

Seattle Center

The Seattle Center station area is located in a mixed use area that includes Seattle Center, one of the city's major entertainment areas, commercial uses near the South Lake Union area, and high-density residential uses near Downtown. In much of the station area, the pedestrian environment is particularly poor, with inadequate connections between Seattle Center and the surrounding neighborhoods.

The City can promote transit use and pedestrian activity in the Seattle Center station area by encouraging additional mixed use development, higher density development north of Denny Way, an improved pedestrian environment, and pedestrian connections to surrounding neighborhoods.

SOUND TRANSIT ALIGNMENT AND STATION OPTIONS

The Lake Union alternative alignment continues in an aerial structure after leaving the South Lake Union station, then drops into a tunnel before reaching the Seattle Center station. This station is proposed to be located at the intersection of 5th Avenue North and either Broad Street or John Street.



“Five-point” intersection, next to elevated Monorail track.

EXISTING STATION AREA CONDITIONS

LAND USE AND HOUSING

Most acreage in the Seattle Center station area falls into the category of entertainment, parking, and open space predominantly associated with Seattle Center. Office, transportation, residential, and some retail uses are interspersed throughout the areas to the east and south.

Average residential densities in the station area are approximately 14.6 units per acre. Most units are located south of Denny Way, within the Denny Regrade Urban Center Village, where densities are more than 60 units per acre.

TRANSPORTATION

The Seattle Center station area is predominantly oriented to automobiles. There are no major pedestrian routes through the area, except for a few pedestrian nodes that serve as gateways to Seattle Center.

Seattle Center Station Area – Existing Conditions, 1997¹	
Population	1,723
Employment	7,835
Median Household Income (1996)	\$ 22,565
<i>Residential Land Use</i>	
Total Dwelling Units	1,416
Density ²	
Single-family Zones	N/A
Multi-family Zones	N/A
<i>Commercial Land Use</i>	
Total Floor Area (sq. ft)	4,370,579
Retail/Service	163,867
Office	1,496,579
Floor Area Ratio (FAR) ³	1.03
¹ Within a ¼-mile radius of station location.	
² Dwelling units per net acre in specified residential zones. Residential units in non-residential and downtown zones are excluded.	
³ Ratio of non-residential space per net acre of commercial and industrial land use.	

- *Auto Access to Adjacent Neighborhoods.* Auto traffic enters and exits the station area from several directions, including Downtown and neighborhoods around Lake Union. Broad Street, 5th Avenue, 4th Avenue, Aurora, and Dexter Avenue all provide auto connections to the Downtown area. However, getting in and out of the Broad/Denny/Denny Triangle area can be difficult due to the peak hour congestion and the configuration of the street grid.
- *Pedestrian Nodes.* Entrances to Seattle Center are located along 5th Avenue and Broad Street. A small mixed commercial area in the southern part of the station area also generates some pedestrian activity. Aurora Avenue functions as a major barrier to pedestrian movement from Seattle Center to areas immediately to the east.

Community Issues

The Seattle Center station area borders on the South Lake Union, Queen Anne, and Denny Regrade neighborhoods. The South Lake Union community is uncertain about how to respond to a potential light rail station and about how light rail could be connected with the Monorail. On the other hand, the Queen Anne community strongly seeks a light rail connection and would prefer to have the station located west of the Seattle Center (at Key Arena Plaza, rather than the proposed site at 5th Avenue N. and Broad Street).

In addition to the light rail issue, the community has a variety of other transportation concerns. There is interest in promoting alternative modes of travel, including pedestrian and transit travel. Particular issues include:

- *Transit Connections.* Transit proposals include a circulator system to the top of Queen Anne Hill and between the east and west sides of Seattle Center;
- *Pedestrian Connections.* Improved pedestrian connections between the Denny Regrade neighborhood and Seattle Center; and
- *Parking.* Parking is a big concern, especially the need for additional Seattle Center event parking.

1995 Metro Six-Year Plan

The Seattle Center station area is already an important transit center, and its current services include the Monorail and bus service to Downtown. King County's 1995 *Six-Year Transit Development Plan* targets the Seattle Center area for improvements in transit services and facilities:

- *Designated Transit Hub.* The Six-Year Development Plan establishes 44 transit hubs throughout the Seattle region, of which the Lower Queen Anne, just west of the Seattle Center, is one. These transit hubs are targeted for service and facility improvements, depending upon service routes and transit frequencies (Strategy C-1).
- *Improved Commuter Access for Employment Centers.* 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. Seattle Center is identified as one of these employment centers (Strategy S-4).

- *Improved Bus Frequencies.* The frequency of buses will be increased along core routes. These include routes to Seattle Center from Capitol Hill (Strategy S-2). The improved bus frequencies contribute to Seattle Center's role as a transit center.

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE NETWORK

Seattle Center generates significant pedestrian traffic, although pedestrian facilities in the area are poor. The shift in the street grid impedes good, direct access across Denny Way. Many of the major pedestrian routes are along important vehicular corridors, such as Denny Way and Mercer Street. These roads are very busy, and vehicles tend to travel fast, particularly along Broad Street. North of Denny Way, Aurora Avenue (Highway 99) is a limited-access roadway that creates a barrier to east/west access, breached only by Broad Street and Denny Way.

The Monorail provides a unique transit link from Seattle Center to Downtown. With the Seattle Center terminus located adjacent to the pedestrian thoroughfare from Broad Street, the Monorail travels southeast along 5th Avenue to Westlake Center in Downtown Seattle.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Both Seattle Center and the nearby Queen Anne neighborhood seek additional pedestrian facilities and traffic/parking management programs. Public improvements called for in the preliminary plan recommendations of the lower Queen Anne neighborhood include: more pedestrian and bicycle connections, additional parking, and signal and intersection changes to improve traffic flow.

URBAN DESIGN FEATURES

The Seattle Center station area touches on portions of many neighborhoods:

- *Denny Regrade / Belltown.* The station area encompasses the northern edge of the Denny Regrade/Belltown, a recent hotspot of redevelopment. Situated between the commerce of Downtown and the residential environment of Queen Anne, this area has become a popular urban neighborhood as developers have capitalized on its central location and views of Elliot Bay.
- *Seattle Center.* The station area encompasses a fair portion of the Seattle Center grounds, the site of the 1962 World's Fair. Seattle Center has served as home to Seattle's performing arts theaters, hockey and basketball teams, festivals, the Seattle Children's Theater, and the Pacific Science Center, making it a hub of activity in northern Downtown Seattle. The Experience Music Project, scheduled to open in mid-2000 is the latest cultural development at Seattle Center.
- *East of Broad Street.* The portion of the station area that lies east of Broad Street and north of Denny Way is still in need of redevelopment. Because of its proximity to Seattle Center, the area is full of (ungracefully) aging World's Fair development, particularly hotels and motor courts. New office development is planned for the expan-

sion of a TV station, and permits have been filed for a new hotel at Aurora and Dexter Avenues.

- *Commercial Areas.* Commercial areas are located just east of the station area, adjacent to Seattle Center.

Visual Landmarks

The dominant visual landmark is Seattle Center, crowned by the Space Needle, and the elevated tracks of the Monorail. The pink neon sign of the Elephant Car Wash is a classic Seattle image. The 1960s-era architecture of Seattle Center also adds character to the area.

Views

In the southwestern portion of the station area, the streets begin to slope down to the west, affording views of Elliot Bay, ferry traffic, and the Olympic mountains.

RECENT MARKET TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

MARKET CONDITIONS

The residential development market, compared to the commercial office and retail markets, has been strong in the Seattle Center station area. Residential vacancy rates have been below 1.5%, and residential land prices have been increasing at about 8%. Similarly, recent permit activity reveals extensive investment in residential development projects.

Commercial development has not stagnated, however. Recent permit activity is slated to result in a minimum of 450,000 additional square feet of commercial floor area. Older warehouse and industrial buildings are currently being converted into office and retail space, and the Seattle Center area is continuing to attract new uses, particularly retail. Office rents are some of the highest in the Seattle region outside of Downtown, which is explained in part by the low vacancy rates.

RECENT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Redevelopment potential in the Seattle Center station area is high. This is evident south of Denny Way in the Denny Regrade, where there are apartments on a number of parcels that are considered redevelopable. East of Broad Street and north of Denny Way, less redevelopment has occurred, but a new Holiday Inn Express was built recently. Current development proposals include:

- The Experience Music Project; and
- KOMO News station at 4th/5th Avenues and Denny Way (under construction).

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

Seattle Center Station Area – Market Conditions¹	
Rents and Vacancy Rates	
Apartment Rents (sq. ft.)	\$ 1.25
Apartment Vacancy Rate	3.9%
Office Rents (sq. ft.)	\$ 18.38
Office Vacancy Rate	1.7%
Trends in Land Prices ²	
Commercial Lots	5.0%
Single Family Lots	7.0%
Multi-family Lots	5.6%
Active Permit Applications	
Housing Units	989
Commercial Space (sq. ft)	452,000
Projected 2010 LRT Boardings	6,400
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 SEATTLE CENTER STATION AREA

The Seattle Center station area has the most active commercial development of any of the stations along the South Lake Union market segment. The development of the Experience Music Project at Seattle Center will likely increase the market potential for supportable retail use. Housing and office uses are less strong in the immediate station area, although the South Lake Union station area and the neighborhood to the east have demonstrated strong growth potential for both office and residential uses.

Seattle Center Station Area – Relative Market Strength¹	
	Ranking (5 high, 1 low)
Housing	2
Retail	3
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 Seattle Center station area (on the alternative alignment) are located within the Downtown Urban Center, the Seattle Center Urban Center, and the South Lake Union Hub Urban Village. The part of the station area that is within the Downtown Urban Center is primarily occupied by high-density housing and office uses. Seattle Center, with the region's largest concentration of recreational and cultural facilities, occupies most of the station area that is located in the Seattle Center Urban Center. The portion of the station area that is included in the South Lake Union Hub Urban Village is dominated by commercial uses, with a concentration of motel and hotels.

ZONING

The Seattle Center station area is zoned predominantly for commercial uses. The Seattle Center grounds and nearby parcels in the Broad Street/Denny Way triangle are zoned NC3, allowing for more compact commercial development and mixed use. Commercial uses are located to the east and northeast of the station area, allowing for larger scale, auto-oriented development.

Downtown zoning is applied to areas south of Denny Way. Downtown Mixed Residential (DMR) and Mixed Commercial (MC) zones both permit all uses except auto-oriented, outdoor storage, and other land-intensive uses. They differ mainly in their specific development requirements and in the emphasis they place on residential uses – DMR favors residential uses through tighter limits on non-residential uses. The two zones have identical requirements for street-level uses on designated street frontages, requiring that at least 75% of the street facade is occupied by retail, childcare, service, entertainment, or museum uses. These provisions essentially allow for office or residential development above ground-floor pedestrian-oriented uses.

Seattle Center Station Area – Potential Development Under Current Zoning Regulations¹		
	<i>Commercial (sq. ft)</i>	<i>Residential (units)</i>
Existing Development	4,370,579	1,416
Additional Potential Development under Current Zoning Regulations ²	3,254,774	3,870
TOTAL	7,625,353	5,286
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 Seattle Center station area is situated between several neighborhoods: South Lake Union to the north and east, Downtown to the south, and Queen Anne to the northwest. The Queen Anne neighborhood is particularly interested in transit-oriented development. The *Preliminary Draft of the Queen Anne Goals and Policies Report* proposes to increase residential density on the west side of the Seattle Center. The recommendations also seek to enhance and preserve the unique design characteristics of the neighborhood, calling for the development of an “urban character” in the Seattle Center Urban Center.

STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

The Queen Anne neighborhood, which lies to the northwest of the proposed station location, enthusiastically seeks light rail. As demonstrated by the comments of community members, the neighborhood is prepared to take measures to support transit. Some community members have expressed interest in extending light rail directly into the heart of the Queen Anne neighborhood. Sound Transit is not currently considering any alternatives that would extend light rail in that direction.

STATION AREA DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

AVAILABLE OPPORTUNITY SITES

The Seattle Center station area has 67 parcels and almost 19 acres of land available for development. These represent vacant and underutilized parcels. Most opportunity sites are located in commercial areas immediately east of the grounds of Seattle Center, with a large number also located south of Denny Way in what is considered the Denny Triangle neighborhood. This area is characterized by mixed commercial and residential uses.

Zoning for Opportunity Sites

Opportunity sites are found in NC3, C1, and Downtown zones, including the Downtown Mixed Residential (DMR) and Downtown Mixed Commercial (DMC) zones. Commercial development is allowed in the C1 zone, including office and auto-oriented uses, while NC3 zones allow for more pedestrian-sensitive land uses. In particular, the NC3-85 zone, in which most opportunity sites are located, offers FAR incentives for mixed use development. Similarly, the DMR and DMC districts allow for mixed use development, with requirements for ground-floor retail, service, entertainment uses, and designated streets.

DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS

Parcels range in size from 0.12 acres to 0.75 acres throughout the Seattle Center station area, and parcels in the NC3 zone (which contains the largest total acreage of opportunity sites) average 0.33 acres in size, large enough to provide ample opportunities for development in the station area.

Existing land uses in the station area have created a precedent for low-intensity auto-oriented development, and the preponderance of these uses in the station area may encourage similar development that seeks the same types of site design. Zoning regulations applicable to the DMR zone restrict large-scale commercial development and auto-oriented uses, but the C1 and NC3 zones still permit such uses. As a result, pedestrian-oriented and mixed use transit-oriented development may be constrained in areas north of Denny Way in areas that lie in closest proximity to the light rail station.

Seattle Center Station Area – Opportunity Sites by Zoning Designation¹		
	<i>Parcels</i>	<i>Acreage²</i>
NC3-85	33	11.09
C1-65	4	0.97
C1-85	4	0.84
DMC-85	2	0.64
DMR/R.125/65	4	0.67
DMC-160	9	1.11
DMR/R.240/65	7	2.09
DMR/C.125/65	2	0.44
DMR/C.240/125	1	0.30
DMC-240	1	0.75
TOTAL	67	18.89
¹ Within a ¼-mile radius of the station location.		
² Based on City of Seattle GIS database.		

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 517 dwelling units in the Seattle Center station area, while the *Comprehensive Plan* Extrapolation forecasts over 2,500 units. There are currently 989 housing units in the permit pipeline, principally in the portion of the station area south of Denny Way. Given the strong demand for housing in the Denny Regrade and the large number of opportunity sites with significant capacity for multi-family housing, the *Comprehensive Plan* forecast of 2,500 new units is the most likely. With “light rail only,” the station area will grow by 2,630 units, adding 3,945 residents to the area by 2020.

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 – the mid-point of 620,000 additional square feet of commercial floor area, therefore, is reasonable. The mix is expected to be approximately 20% retail and 80% office uses, given the current distribution of office and retail in the area. Continued population growth in the station area could probably support a mixed use grocery complex with structured parking similar to the new QFC in the Pike/Pine neighborhood and the Larry’s Market on lower Queen Anne.

LAND USE IMPACTS OF LIGHT RAIL

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

LAND USE IMPACTS OF LIGHT RAIL WITH SUPPORTIVE POLICIES

The potential development strategies for the Seattle Center 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 next to the major cultural attraction of the Seattle Center that is expanding with the introduction of the Experience Music Project, there is little need for direct economic and financial assistance. City-owned land at Seattle Center may also provide some opportunities for development partnerships. Given the strong development interest in the area and zoning that allows high densities, the implementation of the potential development strategies probably would not increase development beyond the “rail only” forecast of 2,630 new dwelling units and 651,000 square feet of floor area.

Seattle Center 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	1,723	3,750	3,945	3,945
Dwelling Units	1,416	250	2,630	2,630
Employment	7,835	2,070	2,170	2,170
Commercial Floor Area ²	4,371	620	651	650

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 Seattle Center station area is to encourage higher-density mixed commercial uses that support Seattle Center uses. This approach is consistent with the market trends and forecasts for the neighborhood, which predict a stronger overall market for retail uses, compared to office and residential uses. The potential development strategy for the Seattle Center station area can be summarized as follows:

- *Increased Density.* Height bonuses can be used to encourage development that supports both the station and Seattle Center.
- *Mixed Use.* Incentives for mixed use and live-work units can help encourage the desired mixture of uses.
- *Pedestrian Environment.* There are already pedestrian improvements planned for the neighborhood, but the station area can be made even more supportive of pedestrians. A POZ could be established to connect Seattle Center, the light rail station, and surrounding uses. Auto-oriented uses could be limited to provide opportunities for development oriented to pedestrians.
- *Parking Management.* Parking maximums and reducing the number of parking spaces can be used to limit the availability of parking and encourage transit use. Since Seattle Center’s parking demand heavily influences the parking situation in the station area, its parking management plan should discourage parking by light rail users.

The table of potential development strategies shows high-priority and recommended actions for the Seattle Center 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. Joint use of the Monorail corridor is a possibility.

Potential Development Strategies: Seattle Center (13)

Strategy	Potential Action	Comments
Land Use Tools	●	<i>Extend mixed use incentives from Denny Regrade into other portions of station area; Establish limitations on auto-oriented uses and a pedestrian overlay zone (POZ). Offer height bonuses for mixed use TOD and incentives for live-work. (NC3 amendments).</i>
Pedestrian Network	✓	<i>The Monorail provides a link with Downtown; improve linkages to adjacent neighborhoods to the west, beyond Aurora and provide pedestrian improvements at both 5th and Broad and Broad and Denny. Improve lighting in Monorail corridor.</i>
Parking Management	●	<i>Establish parking “lids” and reduce number of spaces required. A comprehensive parking management strategy is needed to address parking needs of Seattle Center.</i>
Economics/Financial Assistance	?	<i>The Neighborhood Plan identifies a need for funding for business improvements.</i>
Regulatory Process	?	<i>Provide expedited review/SEPA clearance for TOD projects.</i>
Local Transit Service	✓ / ○	<i>Monorail connection provides service to Downtown. Need for additional east/west service to complement strong north/south service.</i>
Development Partnerships	?	<i>Joint use opportunities might exist in Monorail corridor.</i>
Pilot Projects	?	

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| ✓ = 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 | |

International District

The International District station area is characterized by unique shops and restaurants, the Kingdome, and King Street Station – which all draw visitors from throughout the Seattle region. The core of the International District is pedestrian-oriented, while auto-oriented uses are located at the perimeter.

Although land uses like the Kingdome and King Street station will always attract automobile trips to the International District, efforts can be made to ensure that transit and walking are equally viable modes of transportation. The City can build on the culture and historic character of the International District and the existing mix of uses to encourage pedestrian trips and transit use. Improvements in pedestrian facilities can help encourage walking, and the area's proximity to Downtown may warrant increases in commercial and residential density, which can also promote the use of alternate modes.

SOUND TRANSIT ALIGNMENT AND STATION OPTIONS

All alignment options being considered by Sound Transit between Westlake Station and South McClellan Street include the existing International District station. The station is located in the International District, adjacent to historic Union Station and King Street station. In the future, this area will be a major transfer point for users of light rail and commuter rail.



International District Station at 5th and Jackson.

EXISTING STATION AREA CONDITIONS

LAND USE AND HOUSING

Entertainment and transportation uses occupy the largest land areas in the International District station area. Other major uses are parking, retail, office and warehouse uses. Less than 10 acres of the station area are dedicated to housing and mixed use development combined. Housing is scattered throughout the northern and eastern portions of the station area; the average net residential density is approximately 12 units per acre.

International District Station Area – Existing Conditions, 1997¹	
Population	1,762
Employment	7,157
Median Household Income (1996)	\$ 9,718
<i>Residential Land Use</i>	
Total Dwelling Units	1,277
Density ²	
Single-family Zones	N/A
Multi-family Zones	N/A
<i>Commercial Land Use</i>	
Total Floor Area (sq. ft.)	4,282,520
Retail/Service	593,952
Office	847,060
Floor Area Ratio (FAR) ³	0.97
¹ Within a ¼-mile radius of station location.	
² Dwelling units per net acre in specified residential zones. Residential units in non-residential and downtown zones are excluded.	
³ Ratio of non-residential space per net acre of commercial and industrial land use.	

TRANSPORTATION

Like the Downtown area, the International District station area has a compact street grid that allows for pedestrian movement, particularly within the historic and commercial core. However, pedestrian movement is difficult moving from the station area to adjacent neighborhoods. Interstate 5 is a barrier to pedestrian movement to areas northeast of the station area.

Second Avenue provides a major link from the station area to Downtown. Major arterial streets provide auto connections between Downtown and the Duwamish industrial area through the station area. Bus connections are focused around Union Station, which is linked to the Downtown transit tunnel.

Community Issues

The current *Chinatown/International District Strategic Plan* recommends strategies that are intended to improve transportation and circulation in the International District area. While recommending actions that will improve safety and circulation in the neighborhood, the *Plan* emphasizes measures for reducing traffic speeds and improving access by alternative modes, including walking, bicycling, and transit use. Key issues include:

- *Traffic Safety and Traffic-Calming.* Resignalization of key intersections and traffic-calming at alley entrances and exits.
- *Transit Access.* Extending the Free Ride Zone to Dearborn Street and the Poplar Place light rail station, and improving bus shelters.
- *Bicycle Facilities.* Restriping the Dearborn Street bike lanes and providing bike facilities for International District visitors.
- *Parking Management.* Maximizing on- and off-street parking, expanding residential parking programs, and increasing parking enforcement on Kingdome (and new stadium) event days.

1995 Metro Six-Year Plan

The International District is part of the Downtown urban district, which serves as the focal point of the City's transit system. Its underground bus tunnel links to express busways that carry commuters to and from outlying areas of the city and suburban cities.

King County's *1995 Six-Year Transit Development Plan* does not specifically address improvements in transit facilities in the Downtown area because the plan is primarily concerned with restructuring citywide routes based on non-Downtown transit hubs and employment target areas. Transit services to Downtown will be expanded, however, from other parts of the city and region. Specifically, the frequency of buses will be increased along core routes from the following communities:

- Auburn
- Aurora Village
- Ballard
- Beacon Hill
- Bellevue
- Burien
- Capitol Hill
- Central Area
- Federal Way
- Kirkland
- Madrona
- Northgate
- Queen Anne
- Rainier Beach
- Renton
- Shoreline
- University District
- West Seattle

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE NETWORK

The International District station area allows easy pedestrian movement to Downtown, although pedestrian movement to neighborhoods to the east is interrupted by Interstate 5. The International District neighborhood does not currently have a strong pedestrian connection

to the Kingdome area, however, the future Weller Street pedestrian bridge will provide that connection. Heavy traffic on many streets also inhibits walking in the area.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The *Chinatown/International District Strategic Plan* focuses its recommendations on providing pedestrian facilities and a wayfinding system along three key corridors: Jackson Street, Lane/Dearborn Street, and Fifth Avenue. The *Plan* also suggests additional maintenance and programming at existing public parks and development of new open space and a community recreation center, and notes that utility infrastructure improvements are needed.

URBAN DESIGN FEATURES

The International District station is located adjacent to historic Union Station and King Street Station. In the future, this area will be a major transfer point for light rail and commuter rail passengers. Urban design issues in the International District station area are focused around emphasizing the neighborhood's distinctive characteristics, particularly in the face of intense development in the area. The *Plan* suggests developing a "gateway" to the neighborhood at Fifth and Jackson, installing pedestrian facilities and green streets through the neighborhood, and coordinating the new facilities that are provided as a result of new development.

RECENT MARKET TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

MARKET CONDITIONS

Similar to the Downtown station areas, the International District station area commands some of the highest residential and commercial rents compared to all other station areas. The high rents are explained, in part, by vacancy rates below 5% for residential and commercial/office uses. The International District station area has experienced both commercial and residential development in recent years.

RECENT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Increasing rents in the Downtown commercial core have generated new development interest in the International District. Recent commercial and residential projects include:

- 600 5th Avenue South (Uwajimaya store and expansion site)
- 6th & Dearborn
- Union Station (air rights development over 3 blocks behind Union Station)
- 510 6th Avenue South (Fujisada Condominiums)
- 10 5th Avenue South

International District

In all, 50 residential units were recently completed or are under construction in the International District, and there are plans for 259 additional units in the station area. In addition, there are approved permits for 1.3 million square feet of office space and 16,000 square feet of retail space.

International District Station Area – Market Conditions¹	
Rents and Vacancy Rates	
Apartment Rents (sq. ft.)	\$ 1.25
Apartment Vacancy Rate	3.9%
Office Rents (sq. ft.)	\$ 17.52
Office Vacancy Rate	4.8%
Trends in Land Prices ²	
Commercial Lots	4.9%
Single Family Lots	N/A
Multi-family Lots	4.9%
Active Permit Applications	
Housing Units	171
Commercial Space (sq. ft.)	
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 INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT STATION AREA

Retail uses associated with the new football stadium and existing retail uses are considered to have the highest potential for development in the International District station area. Office and residential uses also are expected to have some potential, consistent with market expectations in the Downtown area.

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

The International District station area is located within the International District and Pioneer Square Urban Center Villages, both of which are included in the Downtown Urban Center. Located directly to the south of Downtown Seattle, the International District neighborhood is the center of the region’s Asian and Pacific Islander communities and is home to many diverse businesses and social service agencies. The Pioneer Square neighborhood is a historic district with a mix of housing, commercial, and entertainment activity.

ZONING

Most of the International District station area has special zoning provisions, including the International District Mixed (IDM) and International District Residential (IDR) zones. Uses in these zones are subject to special review by the International District Special Review District. Mixed use is allowed, subject to approval based on criteria for maintaining and enhancing the character and development of the station area.

International District Station Area – Potential Development Under Current Zoning Regulations¹		
	<i>Commercial (sq. ft.)</i>	<i>Residential (units)</i>
Existing Development	4,282,520	1,277
Additional Potential Development under Current Zoning Regulations ²	3,676,048	7,789
TOTAL	7,939,724	9,066
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

No zoning changes are proposed as part of the International District’s neighborhood planning work, although pedestrian and retail customer circulation are key issues. Stakeholders note that the community, in general, is interested in providing more affordable housing. Coordinating an exceptional amount of development activity already underway with planning for the light rail station area and helping the neighborhood’s small business district remain viable are key neighborhood goals.

STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

The International District community has done work related to station area planning. However, stakeholders note that, although the neighborhood planning group has focused on the station, the community in general has focused on other issues. In particular, the Asian immigrant community that resides in the southeastern portion of the International District area is grappling with issues of equity, affordable housing, and access to jobs. Key issues for the station area include pedestrian circulation, retention of small businesses, and coordination of new development activity. Some stakeholder comments include:

- *Coordination of New Development.* “Many people in the neighborhood fear we will be taken over by new development.”
- *Retention of Small Business.* “We’ve got to help small businesses get over their uncertainty and fear about these new developments. Many don’t know what the new development means for them.”
- *Affordable Housing.* “We want to preserve low-income housing by rehabbing old buildings, but also create mixed use housing for young professionals.”
- *Pedestrian Amenities.* “Our biggest concerns are ongoing: many people move through the ID to get to the stadium, but few go into the District. Thus, it is very hectic and the neighborhood gets a lot of pedestrian congestion, but this congestion doesn’t help the District.”

STATION AREA DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

AVAILABLE OPPORTUNITY SITES

The International District station area has 110 parcels comprising more than 31 acres of land available for development. These represent vacant and underutilized parcels.

Zoning for Opportunity Sites

The greatest number of acres of opportunity sites are located in areas immediately surrounding the light rail station site. Nearly all of these parcels are found in the International District Mixed (IDM) and International District Residential (IDR) zones, where uses are subject to review by the International District Special Review District. Mixed uses are allowed, subject to approval based upon criteria for maintaining and enhancing the character and development of the station area.

DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS

Major constraints to development in the International District station area relate to the adjacent high-intensity uses of the Kingdome and King Street station. Both facilities attract significant volumes of traffic and create parking problems in the station area. Any development

International District Station Area – Opportunity Sites by Zoning Designation¹		
	<i>Parcels</i>	<i>Acreage²</i>
PSM-100	3	1.08
DOC2-240	3	0.92
IDM-100-120	13	3.12
PSM-100-120	1	0.23
IDR-150	25	4.90
IDM-75-85	62	14.77
IDM-65-150	3	6.43
TOTAL	110	31.45
¹ Within a ¼-mile radius of the station location.		
² Based on City of Seattle GIS database.		

in the International District station area must address impacts related to noise, parking short-ages, and pedestrian mobility issues.

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

As with the Downtown station areas, the International District is already served by under-ground bus service via the Downtown transit tunnel. Therefore, introduction of light rail will not have a significant effect on the amount of new development in the station area. Other market factors driving Downtown development will tend to outweigh the effects of changing from rubber-tired buses to light rail trains in the tunnel. Thus, the projections adopt a mid-point estimate between the *Comprehensive Plan* Extrapolation and the PSRC Existing Trends forecast.

EMPLOYMENT AND COMMERCIAL FLOOR AREA

As with population and housing, the mid-point between the *Comprehensive Plan* Extrapolation and PSRC Existing Trends forecasts for floor area and employment was selected. As mar-

ket demand and rents continue to increase in the central Downtown neighborhood, development will spread closer toward the International District station area.

LAND USE IMPACT OF LIGHT RAIL

The land use impacts of “rail without supportive policies” is projected to be negligible in the International District station area. The tunnel station is already built and provides improved access through a rubber-tired system operating in the downtown tunnel. Improved access provided by light rail transit probably will not be great enough to alter Downtown development patterns.

LAND USE IMPACTS OF LIGHT RAIL WITH SUPPORTIVE POLICIES

As the southernmost station area in the Downtown market segment, the International District station area has distinctive needs in terms of an appropriate development strategy. The site requires improved pedestrian linkages from the light rail station to the sports stadiums, King Street Station, and the neighborhood. The renewed development interest in this part of Downtown may create some opportunities for partnerships in the redevelopment effort, while maintaining a sensitivity to the current mix of uses and income levels of station area residents.

International District 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	1,762	2,250	2,685	2,685
Dwelling Units	1,277	1,700	1,790	1,790
Employment	7,157	7,930	8,330	8,330
Commercial Floor Area ²	4,283	2,380	2,499	2,499

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 International District station area is to ensure that new development supports transit use, pedestrian activity, and the needs of the local community. The location of the station area near Downtown and the Kingdome makes it attractive for higher-density commercial development. The potential development strategies are designed to permit more intensive development, while making development responsive to transit, pedestrians, parking needs, and housing concerns. The overall development strategy for the International District station area can be summarized as follows:

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

- *Mixed Use.* Incentives for mixed use and live-work units can help encourage the desired mixture of uses. The International District Special Review District prohibits drive-in uses, gas stations, surface parking areas, and parking garages as principal uses. Ground-floor retail uses oriented to pedestrians are specifically encouraged. Additional provisions to encourage mixed uses in the area may be required.
- *Pedestrian Environment.* Pedestrian links and facilities can be improved between the light rail station, the Kingdome, and King Street Station.
- *Parking Management.* Strategies may be necessary to alleviate the impacts of stadium-related parking.
- *Affordable Housing.* Because the station area is adjacent to Downtown, the Kingdome, and King Street Station, the local real estate market is strong enough to generate development activity without the need for additional incentives for development. However, economic assistance may be necessary to ensure that new development preserves opportunities for affordable housing. The Mayor has proposed multi-family property tax abatement program that would be available for new or substantial rehabilitation projects in this station area.

The table on the next page shows potential high-priority and recommended actions for the International District station area. There is potential for a development partnership with the football stadium authorities. A Gateway project at 5th and Jackson may help connect the International District neighborhood with the International District light rail station.

Potential Development Strategies: International District (I8)

Strategy	Potential Action	Comments
Land Use Tools		
Pedestrian Network	○	<i>Extend pedestrian improvement corridor west on Jackson and north on 5th Avenue. Improve link-ages to King Street station and Kingdome/Seattle Stadium.</i>
Parking Management	●	<i>Comprehensive program needed that responds to stadia impacts.</i>
Economics/Financial Assistance	●	<i>Provide funding to help preserve affordable hous- ing and rehabilitate vacant properties.</i>
Regulatory Process	?	<i>Provide expedited review/SEPA clearance for TOD projects.</i>
Local Transit Service	?	<i>Expansion of the Free-Ride Zone to Dearborn and bus stop improvements.</i>
Development Partnerships	?	<i>Potential work with stadia authorities.</i>
Pilot Projects	●	<i>Establish a "Gateway" to the neighborhood at 5th and Jackson.</i>

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

