
Retail	3
Office	1

<sup>1</sup> 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.

Housing has some development potential if opportunity sites are developed to add multi-family housing to the station area. Densification through accessory dwelling units within single-family homes (which cover more than 50 acres in the station area) may also be possible.

**EXISTING PLANS AND ZONING**

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**PLANNING CONTEXT**

The Rainier Valley Square station area is located between the Rainier/I-90 Hub Urban Village and the northernmost edge of the Columbia City Residential Urban Village. The main thoroughfare through this station area, Rainier Avenue, is characterized predominantly by auto-oriented commercial uses. Low-density residential development and vacant lots occupy single-family zones on both sides of Rainier Avenue South.

## ZONING

Zoning in the Rainier Valley Square station area provides for development in varying densities from the commercial areas along Rainier Avenue South to lower density single-family residential uses farther away. Commercial (C1 and C2) zones allow for auto-oriented retail and commercial uses along Rainier Avenue, and NC1 and NC3 zones in select locations along Rainier Avenue provide transitions to residential areas.

Along Rainier Avenue and behind the Rainier Avenue commercial uses are low-rise (L2 and L3) multi-family residential zones. Surrounding this cluster of commercial and multi-family residential uses are single-family residential zones.

### ***Southeast Seattle Reinvestment Area (SESRA)***

Commercial areas abutting Rainier Avenue South are included in the SESRA Overlay District, the intent of which is to promote community revitalization and investment, business activity, and employment opportunities for Southeast Seattle residents. SESRA’s neighborhood-oriented and pedestrian-oriented regulations can serve as the basis for transit-supportive policies. SESRA regulations encompass two types of regulations:

- *Prohibited Uses.* SESRA prohibits uses incompatible with reinvestment goals, such as outdoor storage, adult movie theaters, work release centers, and construction services.
- *Rezoning Criteria.* SESRA establishes criteria for the rezoning of base districts. A rezoning must reinforce existing commercial nodes and promote business retention, or it must enhance the business environment (increased pedestrian activity; more retail, entertainment, and personal services; infill development; more recreational opportunities).

<b>Rainier Valley Square Station Area – Potential Development Under Current Zoning Regulations<sup>1</sup></b>		
	<i>Commercial (sq. ft)</i>	<i>Residential (units)</i>
Existing Development	508,930	449
Additional Potential Development under Current Zoning Regulations <sup>2</sup>	996,086	508
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,505,016</b>	<b>957</b>
<sup>1</sup> Within a ¼-mile radius of station location.		
<sup>2</sup> 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 *Columbia City/Hillman City/Genesee Draft Interim Planning Report* recommends several policies for improving the neighborhood, including:

- Ensuring that light rail serves as a catalyst for transit-oriented development within the station area.
- Cleaning up the neighborhood and improve the neighborhood image.
- Instituting an anti-graffiti and litter reduction campaign to deter vandalism.

High priority concerns cited at the summer 1998 open house include:

- Adopting design guidelines to reinforce the positive elements that distinguish the business district.
- Adopting design guidelines to promote a good pedestrian environment.
- Eliminating and reducing litter and weeds.
- Improving enforcement of abandoned vehicles.
- Incorporating public art in public/community facilities.

## STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

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The neighborhood plan that includes the Rainier Valley square station area acknowledges Sound Transit's light rail planning effort. At a neighborhood planning workshop during the summer of 1998, the planning group identified key parameters to be met by any selected light rail station. Issues include historic preservation, pedestrian linkages, neighborhood image, local transit access, and protection of existing residential and commercial uses. Specific comments include:

- *Density and Mixed Use.* "A good mix of housing and businesses is needed to make the LINK system work in the area. You cannot expect business growth without density." "A mix of housing, retail, and offices is needed near the Rainier Valley station."
- *Community Facilities.* "We need street improvements, parks, and recreation areas to beautify the area, as well as more open space, curbs, sidewalks, and gutters."
- *Design Guidelines.* As identified at the Open House of June 27, 1998, design guidelines would help reinforce positive elements that distinguish each of the business districts and promote a good pedestrian environment.

## **STATION AREA DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

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### **AVAILABLE OPPORTUNITY SITES**

The Rainier Valley Square station area has 164 parcels comprising over 26 acres of land available for development (or nearly 20% of total station area land). These opportunity sites represent vacant and underutilized parcels.

#### *Zoning for Opportunity Sites*

The largest total number of acres of opportunity sites are located in the single-family residential areas behind the commercial uses on Rainier Avenue South. There are also a significant number of sites in multi-family residential areas and commercial areas located along the length of Rainier Avenue. Opportunity sites are found in the SF5000, L2, and NC2 zones, which allow for a variety of development, including single-family residential, low-rise multi-family residential, and neighborhood commercial uses. Residential and commercial mixed uses are allowed in the NC2 zone.

<b>Rainier Valley Square Station Area – Opportunity Sites by Zoning Designation<sup>1</sup></b>		
	<i>Parcels</i>	<i>Acreage<sup>2</sup></i>
NC2-40	10	0.68
L-3	7	0.77
SF 5000	80	16.47
L-3.RC	7	0.62
L-2.RC	4	0.59
L-2	47	6.20
CI-65	1	0.04
NC3-40	3	0.44
CI-40	5	0.67
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>26.48</b>
<sup>1</sup> Within a ¼-mile radius of the station location.		
<sup>2</sup> Based on City of Seattle GIS database.		

### **DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS**

Existing zoning constrains the potential for transit-supportive development in the Rainier Valley Square station area. The single-family residential zones have low density development patterns and do not permit mixed use development. Low-rise multi-family residential is more dense and appropriately located between commercial and single-family uses, but the L2 zones do not allow mixed use development that would promote pedestrian access to the station.

While NC zones allow mixed use development, they also permit a wide variety of commercial and auto-oriented uses. Overall, current zoning is likely to preserve the existing character of low-density commercial uses with parking, as well as a separation of low-density uses in the neighborhood. With the current zoning, new development is not likely to create improved conditions for pedestrian activity in the station area.

## **STATION AREA FORECASTS**

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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**

An average of the PSRC Trend and *Comprehensive Plan* Extrapolation forecasts results in an additional 130 new housing units in the station area. While there are currently no residential projects in the permit pipeline, several developers have identified this area as having development potential. In addition, Southeast Effective Development (SEED) – a local community development corporation – is proposing to build 88 units of multi-family housing as part of Rainier Valley Square Phase II, a 200,000 square-foot commercial redevelopment project north of the proposed station site, between Charlestown and Spokane Streets. Although perceptions of crime have limited the demand for housing in the area, this area may experience additional demand as housing costs rise in other parts of the city.

## **EMPLOYMENT AND COMMERCIAL FLOOR AREA**

Given the existing base of retail that has already been established in the Rainier Valley Square station area, an additional 23,000 square feet of commercial space is projected. Much of this new space will tend to be auto-oriented retail uses that take advantage of high traffic volumes on Rainier Avenue and nearby MLK Way South.

## **LAND USE IMPACTS OF LIGHT RAIL**

The land use impacts of “rail without supportive policies” will likely be a modest increase in housing within the station area. Since the station area is auto-oriented, the development of new housing would likely be dispersed throughout the station area.

## LAND USE IMPACTS OF LIGHT RAIL WITH SUPPORTIVE POLICIES

The potential development strategies for the Rainier Valley Square station area focus on providing incentives in the zoning code for mixed-use transit-oriented development, improved pedestrian linkages, and direct economic and financial assistance to support housing and mixed use development. Targeted development strategies could boost the number of new dwelling units by 130 units and new commercial floor area by approximately 16,000 square feet.

<b>Rainier Valley Square Station Area – Market Forecasts, 1997-2020<sup>1</sup></b>				
	<u>1997</u>	<u>1997-2020 Growth</u>		
		<i>Without LRT</i>	<i>With LRT Only</i>	<i>LRT and Supportive Policies</i>
Population	1,230	195	210	405
Dwelling Units	449	130	140	270
Employment	1,340	270	280	330
Commercial Floor Area <sup>2</sup>	509	80	84	100

<sup>1</sup> Within a ¼-mile radius of the station location.  
<sup>2</sup> 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 Rainier Valley Square station area is to ensure that new development supports transit use and pedestrian activity. The area is unlikely to accommodate high-density commercial or residential development, primarily because the local real estate market is not likely to be able to support such intensive development. Existing commercial and residential structures, as well as infill development, can be regulated to optimize transit and pedestrian use. The overall development strategy for the Rainier Valley Square station area can be summarized as follows:

- *Infill Development.* Provisions may be necessary to encourage infill development (including the use of TOD overlay zoning) because market conditions alone may not attract additional development.
- *Pedestrian Environment.* The station area can be made more supportive of pedestrian travel. Incentives for infill development can help create a more compact urban development pattern, which allows for more pedestrian activity. Implementation of a POZ would also create a conducive pedestrian environment and would limit auto-oriented uses to provide greater opportunities for pedestrian-oriented development. Linkages to adjacent communities can be improved as well.
- *Parking Management.* Implementation of an RPZ in residential areas and parking maximums throughout the station area can help control the supply of parking and encourage the use of alternative modes of travel, particularly light rail. In conjunction with improved transit service, parking management can help change travel patterns to and from the neighborhood in the long run.

*Rainier Valley Square*

- *Affordable Housing.* Provision of affordable housing in the station area can provide opportunities for living in proximity to transit, particularly for lower income households that are less likely to own cars. Work with SEED is possible.

The table of potential development strategies shows high-priority and recommended actions for the Rainier Valley Square station area. The City can work with the owners of the Rainier Valley Square shopping center to encourage the commercial center to become more oriented to transit use.

## Potential Development Strategies: Rainier Valley Square (24)

Strategy	Potential Action	Comments
Land Use Tools	●	<i>Rezone C2-65 south of Andover to TOD overlay with incentives for infill.</i>
Pedestrian Network	●	<i>Improve linkages to adjacent neighborhoods to east and west; establish a pedestrian overlay for NC zoning along Rainier Avenue.</i>
Parking Management	○	<i>Establish a residential parking zone in adjacent neighborhoods. "Lids" for commercial and/or shared parking with mixed use at mall.</i>
Economics/Financial Assistance	●	<i>Support SEED; finance affordable housing.</i>
Regulatory Process	✓ / ?	<i>SESRA in place. Provide expedited review/SEPA clearance for TOD projects.</i>
Local Transit Service	?	<i>Further planning needed, especially east and to MLK and Beacon Hill.</i>
Development Partnerships	✓	<i>Coordinate planning with Proposed Rainier Valley Square expansion project to provide for transit orientation.</i>
Pilot Projects	?	<i>Further planning needed.</i>

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

# Genesee

The Genesee station area affords opportunities for neighborhood-scale, transit-oriented development. Infill residential development, combined with some ground-floor mixed use, would be consistent with the existing neighborhood character while providing housing opportunities near the light rail station. Mixed use and pedestrian development can also help create opportunities for walking and transit use, complementing the existing commercial uses in the area.

## **SOUND TRANSIT ALIGNMENT AND STATION OPTIONS**

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There are five possible Columbia City station locations under review. Depending on the alignment selected, one or two of these stations will be built. One may be located near South Genesee Street and Rainier Avenue South (the “Genesee” station) north of Genesee Park. An adjacent block could potentially be the location for a mixed use development clustering housing and businesses around the station.

## **EXISTING STATION AREA CONDITIONS**

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### **LAND USE AND HOUSING**

Single-family uses comprise the largest amount of land in the Genesee station area, followed by open space and schools. Retail uses cover relatively few acres, however, the former Safeway



*View of former Safeway store at corner of Rainier Avenue South at Genesee Street.*

site is being redeveloped as a retail mall. Residential neighborhoods, mainly consisting of single-family residences, are located to the west and east of the commercial area on Rainier Avenue South. Residential density in the station area is very low, averaging 5.1 units per acre. Genesee Park provides the largest contiguous open space in the area.

## TRANSPORTATION

The major transportation corridor in the Genesee station area is Rainier Avenue South, which provides a direct link to Downtown Seattle and Renton, as well as to other neighborhoods in the Rainier Valley. Major arterial streets in the station area are not oriented to pedestrians, although the compact street grid in single-family areas provides opportunities for walking. Issues include:

- *Auto Access to Adjacent Neighborhoods.* Rainier Avenue South and 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue South are the principal automobile routes through the station area. The hillside and incomplete street grid in the western portion of the station area prevents access from Rainier Avenue South to the west. Major streets lead from the station area eastward to Lake Washington. South Oregon and South Alaska Streets cross Rainier Avenue, allowing access through the neighborhood.
- *Pedestrian Circulation.* The commercial area along Rainier Avenue South is not oriented to pedestrians and does not allow convenient or comfortable access from adjacent neighborhoods.

<b>Genesee Station Area – Existing Conditions, 1997<sup>1</sup></b>	
Population	1,334
Employment	1,272
Median Household Income (1996)	\$ 37,831
<i>Residential Land Use</i>	
Total Dwelling Units	493
Density <sup>2</sup>	
Single-family Zones	7.9
Multi-family Zones	3.4
<i>Commercial Land Use</i>	
Total Floor Area (sq. ft.)	592,057
Retail/Service	87,050
Office	75,637
Floor Area Ratio (FAR) <sup>3</sup>	0.14
<sup>1</sup> Within a ¼-mile radius of station location.	
<sup>2</sup> Dwelling units per net acre in specified residential zones. Residential units in non-residential and downtown zones are excluded.	
<sup>3</sup> Ratio of non-residential space per net acre of commercial and industrial land use.	

### ***Community Issues***

The *Columbia City/Hillman City/Genesee Draft Interim Planning Report* includes a Transportation Improvement Program calling for pedestrian safety and access, bicycle safety and circulation, traffic-calming, an evaluation of commercial parking, and coordination with King County METRO to enhance local transit service and light rail connections.

The community wants the design of the light rail station to facilitate good connections to the neighborhood core and conducted a community forum on this issue in the summer of 1998.

### ***1995 Metro Six-Year Plan***

Rainier Avenue South is designated a major consolidation corridor, meaning that bus service along the corridor will be consolidated to improve efficiency. Savings from the efficiency improvements will be reinvested in the subareas where the savings are generated. In addition, bus frequencies along the Rainier Beach-Downtown core connection, which uses Rainier Avenue South as a primary corridor, will be increased. More convenient transit connections to downtown – the City’s central transit hub – suggests that residents will be able to make connections to other parts of the city more quickly and easily.

These strategies are consistent with the Plan’s overall objective to improve Metro’s service structure. Routes are consolidated, bus frequencies are increased, and transit hubs of various size provide quick, easy transfers.

## **PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE NETWORK**

Pedestrian movement across Rainier Avenue South is difficult, although there are several pedestrian crossing locations. The station site lacks east-west street network connections to MLK, Jr. Way South and to the Beacon Hill neighborhood.

## **URBAN DESIGN FEATURES**

The Genesee station site is located along Rainier Avenue South and between the Beacon Hill neighborhood and the hill separating the station area from Lake Washington. In this area Rainier Avenue is primarily residential, with the Columbia City Landmark District and commercial area located just south of the station area. The Rainier Community Center and Genesee Playfield, and the Rainier Vista housing development are located in the station area.

### ***Visual Landmarks***

The most prominent visual landmarks in the Genesee station area are Genesee Playfield, the Community Center, and the Columbia Funeral Home at the intersection of South Alaska Street and Rainier Avenue.

**Views**

There are no significant scenic views in or from the Genesee station area. Station siting and design of new transit-oriented development should respect Genesee Playfield and the historic architecture of the nearby Columbia City Landmark District.

**RECENT MARKET TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY**

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**MARKET CONDITIONS**

The Genesee station area has relatively low apartment rents and vacancy rates of approximately 6%, suggesting that the residential housing market currently has low-rent housing available. However, recent trends in land prices for multi-family housing suggest that housing prices and rents are increasing. While the area may be relatively affordable for housing, its affordability is attracting new residents and, therefore, increasing the value of properties.

There has been little commercial development overall in the Genesee station area, although there is an increasing trend in commercial land prices. This suggests that commercial properties may be able to support additional development in the near future. Established retail uses along Rainier Avenue South could potentially support additional space.

<b>Genesee Station Area – Market Conditions<sup>1</sup></b>	
<b>Rents and Vacancy Rates</b>	
Apartment Rents (sq. ft.)	\$ 0.71
Apartment Vacancy Rate	6.0%
Office Rents (sq. ft.)	N/A
Office Vacancy Rate	N/A
<b>Trends in Land Prices<sup>2</sup></b>	
Commercial Lots	8.2%
Single Family Lots	7.2%
Multi-family Lots	4.5%
<b>Active Permit Applications</b>	
Housing Units	0
Commercial Space (sq. ft.)	23
<sup>1</sup> Within a ¼-mile radius of station location.	
<sup>2</sup> 1985-95 average annual increase, based on sales prices recorded by King County Assessor and reported by zone category.	

## RECENT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Redevelopment opportunities in the Genesee station area include potential infill housing sites in single-family areas, particularly in the western part of the station area, between Rainier Avenue South and the Rainier Vista development. The potential redevelopment of Rainier Vista would significantly improve the aesthetic character of the station area.

## RELATIVE STRENGTH OF DEVELOPMENT MARKETS IN THE GENESSEE STATION AREA

Retail development has market potential in the Genesee station area. Retail uses along Rainier Avenue South attract enough customers to support additional retail development.

Housing also has some development potential in this station area. Housing development on opportunity sites could add multi-family housing to the station area, and densification through accessory dwelling units in single-family homes (which cover more than 42 acres in the station area) is also possible.

<b>Genesee Station Area – Relative Market Strength<sup>1</sup></b>	
	Ranking (5 high, 1 low)
Housing	2
Retail	3
Office	1
<i><sup>1</sup> 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.</i>	

## EXISTING PLANS AND ZONING

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### PLANNING CONTEXT

The Genesee station area is located within the Columbia City Residential Urban Village. The main thoroughfare through this station area, Rainier Avenue, is characterized predominantly by auto-oriented commercial uses. Low-density residential development occupies single-family zones on both sides of Rainier Avenue South. To the far west is the Rainier Vista Garden Community. Genesee Playfield is a large open space to the south of the station site.

## ZONING

The Genesee station area is generally zoned for single-family, multi-family, neighborhood commercial, and commercial development. The area near South Alaska Street is zoned for multi-family, single-family, and commercial uses. This zoning provides for development of varying densities, from the commercial areas along Rainier Avenue South to lower density single-family residential areas farther away. A mix of commercial and neighborhood-commercial zones along Rainier Avenue South provides necessary commercial services and pedestrian facilities.

Low-rise multi-family residential zones (including L2 and L3) are located behind the commercial uses on the west side of Rainier Avenue South. Surrounding this cluster of commercial and multi-family residential uses are single-family residential zones.

### ***Southeast Seattle Reinvestment Area (SESRA)***

Commercial areas abutting Rainier Avenue South are included in the SESRA Overlay District, the intent of which is to promote community revitalization and investment, business activity, and employment opportunities for Southeast Seattle residents. SESRA’s neighborhood-oriented and pedestrian-oriented regulations can serve as the basis for transit-supportive policies. SESRA regulations encompass two types of regulations:

- *Prohibited Uses.* SESRA prohibits uses incompatible with reinvestment goals, such as outdoor storage, adult movie theaters, work release centers, and construction services.
- *Rezoning Criteria.* SESRA establishes criteria for the rezoning of base districts. A rezoning must reinforce existing commercial nodes and promote business retention, or it must enhance the business environment (increased pedestrian activity; more retail, entertainment, and personal services; infill development; more recreational opportunities).

<b>Genesee Station Area – Potential Development Under Current Zoning Regulations<sup>1</sup></b>		
	<i>Commercial (sq. ft.)</i>	<i>Residential (units)</i>
Existing Development	592,057	493
Additional Potential Development under Current Zoning Regulations <sup>2</sup>	337,076	490
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>929,133</b>	<b>983</b>
<sup>1</sup> Within a ¼-mile radius of station location.		
<sup>2</sup> 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 *Columbia City/Hillman City/Genesee Draft Interim Planning Report* recommends several policies for improving the character of the neighborhood. Suggested policies are to:

- Ensure that light rail serves as a catalyst for transit-oriented development within the station area.
- Clean up the neighborhood and improve the neighborhood image.
- Institute an anti-graffiti and litter reduction campaign to deter vandalism.

High priority concerns cited at the summer 1998 open house include:

- Adopting design guidelines to reinforce the positive elements that distinguish the business district.
- Adopting design guidelines to promote a good pedestrian environment.
- Eliminating/reducing litter and weeds.
- Improving enforcement of abandoned vehicles.
- Incorporating public art in public/community facilities.

## STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

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The neighborhood plan that includes the Rainier Valley square station area acknowledges Sound Transit's light rail planning effort. At a neighborhood planning workshop during the summer of 1998, the planning group identified key parameters to be met by any selected light rail station. Issues include historic preservation, pedestrian linkages, neighborhood image, local transit access, and protection of existing residential and commercial uses. Specific comments include:

- *Density and Mixed Use.* "A good mix of housing and businesses is needed to make the LINK system work in the area. You cannot expect business growth without density." "A mix of housing, retail, and offices is needed near the Rainier Valley station."
- *Community Facilities.* "We need street improvements, parks, and recreation areas to beautify the area, as well as more open space, curbs, sidewalks, and gutters."
- *Design Guidelines.* As identified at the Open House of June 27, 1998, design guidelines would help reinforce positive elements that distinguish each of the business districts and promote a good pedestrian environment.

## STATION AREA DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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### AVAILABLE OPPORTUNITY SITES

The Genesee station area has 71 parcels comprising almost 9 acres of land available for development. These opportunity sites represent vacant and underutilized parcels.

***Zoning for Opportunity Sites***

The largest total number of acres of opportunity sites are located in the commercial areas along Rainier Avenue South. There are also opportunity sites in multi-family residential and commercial areas located along Rainier Avenue.

Most opportunity sites are found in the NC3, SF5000, and L2 districts, which allow for a variety of development, including neighborhood commercial, single-family residential, and low-rise multi-family residential uses. Residential and commercial mixed uses are allowed in the NC3 districts.

<b>Genesee Station Area – Opportunity Sites by Zoning Designation<sup>1</sup></b>		
	<i>Parcels</i>	<i>Acreage<sup>2</sup></i>
NC2-40	12	0.90
SF 5000	16	1.95
L-3.RC	10	0.90
L-2	11	1.55
NC3-40	19	3.11
CI-40	3	0.45
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>8.87</b>
<sup>1</sup> Within a ¼-mile radius of the station location.		
<sup>2</sup> Based on City of Seattle GIS database.		

**DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS**

The area immediately around the Genesee light rail station site is almost completely built out. The small number of acres of opportunity sites could potentially constrain development. In addition, the average size of residential and commercial parcels in the station area ranges between 0.10 and 0.15 acres; the size of residential and commercial parcels may constrain development if the local market cannot support small-scale infill development.

Existing zoning in the Genesee station area may constrain the potential for transit-supportive development. The single-family residential zones have low-density development patterns and do not permit mixed use development. Low-rise multi-family residential is more dense and appropriately located between commercial and single-family uses, but L2 zoning does not allow mixed use development that would promote pedestrian access to the station. While NC zones allow mixed use development, they also permit a wide variety of commercial and auto-oriented uses. Overall, current zoning in the station area is likely to encourage new development that is consistent with existing low-density commercial uses (with parking) and encourage and maintain the existing separation of low-density uses in the neighborhood. Potential development will not be likely to create improved conditions for pedestrian activity in the station area.

## **STATION AREA FORECASTS**

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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**

An average of the PSRC Trend and *Comprehensive Plan* Extrapolation forecasts results in an additional 130 new housing units in the Genesee station area. While there are currently no residential projects in the permit pipeline, several developers have identified this area as having development potential. Although perceptions of crime have limited the demand for housing in the area, the area may experience additional demand as housing costs rise in other parts of the city.

## **EMPLOYMENT AND COMMERCIAL FLOOR AREA**

An average of the PSRC Trend and *Comprehensive Plan* Extrapolation forecasts projects approximately 70,000 square feet of additional floor space for the Genesee station area. Most of this space will tend to be auto-oriented retail uses that take advantage of high traffic volumes on Rainier Avenue South. By way of comparison, the Rainier Valley Square station is projected to have approximately 80,000 additional square feet by 2020.

## **LAND USE IMPACTS OF LIGHT RAIL**

The land use impacts of rail without supportive policies will likely be a modest increase in housing within the station area. Since the Genesee station area is auto-oriented, the development of new housing would likely be dispersed throughout the station area.

## **LAND USE IMPACTS OF LIGHT RAIL WITH SUPPORTIVE POLICIES**

The potential development strategies for the Genesee station area focus on providing incentives in the zoning code for mixed-use transit-oriented development, improved pedestrian linkages, and direct economic and financial assistance to support housing and mixed uses. Targeted development strategies could boost the number of new dwelling units by 135 units and new commercial floor area by approximately 17,000 square feet.

*Background Report for Light Rail Station Area Planning in Seattle:  
Existing Conditions and Future Prospects for Transit-Oriented Development*

<b>Genesee Station Area – Market Forecasts, 1997-2020<sup>1</sup></b>				
	<u>1997</u>	<u>1997-2020 Growth</u>		
		<i>Without LRT</i>	<i>With LRT Only</i>	<i>LRT and Supportive Policies</i>
Population	1,334	195	210	345
Dwelling Units	493	130	140	230
Employment	1,272	230	250	330
Commercial Floor Area <sup>2</sup>	592	70	73	100

<sup>1</sup> Within a ¼-mile radius of the station location.  
<sup>2</sup> 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 Genesee station area is to ensure that new development supports transit use and pedestrian activity. The station area is not seen as being able to accommodate high-density commercial or residential development, primarily because the local real estate market is not likely to be able to support such intensive development. Existing commercial and residential structures, as well as infill development, can be regulated to optimize transit and pedestrian use. The overall development strategy for the Genesee station area can be summarized as follows:

- *Pedestrian Environment.* The station area can be made more oriented to pedestrians. Re-zoning of opportunity sites to NC-3 would encourage small-scale commercial development with better pedestrian connections and amenities. Implementation of a POZ could create a conducive pedestrian environment and would limit new auto-oriented uses to provide greater opportunities for pedestrian-oriented development. Linkages to adjacent communities can be improved as well.
- *Parking Management.* Implementation of an RPZ in residential areas can help control the supply of parking and encourage the use of alternative modes of travel, particularly light rail. In conjunction with improved transit service, parking management can help change travel patterns to and from the neighborhood in the long run.
- *Affordable Housing.* Provision of affordable housing in the station area can provide opportunities for living in proximity to transit, particularly for lower income households that are less likely to own cars. Work with SEED is possible.

The table of potential development strategies shows high-priority and recommended actions for the Genesee station area. There are already development partnership projects in place to develop opportunity sites adjacent to the light rail station site. Partners include SEED, Sound Transit, and the Cinema multiplex operators. Additional development partnerships may be feasible for affordable housing development in the Genesee station area.

## Potential Development Strategies: Genesee (25)

Strategy	Potential Action	Comments
Land Use Tools	●	Rezone opportunity sites on east side of Rainier Ave (former Safeway store and block to south) NC3-65 with a POZ and incentives for TOD.
Pedestrian Network	●	Establish POZ around station and improve linkages to adjacent neighborhoods, especially to the west, where the street grid is incomplete.
Parking Management	○	Consider RPZ west and east of station.
Economics/Financial Assistance	✓	Support SEED to help finance affordable housing and economic development projects.
Regulatory Process	?	SESRA in place. Provide expedited review/SEPA clearance for TOD projects.
Local Transit Service	○	Provide feeder bus service, especially east and to MLK and Beacon Hill.
Development Partnerships	✓	The opportunity sites adjacent to the station site might be viable joint development projects with SEED, Sound Transit or others.
Pilot Projects	?	Further planning needed.

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

