

Introduction

In 1996, voters in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties approved a regional transit plan that empowers Sound Transit (also known as the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority or RTA) to spend over \$1.2 billion on rail transit within the Seattle city limits. Stations on the rail transit line will create opportunities to shape the pattern of future growth in the city's neighborhoods and commercial areas. By encouraging the location of future jobs, housing, shopping areas, and cultural attractions near transit stations, the City of Seattle can increase potential ridership on the new transit system, making it more efficient and cost-effective. In the process, the City can also revitalize existing communities and create vibrant new communities where people can work, shop, live, and play without relying on a car.

This introduction provides an overview of the purpose and scope of the City's station area planning program; it also explains what is meant by the term "transit-oriented development" for those unfamiliar with the concept. Then, the organization of this report is briefly summarized.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This report presents the results of Part A, the first of two parts of the City of Seattle's Station Area Planning for Sound Transit's proposed light rail station areas. This part of the process has focused on assessing opportunities for transit oriented development (TOD) around station sites, including the market conditions and neighborhood planning context. The results of this work will be used in further, more detailed planning for TOD being conducted by the City for selected stations and in the City's evaluation of alignment and station alternatives being considered by Sound Transit. The market analysis also is being used in the Environmental Impact Statement being prepared by Sound Transit.

WHAT IS TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT?

When city planners talk about transit-oriented development, really all they mean is a development pattern that has been around for almost a century, for as long as American cities have had light rail lines running through them. In Seattle, streetcar suburbs grew around rail lines that were extended north and south of downtown. Neighborhood commercial centers were often sited around rail stops. With more people and activity on the street, the area around the transit stations sometimes became the central focal point of the neighborhood.

Today, transit-oriented development attempts to recreate those older patterns of urban development. Transit-oriented development can create a neighborhood center, can help revitalize urban communities, and can attract people and activity that create safe, vibrant places to live. Transit-oriented development tends to include employment centers, housing, and traditional neighborhood shopping areas, not warehouses, auto repair, or truck stops.

Six key characteristics typify transit-oriented development:

- *Compact Land Development.* The fronts of buildings come right up to the street, and parking is located on the side or rear, or there is no parking.
- *Mixed Use.* A variety and mix of activities near stations to promote vitality and create a sense of place.
- *Pedestrian Environment.* Attractive, pedestrian-friendly streets and buildings that are at a pedestrian scale and make people feel comfortable walking. Views into buildings, eyes on the street, help create a feeling of safety.
- *Public Amenities.* Awnings, shelters, benches, good lighting, and similar features that provide comfort and safety.
- *Parking Management.* Careful management of parking supply and demand can help encourage transit use and walking while limiting auto-use. Some cities have gone so far as to establish parking lids, although that will not necessarily be proposed here.
- *Pedestrian and Bicycle Network.* A complete network of walking and biking paths. Places that allow for easy transfers between light rail and buses.

The diagrams on the following page illustrate some of these transit-oriented development concepts for Seattle.

OBJECTIVES FOR STATION AREA PLANNING

There are five key objectives for Seattle's station area planning:

- **To ensure a good fit between Sound Transit's plans and neighborhood planning.** Through Seattle's neighborhood planning program, individual communities over the past three years have been developing visions for the future, setting priorities for transportation, housing, open space, and public safety. Some neighborhoods have been focusing on the station areas and have very specific ideas about what they want to happen. The neighborhood plans are nearly complete and will be adopted by the City Council over the next year. Station area planning will build on these neighborhood plans, focusing on the areas around light rail stations.

To take advantage of housing and economic development opportunities where these opportunities fit with citywide goals and neighborhood objectives. With a market study and "reality check" for each station area, the City will have a better understanding of the kinds of activities and services that might be attracted to the light rail station areas and then craft strategies to encourage those activities and services in appropriate areas.

- Insert diagram of TOD concepts for Seattle

- **To foster new development that supports transit ridership and helps create pedestrian-friendly, safe environments around stations.** The City needs to tailor the development strategies to individual station areas and neighborhoods; a cookie-cutter approach – one size fits all – does not make sense. With this in mind, the development strategies must respect existing neighborhood character. Then, the station area plans, to be prepared in Part B, will reflect what could happen, lay out policies and actions to support what the City wants to happen, and recommend decisions to avoid those things that the City doesn't want.
- **To identify what public amenities and supportive infrastructure would be needed to make station areas exciting and attractive places.** The City and Sound Transit will be working out who will build and pay for the amenities and infrastructure needed for the station areas. The ideas embodied in the station area development strategies will need financing commitments to move ahead, and there will be pilot projects and development partnerships formed to make these concepts a reality.
- **To identify needs for local transit service.** This is particularly important because the City and Sound Transit will not be building park-and-ride lots at the transit stations and many local and express bus routes may be re-routed to serve the new LRT stations. How this can be done in a cost-effective manner, why still maintaining service to those who need it will be a challenge for the City, Sound Transit and King County Metro.

OVERVIEW OF PLANNING PROCESS AND TIMELINE

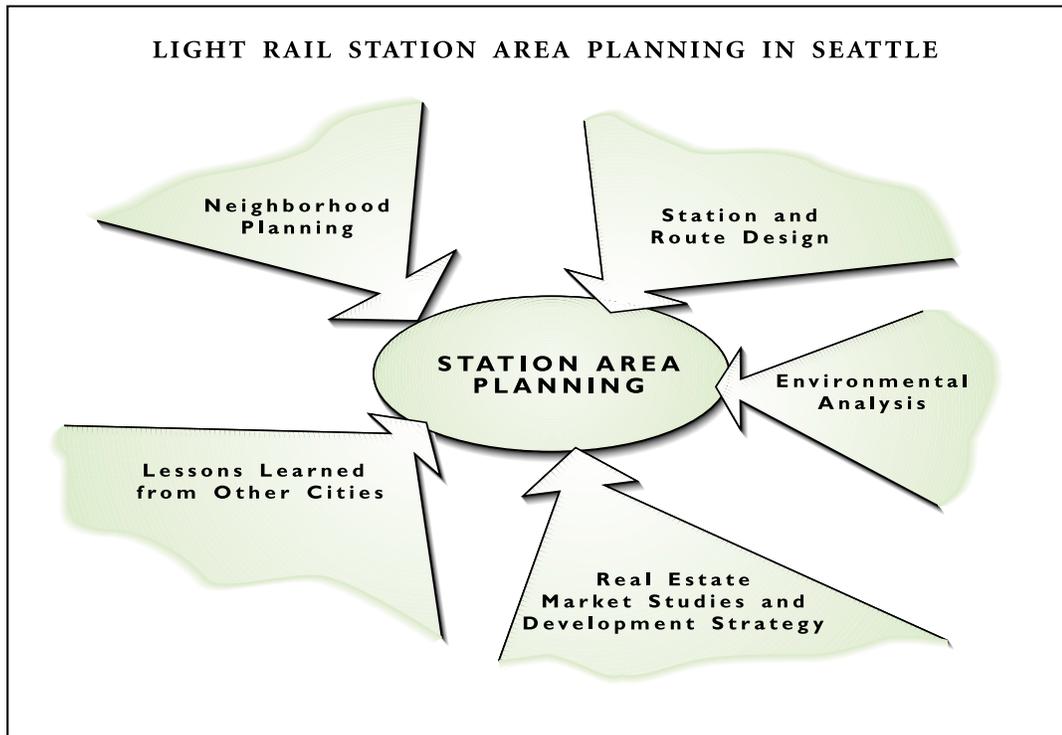
Station area planning started in the spring of 1998; it is expected to be complete by the end of 1999 when a final decision is scheduled to be made on the specific design for the light rail system. Construction would start in the fall of 2000, and service would begin in 2004. The diagram on the following page shows the relation between station area planning, neighborhood planning and Sound Transit's project schedule.

The City's station area planning program will bring together light rail planners and neighborhood property owners, businesses, and community organizations to review the information and make the best decisions about investment in station areas. Neighbors will not only have opportunities to voice their concerns, but will directly contribute to recommendations for the location of light rail lines and stations and for neighborhood plans. The process will be closely coordinated with the Neighborhood Plan process and Sound Transit's design and engineering.

There are three steps in the station area planning process:

1. **The first step is to establish the planning framework.** To begin the effort, planners worked with neighborhood residents, property owners, and businesses around the proposed light rail stations to understand the market and neighborhood issues that may drive station area planning. Case studies of station area development in other cities also were completed to learn from their experiences.

Throw page: schedule showing 3 timelines. "Relation of Station area planning to"



- 2) The next step is to flesh out planning ideas, prepare and evaluate physical planning concepts and then make choices. Station area planning will give neighborhoods information that will help make decisions about locations for the light rail lines and stations and make land use and community design plans for the neighborhoods around the stations. The Station Area Atlas, a Part A product, includes graphic information on development opportunities, urban design ideas and development strategies.
- 3) The third step will take place in 1999 and will involve taking action so that station area plans can be realized. Station area planning will mean something different in every neighborhood. In some, it might involve finding assistance for a single desired project; in others, it might include new design standards or land use plans. Whatever the desired outcome in a particular neighborhood, station area planning will help community organizations, property owners, and businesses work together to make it happen.

PART A RESEARCH AND INTERIM REPORTS

In Part A, work included:

- Case Studies of Transit-Oriented Development;
- Neighborhood Plan Review;
- Stakeholders' and City Council Interviews;
- Station Area Land Use Survey and Mapping of Development Opportunity Sites;

- Urban Design Analysis;
- Market Analysis and Development Strategies; and
- Formulation of Development Strategies.

The consultant team participated in neighborhood technical assistance for station area planning, which included workshops and follow-up memoranda on station area planning issues and options. Consulting economists on the team participated with City staff in meetings with developers interested in TOD projects; more detailed assistance on TOD projects is planned to be initiated during the winter and spring.

Interim reports prepared during Part A were reviewed by the City's Strategic Planning Office and their comments are reflected in the summary of Part A presented in this report and in the accompanying technical reports on *Market Analysis and Development Strategies*, *Neighborhood Plan Review* and *Case Studies of Transit-Oriented Development*, which are available from the City's Strategic Planning Office.

ORGANIZATION OF SUMMARY REPORT AND ATLAS

The Part A report organization is straightforward. In Section 1, chapters set the framework for station area planning. These include summaries for the case studies for TOD, analysis of existing conditions and trends in station areas, the neighborhood plan review and the summary of the market analysis and development strategies generally,

In Section 2, individual station area profiles synthesize information pertinent to each station, including the Sound transit alignment and station locations being considered, existing conditions and recent market trends, and the development strategies being proposed. The station area profiles are intended to complement graphic information presented in the Station Area Atlas, a series of large-scale sheets with color photographs and maps of each candidate station area. Information presented in the Atlas includes:

- Aerial photograph of existing conditions;
- Existing land use map and summary tabulation of acres of land within each land use category;
- Summary statistics including demographics, land use and density, market trends and growth projections, including population and employment with and without light rail transit (LRT);
- Map of existing zoning and opportunity sites for transit-oriented development and summary tabulation of number of parcels and acreage included within each zoning district;
- Map of urban design factors and preliminary land use/development ideas.
- Station location and alignment options;
- Comprehensive Plan designations for the station area;
- Summary of key neighborhood concerns;
- Photographs that convey the scale and character of the station area; and
- Summary of potential development strategies.

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

The appendices provide key terms and contacts that may be useful for reference. Appendix A lists focus group participants, and Appendix B lists stakeholders interviewed in the inventory phase of Seattle's Station Area Planning process. Appendix C explains key terms and methodology used in the market study, which is summarized in Appendix D.