Public Life Study in Seattle
Measuring Public Space Vibrancy

City of Seattle

Our mission, vision, and core values

Mission: deliver a high-quality transportation system for Seattle

Vision: connected people, places, and products

Committed to **5 core values** to create a city that is:
- Safe
- Interconnected
- Affordable
- **Vibrant**
- Innovative

For **all**

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A **vibrant city** is one where the streets and sidewalks hum with activity.

Public Life is…

"Activity that takes place in everyday public spaces – on streets, in parks and plazas, and in spaces between buildings"
-Gehl Institute

Public space is the backdrop for our:
- Everyday routines
- Culture
- Community
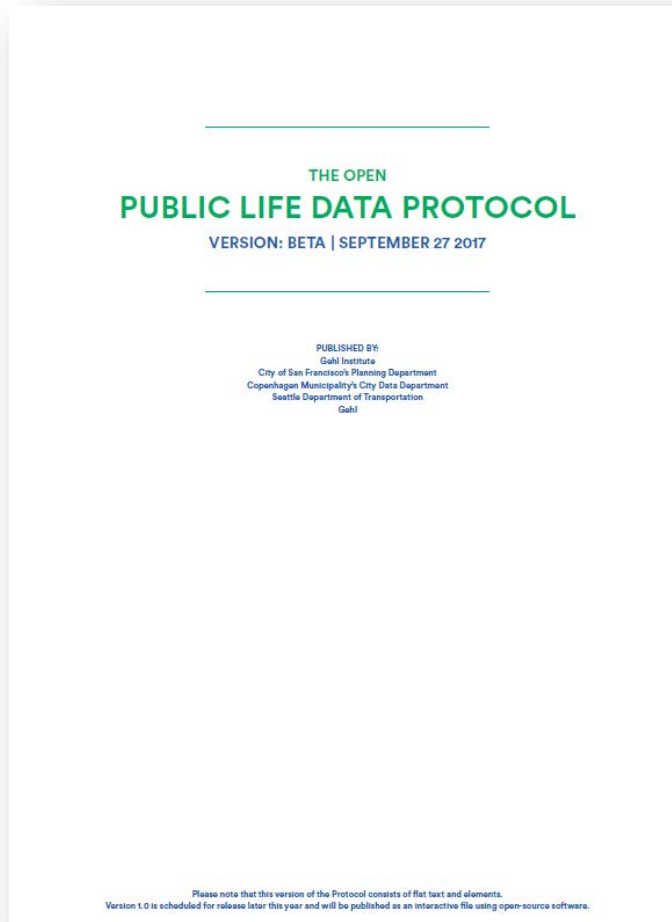- Social activities
- Physical activity
- Civic life

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Positive Public Life Encourages:

- Social interactions
- Improved health & well-being
- Economic benefits

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Opportunity Statement

- Measure SDOT's core value of vibrancy to provide initial benchmark to track the performance of public space activity

- Equip SDOT with data to inform public realm investments, compare across neighborhoods, and understand what makes a successful public space
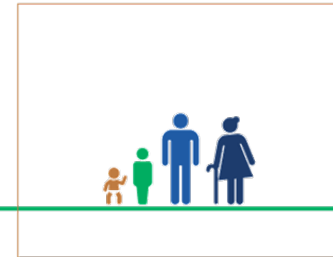
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Public Life Data Protocol

Public Life Data Protocol

THE OPEN
PUBLIC LIFE DATA PROTOCOL

VERSION: BETA | SEPTEMBER 27 2017

PUBLISHED BY:
Gehl Institute
City of San Francisco's Planning Department
Copenhagen Municipality's City Data Department
Seattle Department of Transportation
Gehl

Please note that this version of the Protocol consists of flat text and elements.
Version 1.0 is scheduled for release later this year and will be published as an interactive file using open-source software.
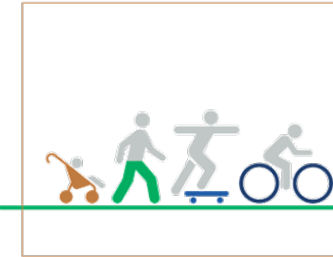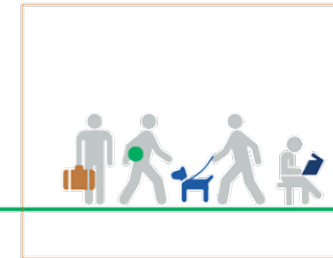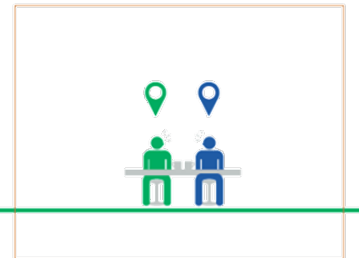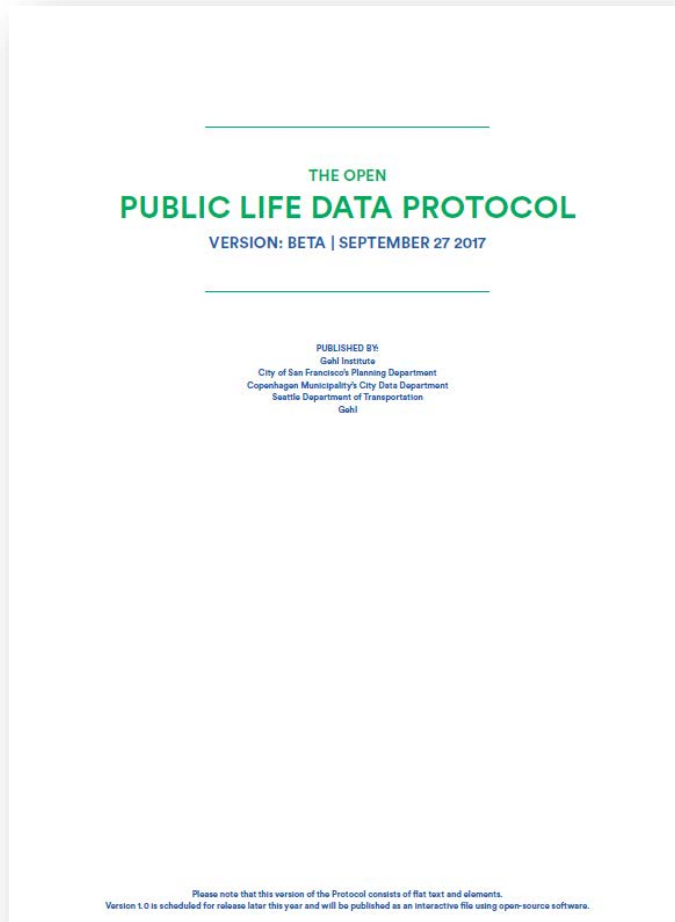
SPECIFICATION

SURVEY COMPONENT: ACTIVITY ENGAGEMENT

FIELD NAME	FIELD DESCRIPTION	DATA TYPE	CONTENT STRUCTURE	RECOMMENDATIONS
commercial	Commercial activity, both people providing a commercial service and people purchasing or showing interest in a commercial service.	integer	n/a	Several tiers are available. The preferred tier for medium density area locations is presented here. If they survey focuses on people moving (line locations), other activities may be selected. Counts are non-exclusive. One person can have several attributes.
consuming	Consuming food and beverages, or preparing to consume food or beverages.			
conversing	Conversing with one another.			
cultural	Cultural activities, both people providing a cultural activity (performing) and people participating in or observing a cultural activity.			
recreation_active	Active recreation, play, exercise.			
waiting_transfer	Waiting for transportation at designated waiting areas, both public and private.			

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2017 Beta Phase

- Initial test of PLDP on small number of block faces in center city
- Key findings
  - Users of the space
    - S Jackson St had high age diversity (21% youth and senior)
    - Bell St had low female presence (24% of all staying still)
  - Use of infrastructure
    - Similar stationary activity levels, even though more pedestrian activity and seating available on Bell St

S Jackson St

0 public seats

Bell St

73 public seats

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2018 Study Objectives

To understand:
- How many people are passing through? How many are lingering?
- What types of activities are observed?
- How is pedestrian infrastructure utilized?

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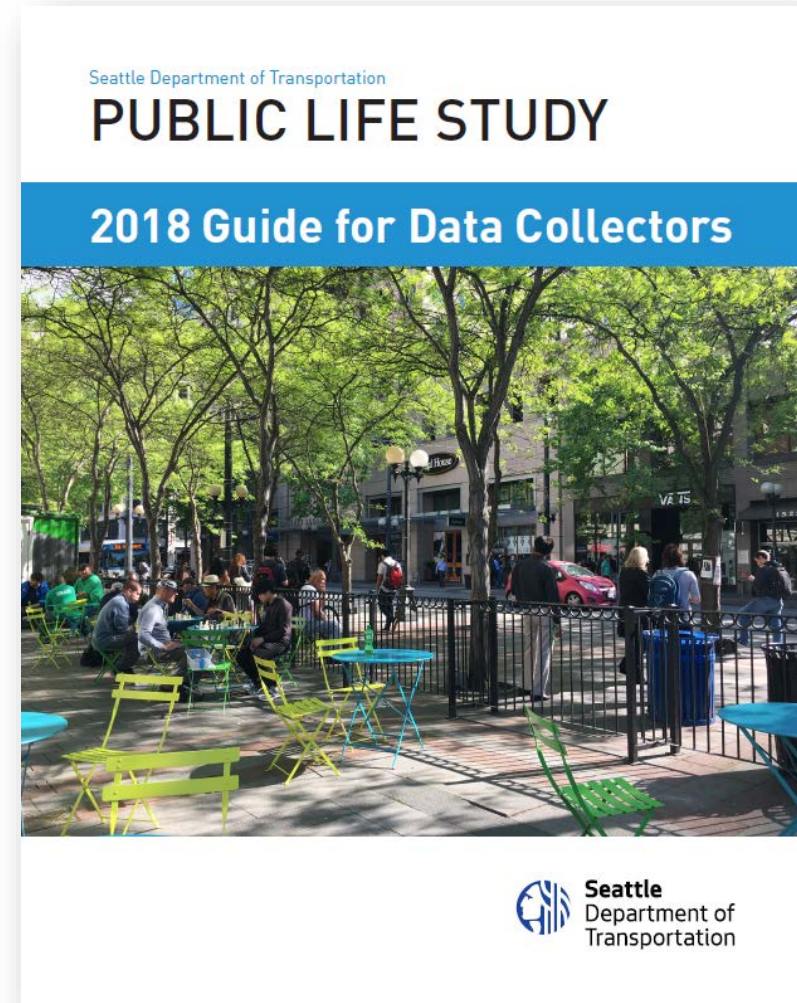
2018 Study Design

- Data collection: July – September
- 108 block faces across 38 neighborhoods
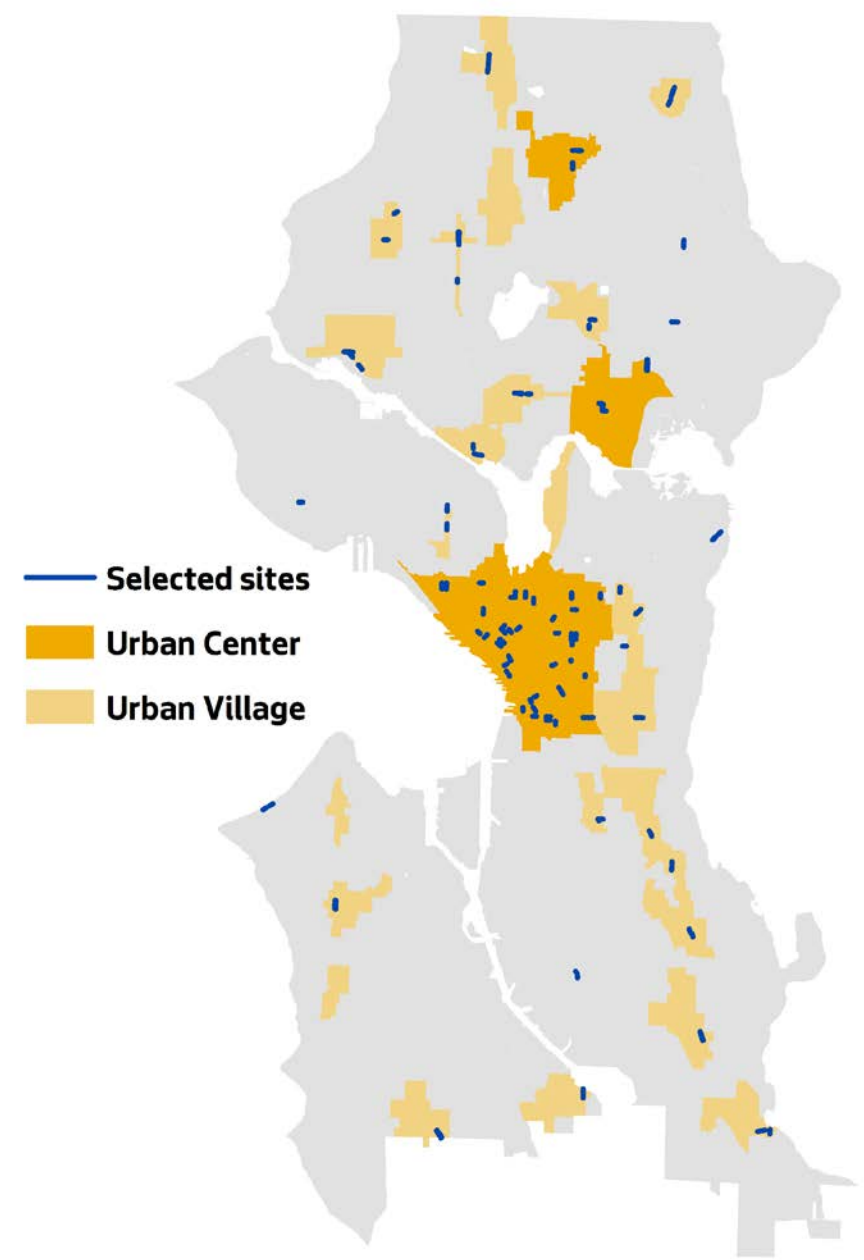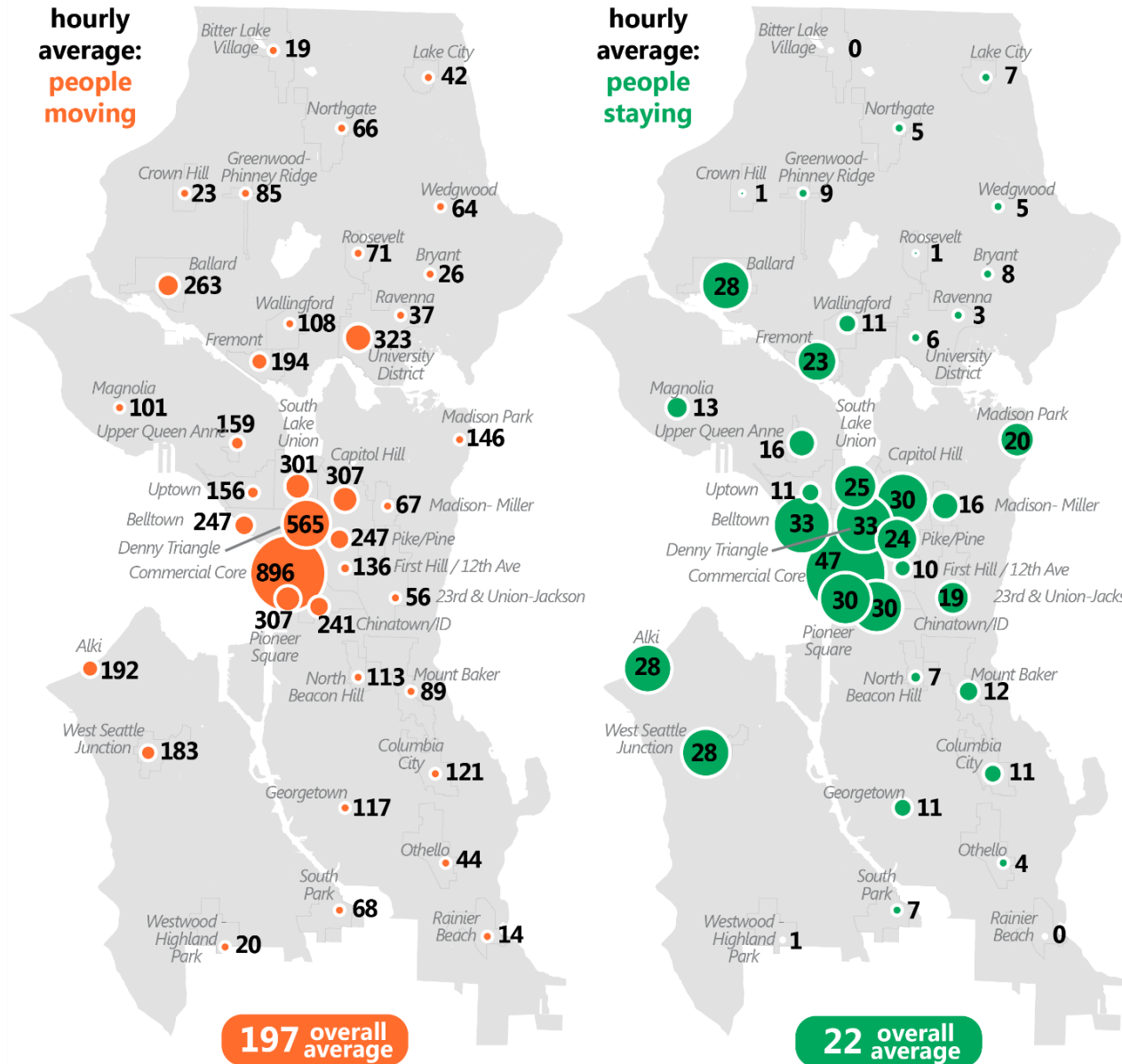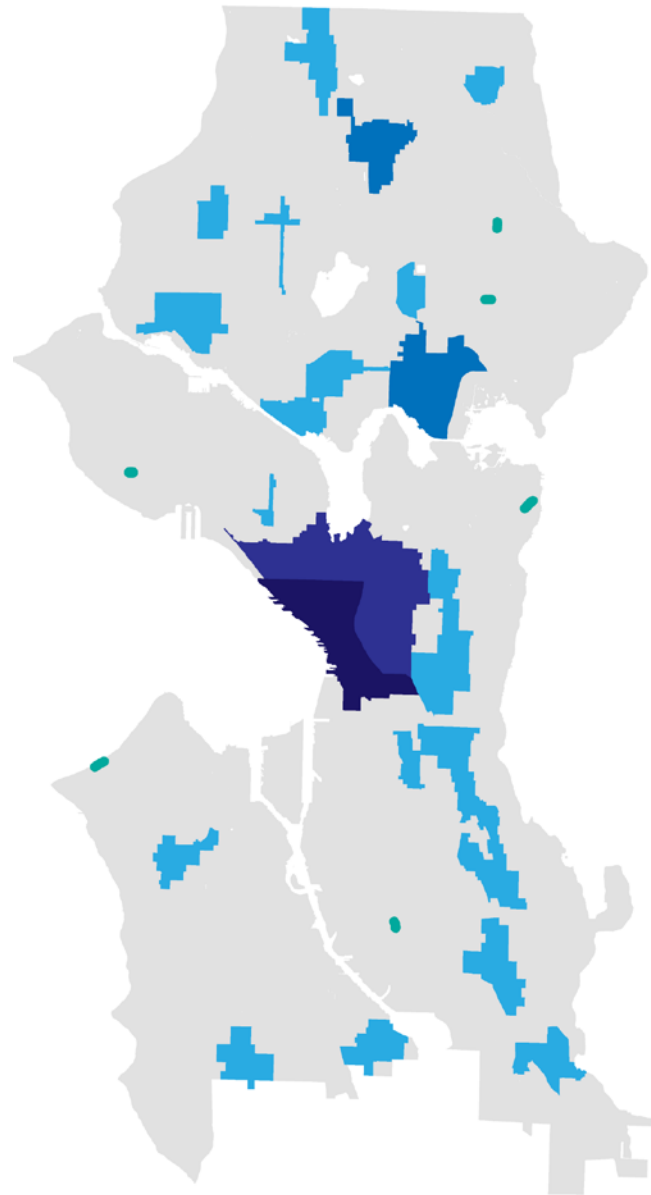- Each block face visited 8 times during peak periods (weekends and weekdays)

Selected sites

Urban Center

Urban Village

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Activity volumes

hourly average: people moving

Bitter Lake Village 19
Lake City 42
Northgate 66
Crown Hill 23
Greenwood-Phinney Ridge 85
Wedgwood 64
Roosevelt 71
Bryant 26
Ballard 263
Wallingford 108
Ravenna 37
University District 323
Fremont 194
Magnolia 101
Upper Queen Anne 159
South Lake Union 301
Madison Park 146
Capitol Hill 307
Uptown 156
Madison- Miller 67
Belltown 247
Denny Triangle 565
Pike/Pine 247
Commercial Core 896
First Hill / 12th Ave 136
23rd & Union-Jackson 56
307 241 Chinatown/ID
Pioneer Square
Alki 192
North Beacon Hill 113
Mount Baker 89
West Seattle Junction 183
Columbia City 121
Georgetown 117
Othello 44
South Park 68
Rainier Beach 14
Westwood - Highland Park 20

197 overall average

hourly average: people staying

Bitter Lake Village 0
Lake City 7
Northgate 5
Crown Hill 1
Greenwood-Phinney Ridge 9
Wedgwood 5
Roosevelt 1
Bryant 8
Ballard 28
Wallingford 11
Ravenna 3
University District 6
Fremont 23
Magnolia 13
Upper Queen Anne 16
South Lake Union 25
Madison Park 20
Capitol Hill 30
Uptown 11
Madison- Miller 16
Belltown 33
Denny Triangle 33
Pike/Pine 24
Commercial Core 47
First Hill / 12th Ave 10
30 30 Chinatown/ID 19
23rd & Union-Jackson
Pioneer Square
Alki 28
North Beacon Hill 7
Mount Baker 12
West Seattle Junction 28
Columbia City 11
Georgetown 11
Othello 4
South Park 7
Rainier Beach 0
Westwood - Highland Park 1

22 overall average

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Activity Volumes

Downtown Urban Center
Belltown, Chinatown/ International District, Commercial Core, Denny Triangle, Pioneer Square
20 sites total

451 35

Center City Urban Center
Capitol Hill, First Hill/12th Ave, Pike/Pine, South Lake Union, Uptown
20 sites total

229 20

Urban Center
Northgate, Ravenna, University District
10 sites total

157 4

Urban Village
23rd Union/Jackson, Ballard, Beacon Hill, Bitter Lake Village, Columbia City, Crown Hill, Fremont, etc.*
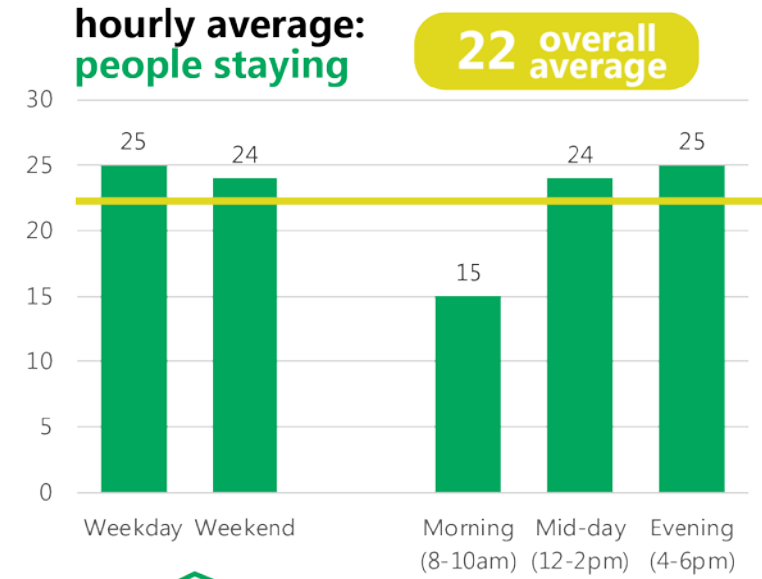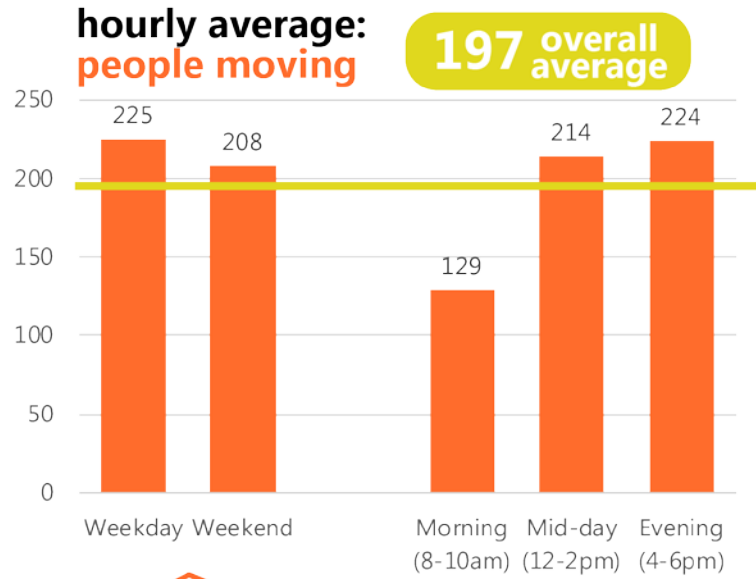*46 sites total*

103 11

Outside Neighborhood
Alki, Bryant, Georgetown, Madison Park, Magnolia, Wedgwood
12 sites total

108 14

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Activity Volumes

hourly average: people moving

| 197 overall average |

- Weekday: 225
- Weekend: 208
- Morning (8-10am): 129
- Mid-day (12-2pm): 214
- Evening (4-6pm): 224

↓ **7%** fewer **people moving** observed on weekends **overall**

hourly average: people staying

| 22 overall average |

- Weekday: 25
- Weekend: 24
- Morning (8-10am): 15
- Mid-day (12-2pm): 24
- Evening (4-6pm): 25

↓ **3%** fewer **people staying** observed on weekends **overall**

neighborhood type	people moving	people staying	
Downtown Urban Center	-20%	-15%	↓ **fewer** people observed on weekends
Center City Urban Center	-16%	-8%	
Urban Center	-32%	-15%	
Urban Village	+17%	+4%	↑ **more** people observed on weekends
Outside Neighborhood	+73%	+61%	

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Linger Factor

neighborhood average: linger factor
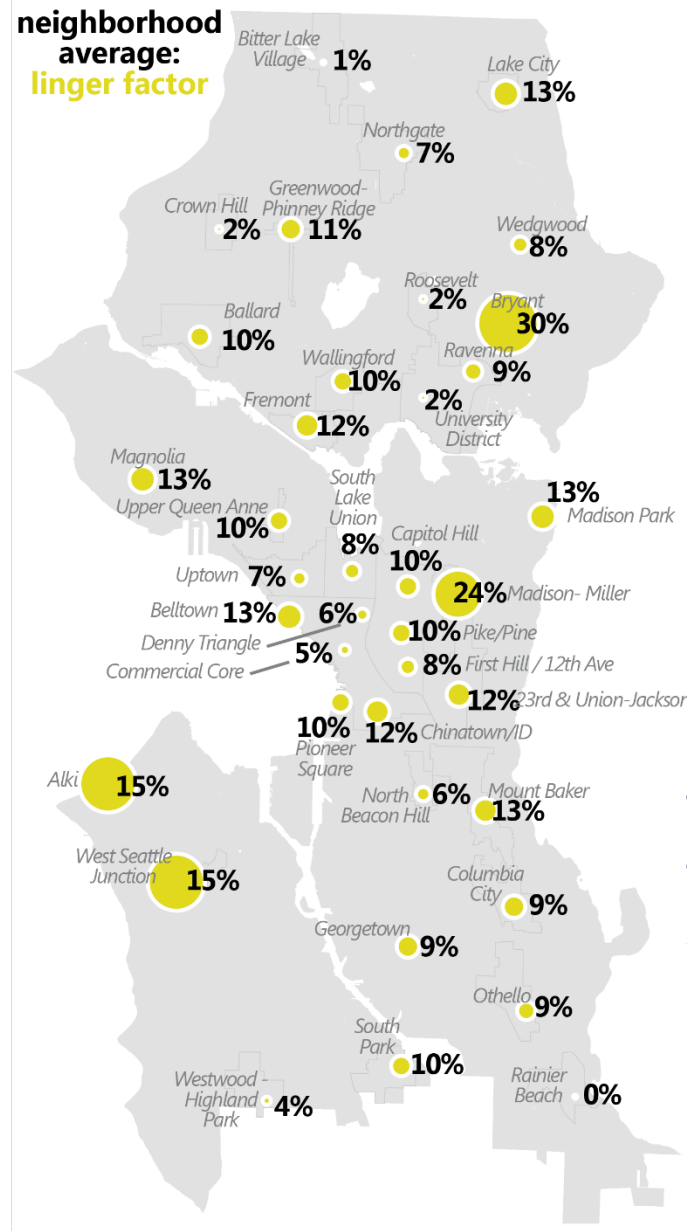
9% overall average

Highest Linger Factor	Lowest Linger Factor
Bryant (30%)	University District (2%)
Madison Miller (24%)	Commercial Core (5%)
Alki West Seattle Junction (15%)	Denny Triangle Beacon Hill (6%)
Belltown Lake City Mount Baker Magnolia Madison Park (13%)	Uptown Northgate (7%)

Map values:
- Bitter Lake Village 1%
- Lake City 13%
- Northgate 7%
- Crown Hill 2%
- Greenwood-Phinney Ridge 11%
- Wedgwood 8%
- Roosevelt 2%
- Bryant 30%
- Ballard 10%
- Wallingford 10%
- Ravenna 9%
- Fremont 12%
- University District 2%
- Magnolia 13%
- South Lake Union 8%
- Madison Park 13%
- Upper Queen Anne 10%
- Capitol Hill 10%
- Uptown 7%
- Madison-Miller 24%
- Belltown 13%
- Denny Triangle 6%
- Pike/Pine 10%
- Commercial Core 5%
- First Hill / 12th Ave 8%
- 23rd & Union-Jackson 12%
- Pioneer Square 10%
- Chinatown/ID 12%
- Alki 15%
- North Beacon Hill 6%
- Mount Baker 13%
- West Seattle Junction 15%
- Columbia City 9%
- Georgetown 9%
- Othello 9%
- South Park 10%
- Westwood - Highland Park 4%
- Rainier Beach 0%

Average by neighborhood type:
- Downtown Urban Center — 8%
- Center City Urban Center — 9%
- Urban Center — 3%
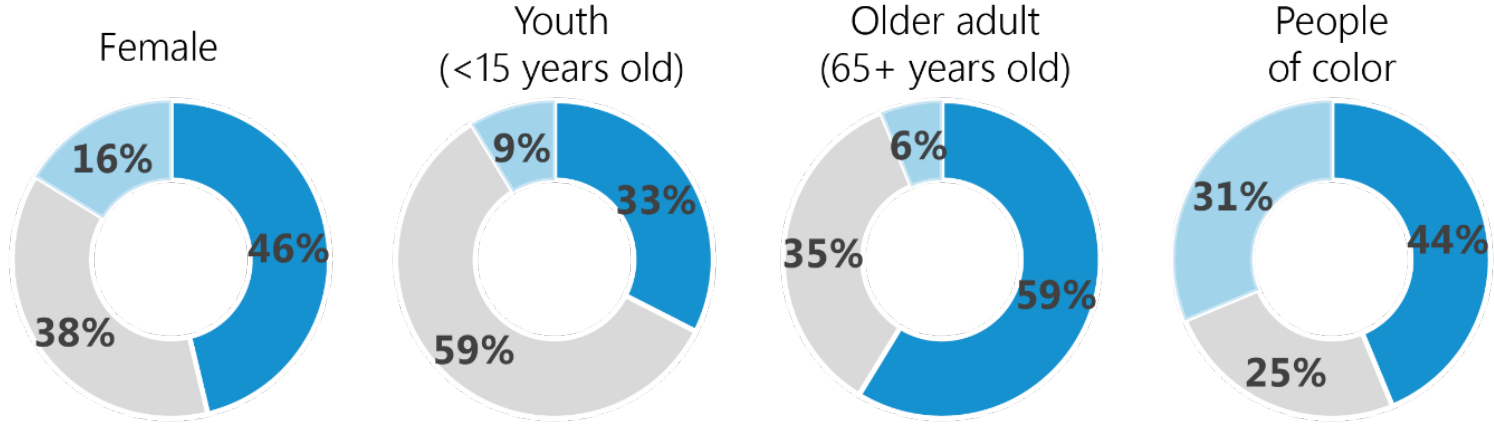- Urban Village — 11%
- Outside Neighborhood — 13%
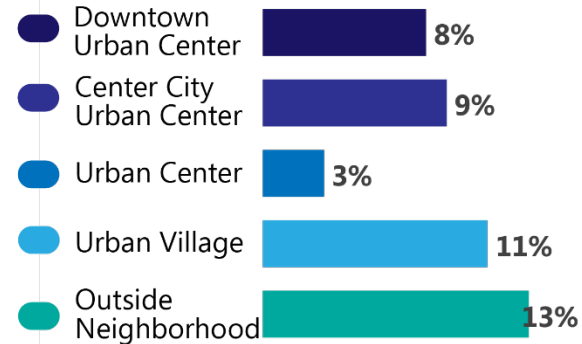
Public Space Users

Local resident demographics (Census data) compared to **people moving*** and **people staying**

Legend:
- Census
- People moving
- People staying

	Female	Youth (<15 years old)	Older adult (65+ years old)	People of color
Census	50%	13%	12%	34%
People moving	44%			
People staying	41%	4%	6%	33%
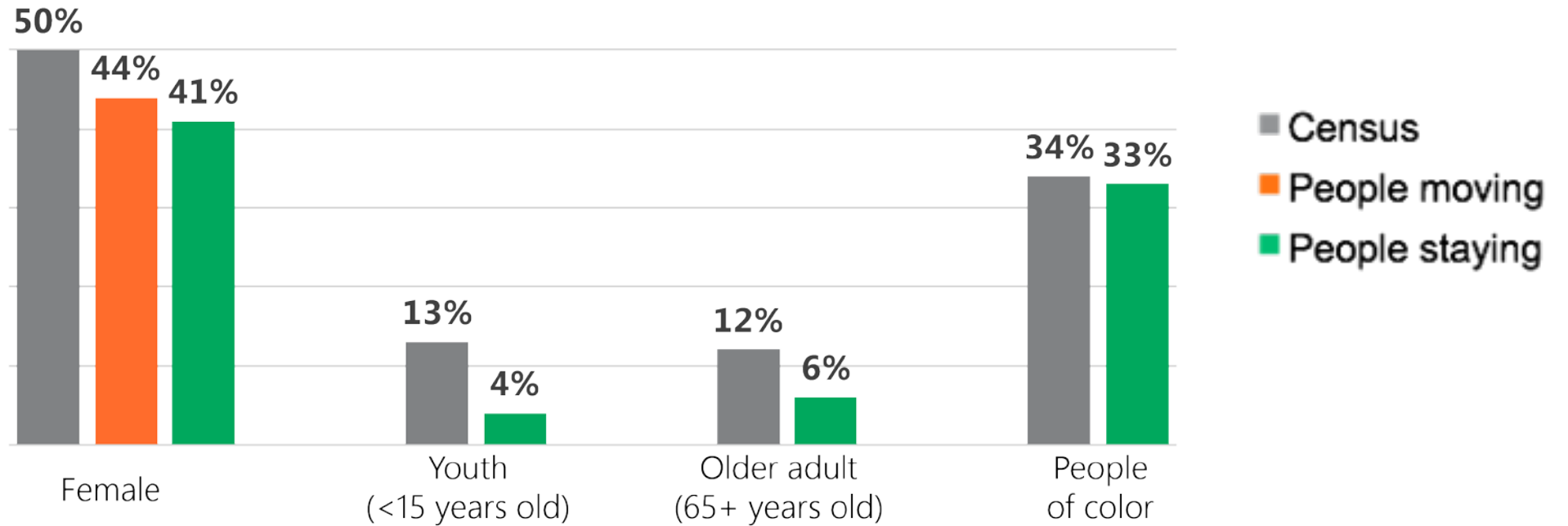
* Demographics of people moving counts consisted only of gender breakdown.

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Public Space Users

Female
16% 46% 38%

Youth
(<15 years old)
9% 33% 59%

Older adult
(65+ years old)
6% 59% 35%

People
of color
31% 44% 25%

Proportion of sites where user group was **underrepresented** (fewer observed compared to Census data)

Proportion of sites where user group was **evenly represented** (equal proportion observed compared to Census data)

Proportion of sites where user group was **overrepresented** (more observed compared to Census data)

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Activities

Activity — **Percent of people engaged:**

Talking to others — 47%
- Downtown Urban Center: 48%
- Center City Urban Center: 43%
- Urban Center: 26%
- Urban Village: 50%
- Outside Neighborhood: 61%

Using electronics — 29%
- Downtown Urban Center: 27%
- Center City Urban Center: 36%
- Urban Center: 43%
- Urban Village: 26%
- Outside Neighborhood: 24%

Commercial activity — 25%
- Downtown Urban Center: 22%
- Center City Urban Center: 22%
- Urban Center: 20%
- Urban Village: 27%
- Outside Neighborhood: 50%

Waiting for transportation — 24%
- Downtown Urban Center: 19%
- Center City Urban Center: 33%
- Urban Center: 58%
- Urban Village: 22%
- Outside Neighborhood: 4%

Eating / drinking — 20%
- Downtown Urban Center: 21%
- Center City Urban Center: 17%
- Urban Center: 10%
- Urban Village: 18%
- Outside Neighborhood: 40%

Passive recreation — 17%
- Downtown Urban Center: 17%
- Center City Urban Center: 18%
- Urban Center: 12%
- Urban Village: 19%
- Outside Neighborhood: 14%

Smoking — 7%
- Downtown Urban Center: 9%
- Center City Urban Center: 7%
- Urban Center: 6%
- Urban Village: 6%
- Outside Neighborhood: 3%

Legend:
- All sites
- Downtown Urban Center
- Center City Urban Center
- Urban Center
- Urban Village
- Outside Neighborhood

<5% of people were recorded doing the following activities: Living in public (3%), Civic work (2%), Active recreation (2%), Soliciting (1%), Cultural activity (<1%), and Disruptive activity (<1%).

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Chinatown/ID: Maynard Ave S

South Lake Union: Fairview Ave N

Chinatown/ID: Maynard Ave S

South Lake Union: Fairview Ave N

	Chinatown/ID: Maynard Ave S	South Lake Union: Fairview Ave N
Customer-facing businesses	4	7
Public seats present	4	34
Average seat occupancy	63%	13%
Hourly ped average	221	302
Stationary activity	62	125 (62 not waiting for transit)
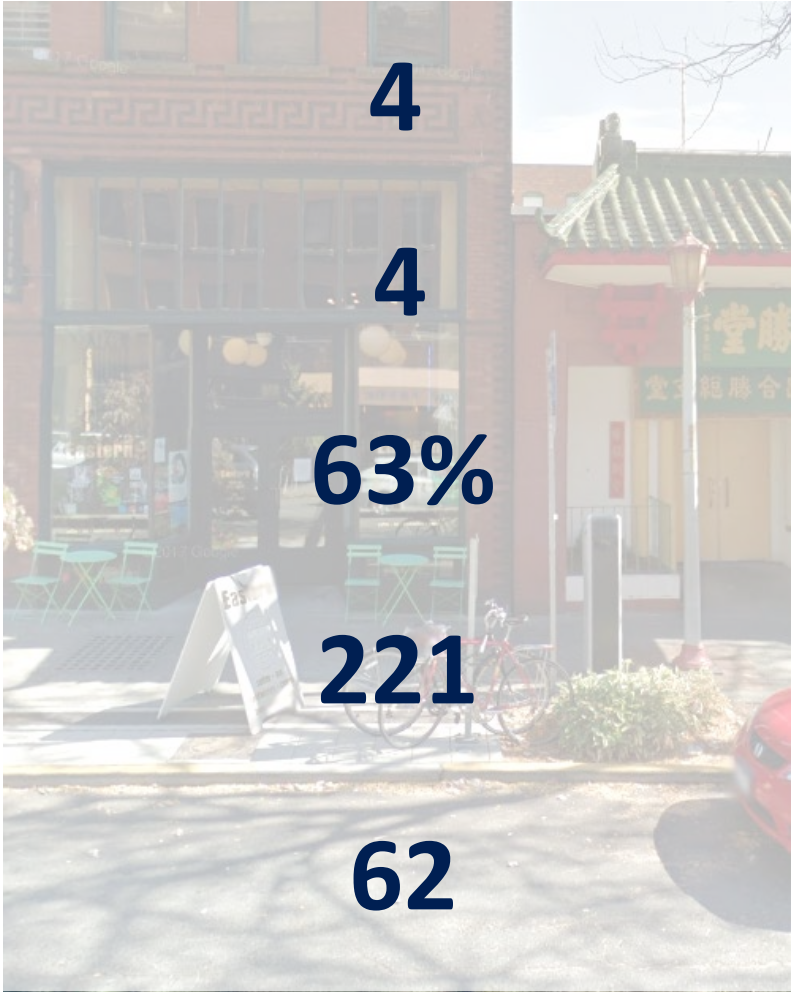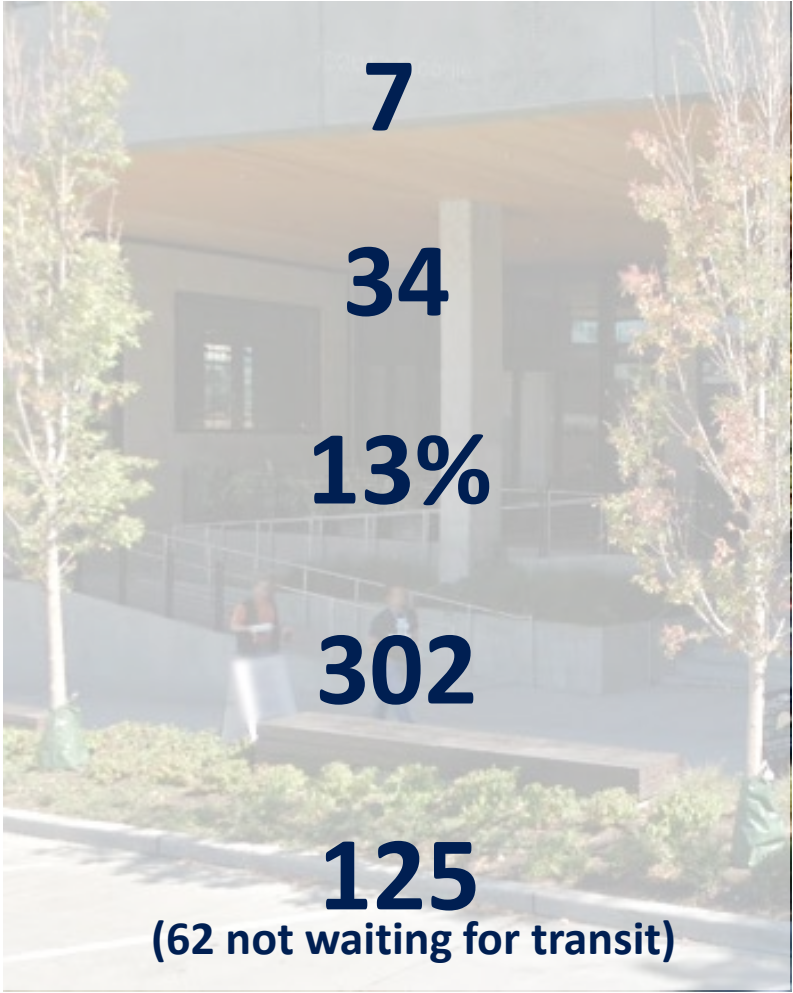
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Chinatown/ID: Maynard Ave S

South Lake Union: Fairview Ave N

	Chinatown/ID: Maynard Ave S	South Lake Union: Fairview Ave N
Extroverted activity	60%	27%
Traveling in groups	61%	33%
Female presence	52%	37%
Youth and elderly presence	18%	1%
Persons of color presence	55%	34%

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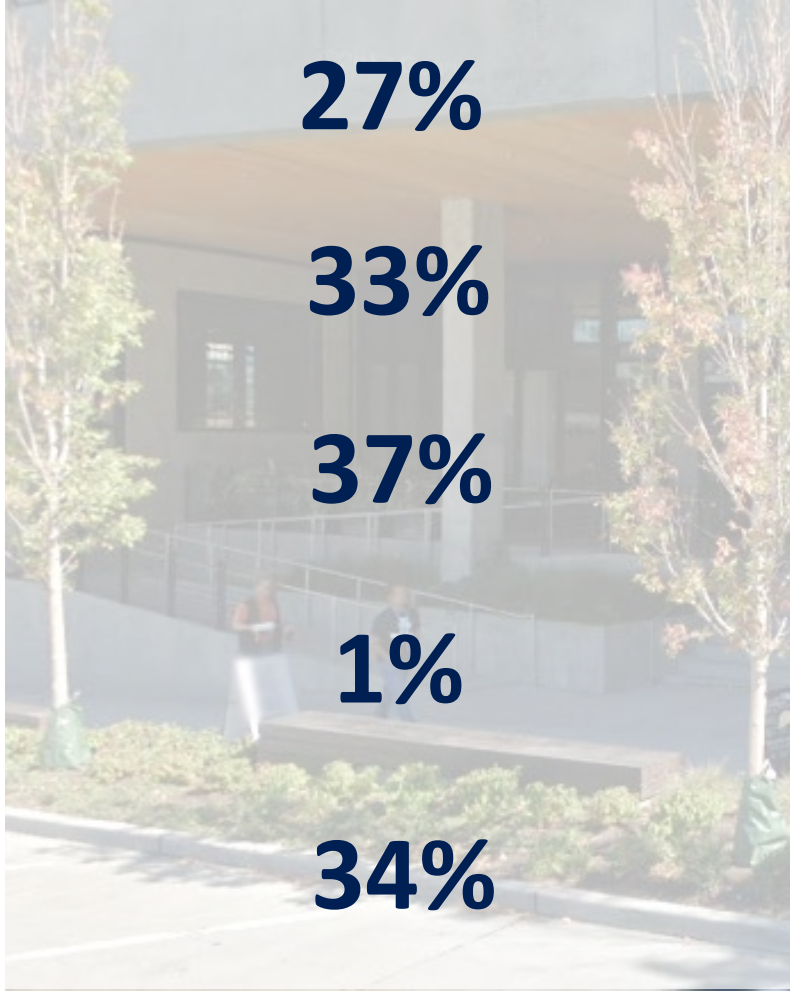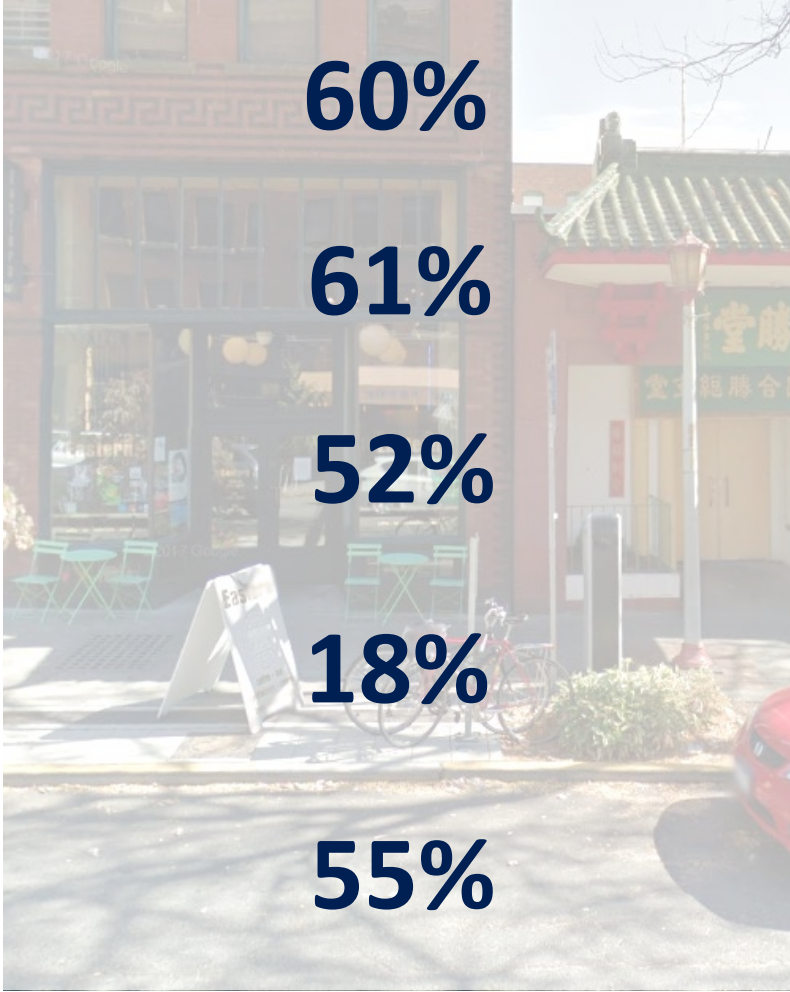
Gehl's 12 urban quality criteria

Protection

Without basic protection from cars, noise, rain, and wind, people will avoid spending time in a space. Protection from these things is mandatory for a place to be used.

Comfort

A space with elements that make walking, standing, sitting, seeing, and conversing comfortable, invite people to spend time there.

Delight

A good place becomes great by including elements that delight - they invite people to be active and make use of the positive aspects of micro-climates and the human scale.

- Protection against traffic
- Protection against crime
- Protection against sensory experiences

- Opportunities to walk/cycle
- Opportunities to stop & stay
- Opportunities to sit

- Opportunities to see
- Opportunities to talk & listen
- Opportunities for play & exercise

- Dimensioned at human scale
- Opportunities to enjoy climate
- Aesthetic qualities

# Making Public Life Data Useable and Available

- Sharing data
  - User-friendly interface
  - Open Data Portal (Socrata)
- Applying data to SDOT work
  - Strategic Metrics
  - Complete Streets
  - Data driven prioritization of pedestrian realm improvements
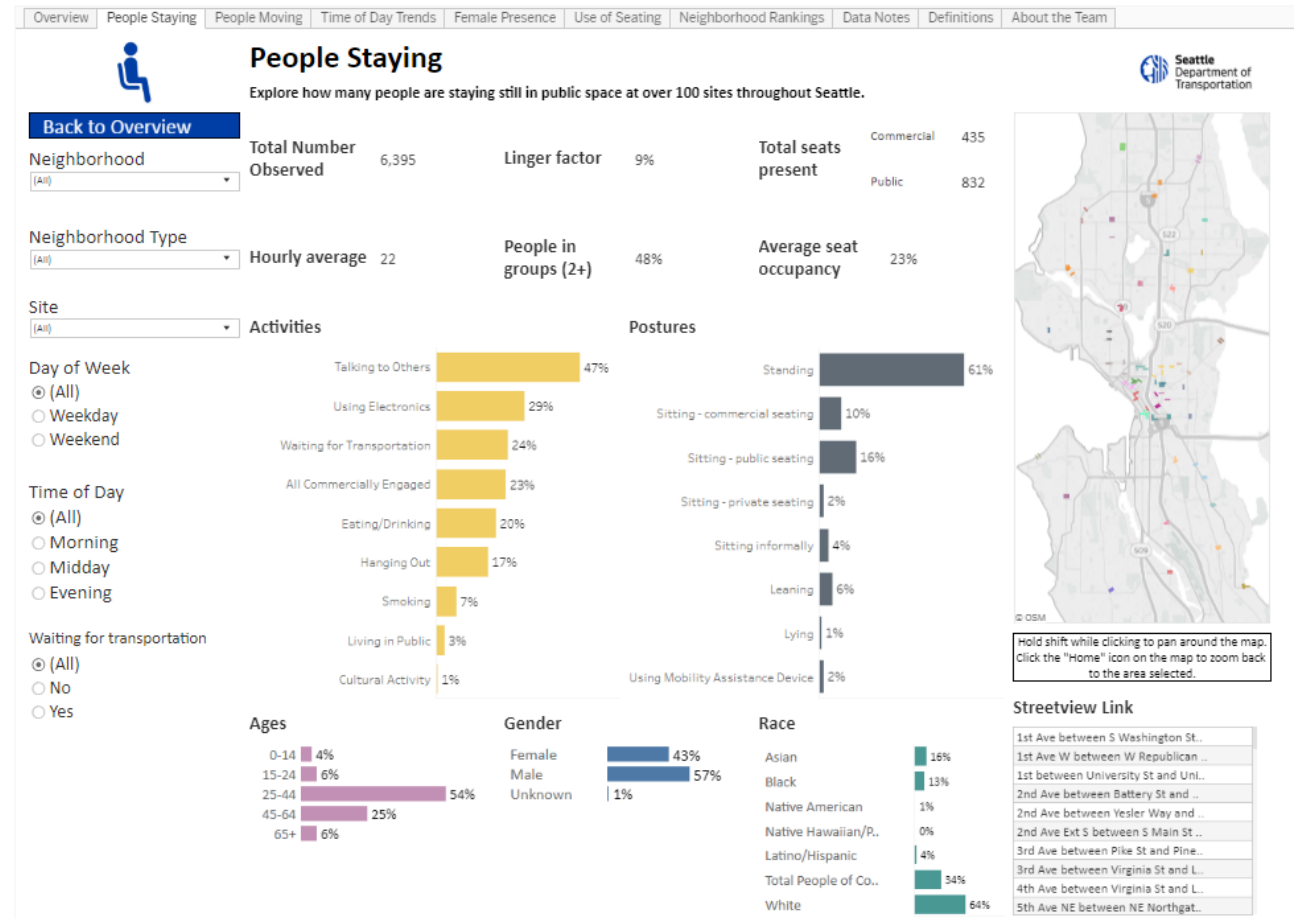
2019 Program - Next Steps

- Pursue collaboration opportunities with community partners (DSA, UW, CHH)
- Advance technology innovations with our Gehl partners
- Serve as central repository for data collected across the city
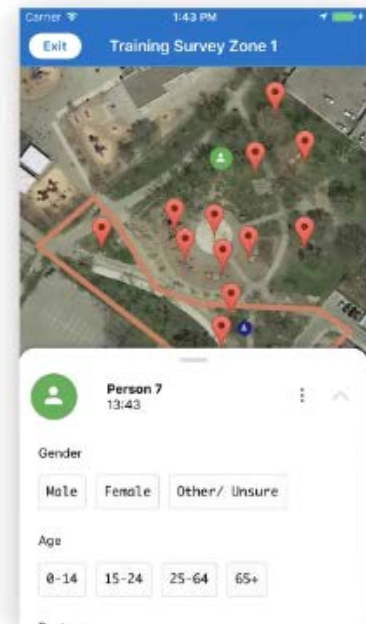- Establish a framework for Public Realm Action Plans

Stationary Activity Mapping
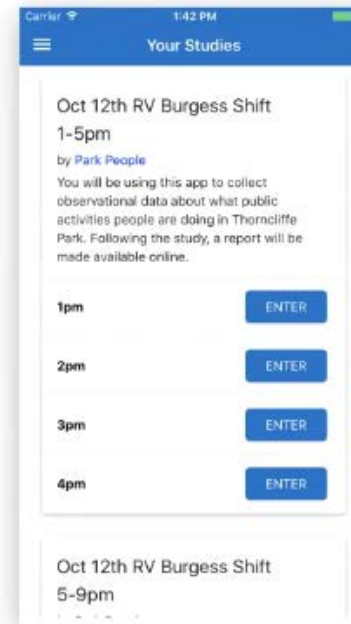
Volunteers are assigned surveys

Add a new count by holding on the map

Notate observed traits for each count

Sidewalk Labs data collection app (CommonSpace)

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Questions?

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SDOTpubliclife@seattle.gov

www.seattle.gov/transportation

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