

1.1 History and Context

1.1.1 Community Character

The Southeast Seattle community is bounded by S. Dearborn Street and I-90 to the north, I-5 to the west, Lake Washington to the east, and the Seattle city limits to the south. The community comprises numerous neighborhood, business districts, and commercial nodes.

The first phase of the project reviewed a variety of existing plans and studies (please refer to Appendix B for a list of reports and plans reviewed), and then identified and summarized the study area's existing needs and described the improvements that been implemented. The existing reports that were reviewed were developed by a variety of sources, including community groups. Phase 2 of the project will address the needs and gaps identified in Phase 1.

The neighborhood planning effort developed neighborhood boundaries, and this Existing Conditions Report identifies and summarizes needs that are consistent with the neighborhood planning boundaries. Figure 1 illustrates the neighborhood boundaries located within the study area. The project area includes areas both within and outside neighborhood boundary areas. Therefore, geographic areas outside neighborhood boundary areas will also be considered and evaluated.

The five core neighborhoods in the study area are North Rainier, North Beacon Hill, Columbia City, M.L. King Jr. Way S. at Holly Street, and Rainier Beach. These neighborhoods have a strong history of community involvement and activism. They serve a variety of needs including businesses, residents, senior citizens, visitors, commuters, and an industrial area.

The Southeast Seattle community's five urban villages each developed their own Neighborhood Plan, and each will also include a light rail station by 2009. These five stations provide unique opportunities for development by improving access to jobs within the community and throughout the region.

1.1.2 Transportation Planning History

The Southeast Seattle community has a unique and exciting opportunity, given the planned growth for this area and implementation of Sound Transit's Link Light Rail line by 2009. The Link Light Rail line will provide numerous opportunities including household and employment development, access to jobs in the community and the Puget Sound region, safety improvements through streetscape design, and additional non-motorized and transit connections. Insightful planning and analysis have been completed for each neighborhood in this area and access improvements have been made around light rail station areas. However, what remains to be accomplished is a cohesive transportation plan that connects each neighborhood with one another and ensures adequate access and connections from a community standpoint.

Figure 1 illustrates the proposed light rail line through Southeast Seattle. Partially because of the new light rail line, the Seattle Comprehensive Plan has projected a significant increase in households and employment by the year 2010 in the Southeast Seattle area. All transportation studies and plans must address the needs for multimodal community connections to and from the light rail stations.

Rather than duplicating work recently completed, the SETS study draws on findings and recommendations from the City of Seattle's Neighborhood Plans, Station Area Plans, and Comprehensive Plan to assess the communities' needs. Community and business groups have a wealth of knowledge to share and will serve as resources for this study. They will also help determine whether any recommendations have changed since completion of these earlier studies.

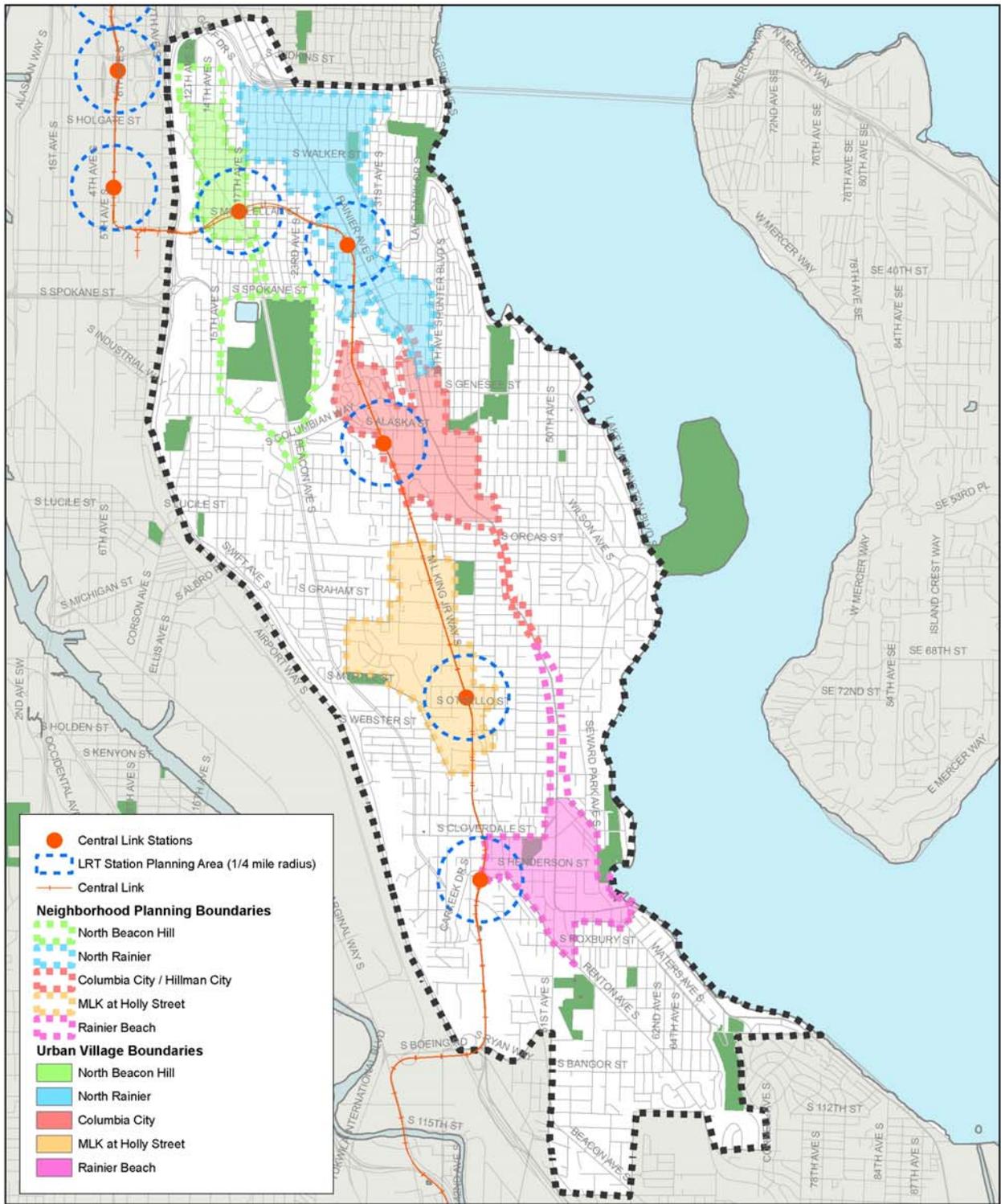
1.2 Southeast Transportation Study (SETS)

In the past, planning studies related to multimodal transportation infrastructure concentrated on particular segments of the Southeast Seattle community, such as an individual neighborhood or a specific station area. The SETS will provide one cohesive multimodal transportation plan for the entire Southeast Seattle community, by identifying overarching needs for all neighborhoods in this community.

The Southeast Transportation Study (SETS)'s purpose is to identify and prioritize transportation projects and programs to implement over the next 20 years and to develop a funding strategy to implement top-priority projects and programs. Building on prior work and collaborating with Southeast Seattle community leaders, the City of Seattle's Department of Transportation (SDOT) will evaluate transportation projects and programs against a set of evaluation criteria that are consistent with the transportation study's following goals:

- Improve mobility and safety for Southeast Seattle's diverse needs.
- Improve the transportation network in Southeast Seattle, with a particular focus on connections to the new light rail system.
- Support growth and change in Southeast neighborhoods to enhance neighborhood livability.
- Make cost-effective investments to preserve and maintain transportation infrastructure and maximize other existing efforts and investments.
- Prioritize transportation improvements that support the Urban Village Strategy in the city's Comprehensive Plan and the strategies and actions defined in the Seattle Transportation Strategic Plan Update.

Figure 1: Neighborhood Boundaries and Central Link Light Rail (Initial Segment)





Southeast Seattle Transportation Study
Existing Conditions: Neighborhood Planning Areas
June 28, 2005

Southeast Seattle Transportation Study
Existing Conditions: Neighborhood Planning Areas



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1.3 Existing Zoning

Conclusions:

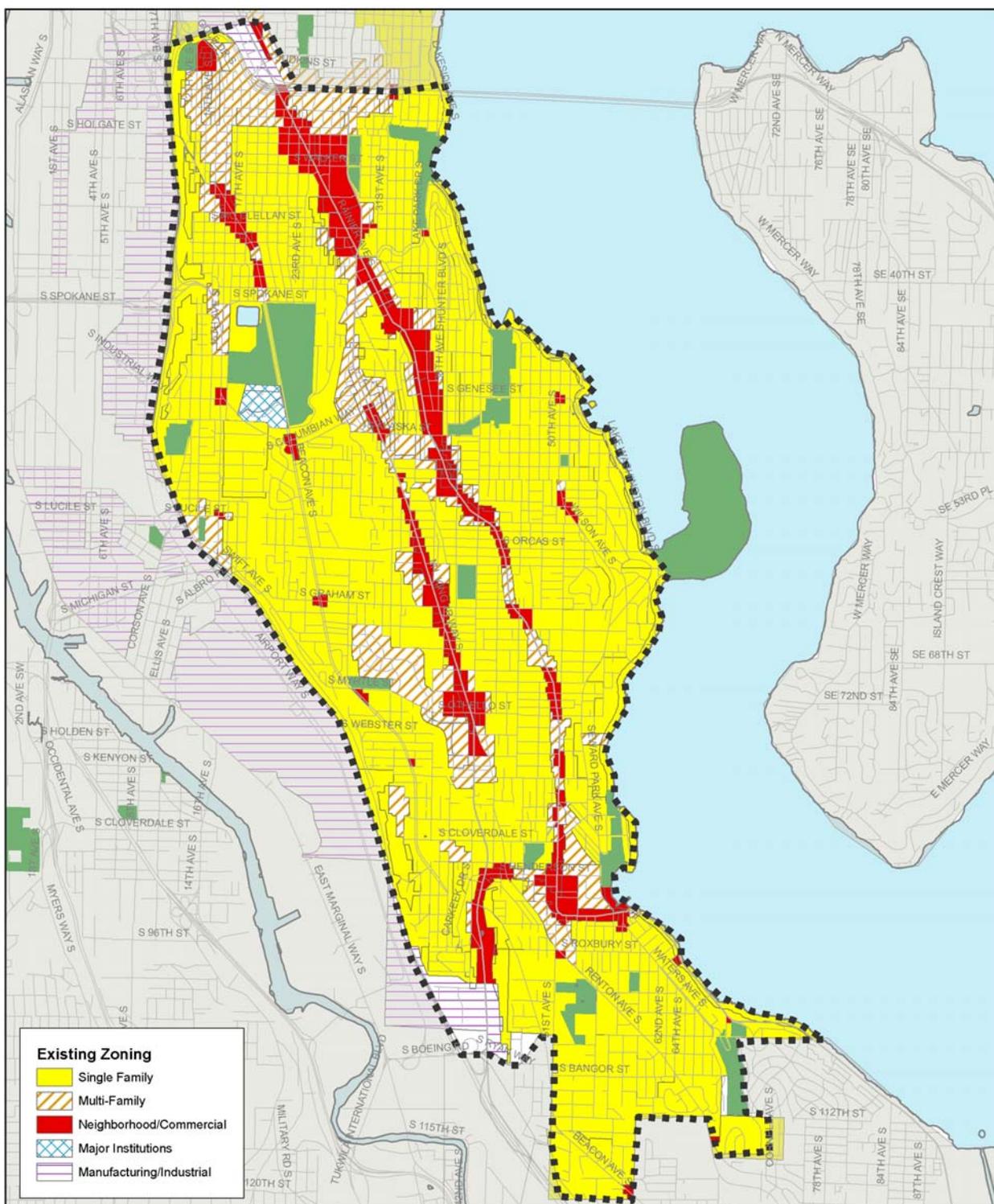
- *Single-family zoning is predominant in Southeast Seattle*
- *Manufacturing/industrial zone is at the southwest corner of the study area and is comprised of small land parcels.*
- *Multi-family zoning and neighborhood/commercial zoning are primarily at the core of urban villages and along Rainier Avenue S. and M. L. King Jr. Way S.*
- *Station Area Overlay Districts have been established around the future light rail stations.*

The existing zoning for the Southeast Seattle neighborhood is primarily single family. Please refer to Figure 2 for a zoning map. Multi-family is zoned primarily at the study area's northern segment (near I-90) and around the vicinity of Rainier Avenue S. and M. L. King Jr. Way S. Some multi-family zoning exists within urban villages.

Station Area Overlay Districts and rezones around the light rail stations were established in July 2001. These actions support Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) and promote neighborhood goals for walkable town centers. The Station Area Overlay District provides flexibility for existing businesses and new development and prohibits certain auto-oriented land uses near the stations. The Station Area Overlay Districts are generally a quarter mile around each light rail station.

Neighborhood/commercial areas are also zoned primarily in the urban villages. The Veteran's Hospital is the only area zoned as a major institution. A manufacturing/industrial zone is located at the study area's southwest corner.

Figure 2: Existing Zoning



Existing Zoning

- Single Family
- Multi-Family
- Neighborhood/Commercial
- Major Institutions
- Manufacturing/Industrial



Southeast Seattle Transportation Study

Existing Conditions: Zoning

June 30, 2005



Not to Scale

1.4 Demographics

Conclusions:

- *The Southeast Seattle community is diverse in culture, income and ethnicity.*
- *35 percent of the population is foreign-born.*
- *A higher percentage of children live in the study area compared to the entire city.*
- *The median income in Southeast Seattle is similar to the city-wide average.*
- *Educational attainment at the high school and college level is lower in the study area than the city-wide average.*

Southeast Seattle is a richly diverse community with respect to ethnicity and socio-economic backgrounds. Over forty different languages are spoken in these neighborhoods. Figure 3 illustrates this diversity. Community members span from around the world. The most prevalent ethnic groups include Asians, African/African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Pacific Islanders. African immigrants are largely from Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia. Other languages spoken besides English include Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Spanish, Japanese, Monkhmer/Cambodian, Laotian, and a variety of African and Pacific Island dialects.

This community has a higher percentage of children and foreign-born community members compared to the entire City of Seattle. Its elderly population percentage is similar to the city as a whole. Please refer to Table 1 for a comparison of population by age and birthplace for residents of Southeast Seattle versus the city as a whole.

Table 1: Population Percentage Comparison

	Southeast Seattle	City of Seattle
Children (under 18 years old)	24	15
Elderly (65+ years)	13	12
Foreign Born	35	17

Source: Year 2000 Census Data

Figures 4 and 5 illustrate the distribution of elderly and the youth, respectively. Although both population types live throughout the community, the elderly tend to live in single-family zoning areas and many more youth live in multi-family zoning areas. Additionally, more elderly live along the Lake Washington waterfront than youth.

The Southeast Seattle community is home to every household income level (see Figure 6). As shown in Table 2, the median income for Southeast Seattle is comparable to the city's, although the Rainier Valley neighborhood has a lower median income of \$38,731. Southeast Seattle's overall poverty level is slightly higher than the city's (13 percent versus 12 percent), but Rainier Valley's poverty level is at 18 percent, which is substantially higher than the city-wide average.

Table 2: Summary of Project Area Demographics

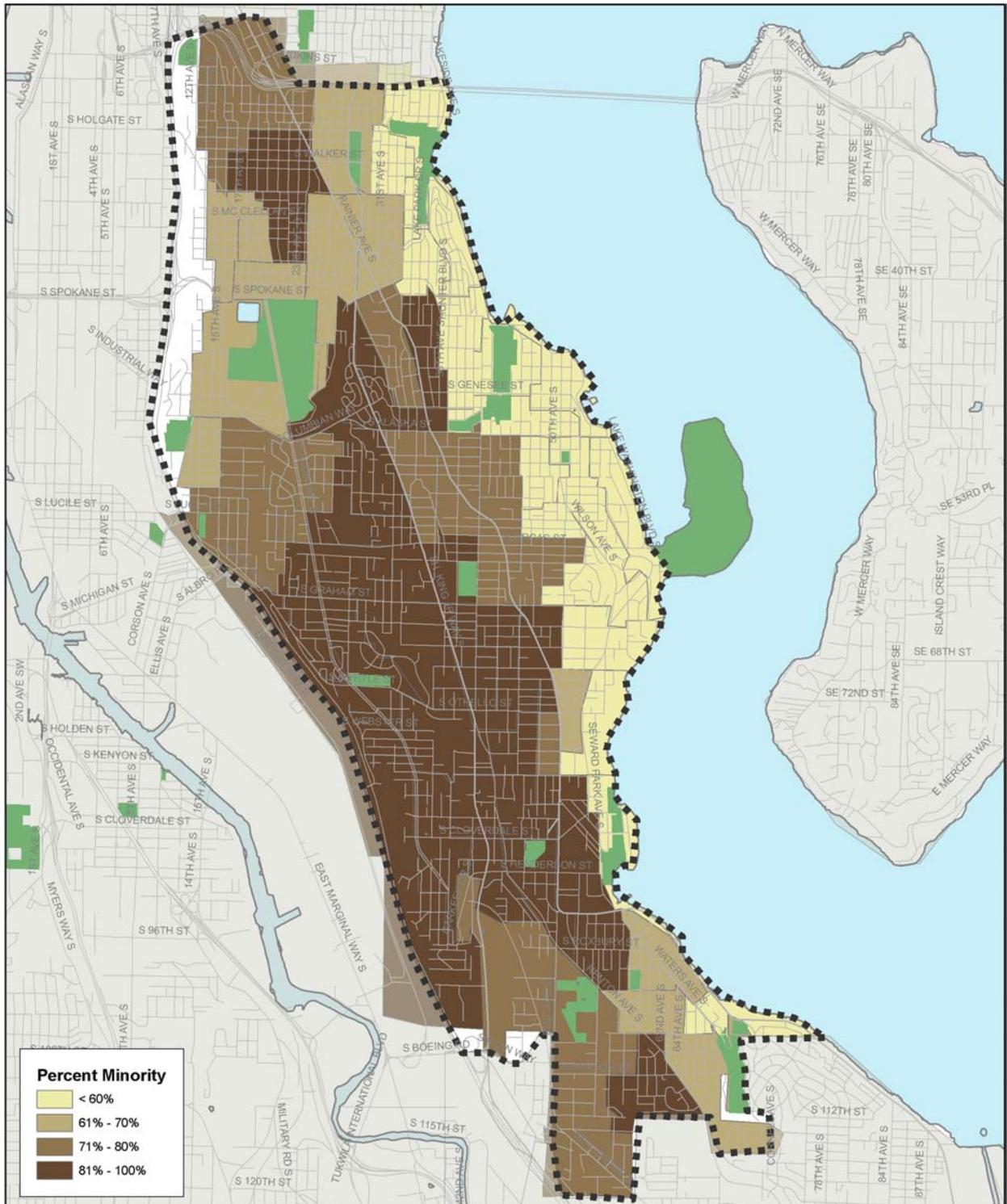
	Southeast Seattle	City of Seattle
Home Ownership Rates	62%	48%
Median Household Income (1999)	\$44,700	\$45,700
Presence of Poverty	13%	12%
Educational Attainment (25 years & older):		
Did not finish high school	25%	11%
Received a Bachelor's degree (college)	18%	30%
Percentage of Single Parent Families	17%	12%

Home ownership in Southeast Seattle is substantially higher than the city's average. Approximately 62 percent of households own their homes in Southeast Seattle compared to 48 percent city-wide.

A higher percentage of single-family households reside in Southeast Seattle than in the rest of the city. The average size of a single-family household in Southeast Seattle is 2.86 versus, 2.08 for the City of Seattle.

Educational attainment varies significantly between Southeast Seattle and the rest of the city. Nearly 25 percent of Southeast Seattle residents have not finished high school, compared to just over 10 percent city-wide.

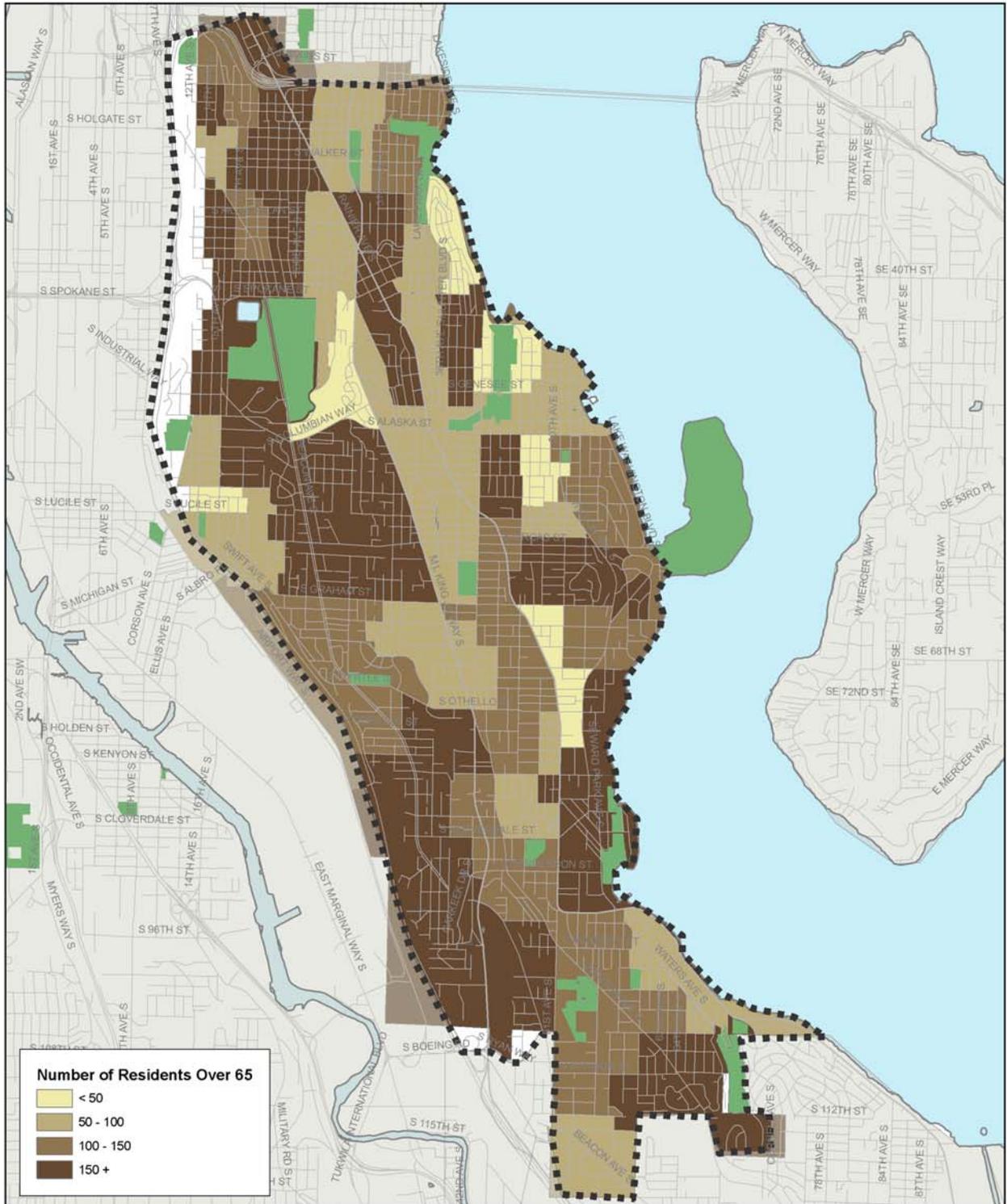
Figure 3: Minority Distribution




Southeast Seattle Transportation Study
Existing Conditions: Minority Distribution
 June 1, 2005 Source: U.S. Census 2000

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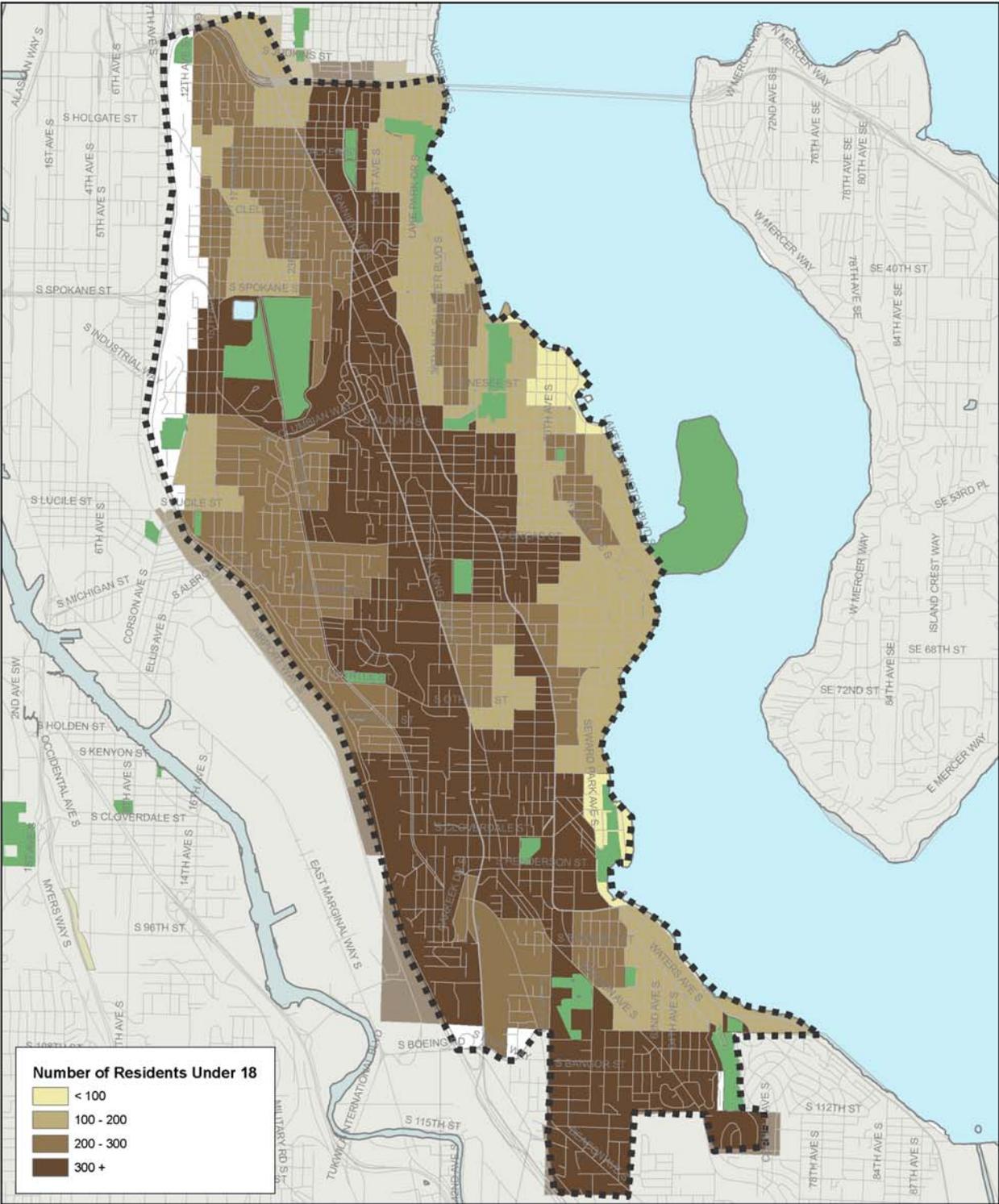
Figure 4: Elderly Population Distribution




Southeast Seattle Transportation Study
Existing Conditions: Elderly Distribution
 June 1, 2005 Source: U.S. Census 2000


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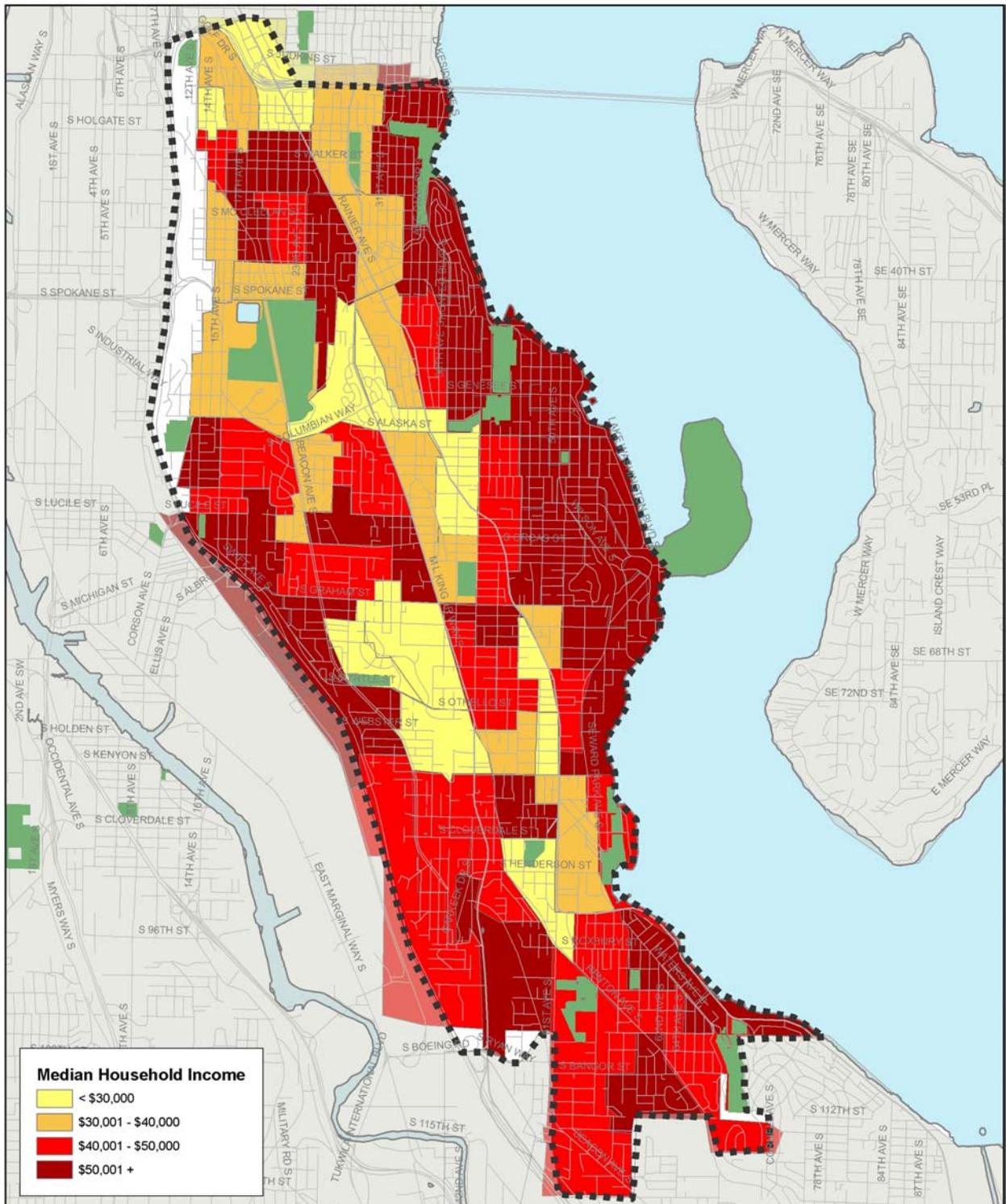
Figure 5: Youth Population Distribution



Southeast Seattle Transportation Study
Existing Conditions: Youth Distribution
 June 1, 2005 Source: U.S. Census 2000

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Figure 6: Median Household Income




Southeast Seattle Transportation Study
Existing Conditions: Median Household Income
 June 28, 2005 Source: U.S. Census 2000

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