



**Graham Street Station Area Planning**

# **Background Report**

December 2025  
(Updated April 2026)



**Seattle**  
Office of Planning &  
Community Development



**Seattle**  
Department of  
Transportation

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## Study area at a glance

A new light rail station at S Graham St between the existing Columbia City and Othello stations will create new opportunities for the neighborhood. People will be able to choose different options for how they get around and where they live, work, find community, and play. Graham Street Station Area Planning focuses on this area to anticipate and plan for potential changes to land use and transportation.

Throughout this document, we use two different boundaries to help us understand the area: the smaller “Station Area” within a short walking distance of the planned station, and the larger “Study Area” encompassing the broader neighborhood and majority of riders.

The smaller “Station Area” is within a half-mile (or roughly 10-minute) walk from the proposed Graham Street Station, excluding area that is closer to other stations. Through this planning process, we will focus on how land use and public amenities can support community-identified priorities. About 4,100 residents live in this area. The station area around Othello Station includes about 8,700 people, and similarly about 8,100 people in the area around Columbia City Station.

The larger “Study Area” is within a one-mile (or roughly 20-minute) walk to Graham Street Station, excluding area that is closer to other stations. This represents the area where we think a majority of future light rail riders could choose to use the proposed Graham Street Station. Through this planning process, we will identify and prioritize transportation projects to improve neighborhood access for people walking, rolling, biking, and taking transit. About 12,400 people live in the one-mile Study Area.

Please note that the project area boundary shows the general area we are planning for and may change as the project progresses.



Station Area (Half-mile walkshed)	Graham Street Station	Othello Station	Columbia City Station	City of Seattle (for reference)
Population (2024 WA-OFM data)	<b>4,118</b>	<b>8,673</b>	<b>8,084</b>	<b>797,700</b>
% People of Color (2020 Census data)	<b>82.8%</b>	<b>78.3%</b>	<b>65.0%</b>	<b>40.5%</b>
Land Area in acres	<b>309</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>53,754</b>
Population Density per acre	<b>13.3</b>	<b>29.0</b>	<b>26.6</b>	<b>14.8</b>
Housing Units (2024 WA OFM data)	<b>1,492</b>	<b>3,785</b>	<b>3,834</b>	<b>413,723</b>
Housing Density per acre	<b>4.8</b>	<b>12.7</b>	<b>12.6</b>	<b>13.0</b>

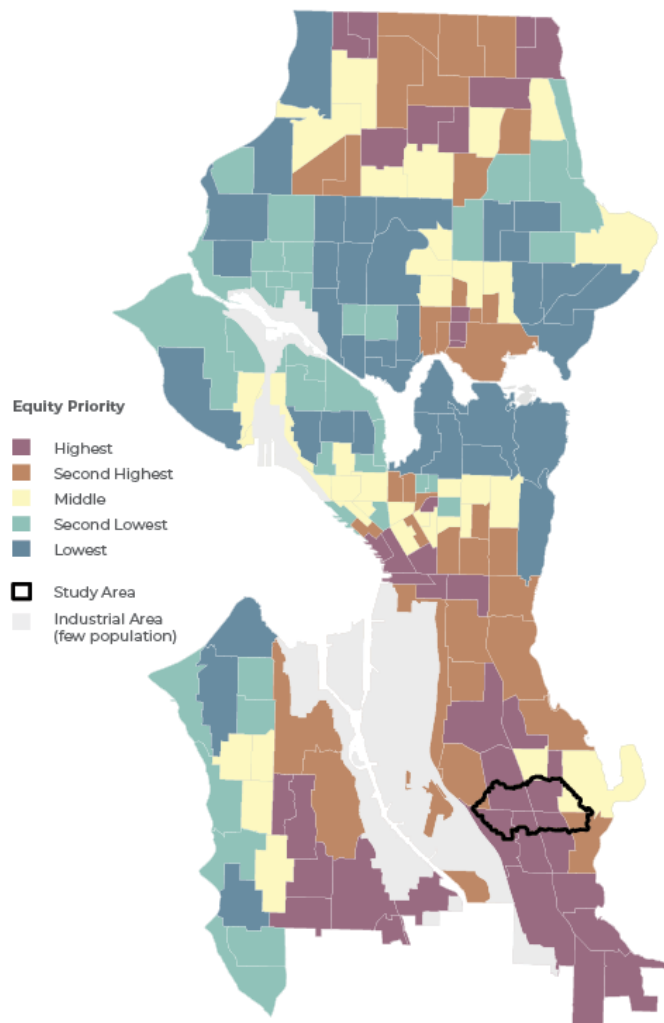
# Demographics

## Race and Social Justice Index map

The [Race and Social Justice Initiative](#) (RSJI) is the City's commitment to eliminate racial disparities and achieve racial equity in Seattle. One tool developed to support this goal is the [Race and Social Equity Index](#). The map, produced in 2023, is a composite of three indices to illustrate where RSJI-priority populations are concentrated:

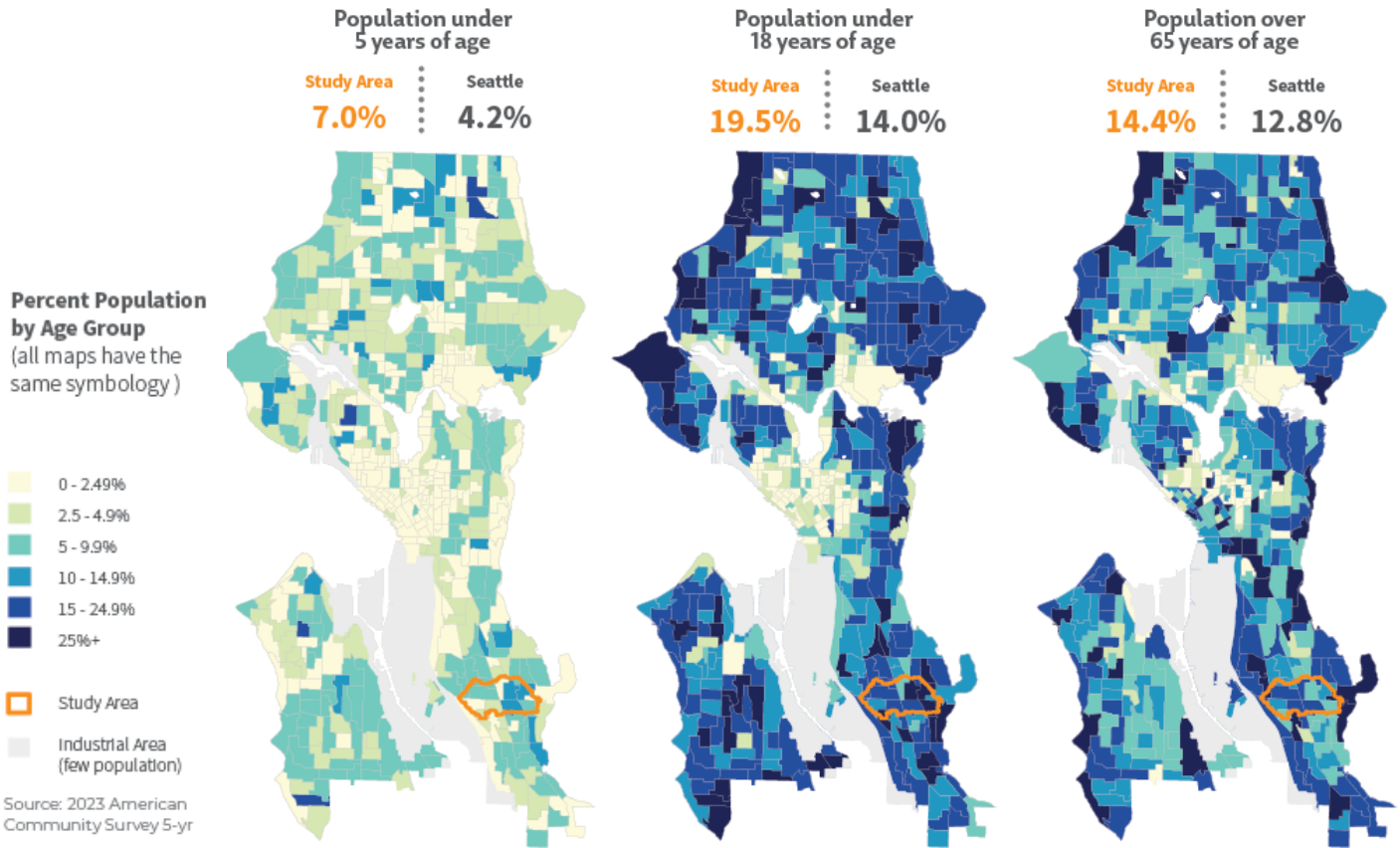
- Index of Race, Ethnicity and English Language Learning
- Socio-economic Disadvantage
- Health Disadvantage

The core part of the Graham Street Station Area Planning study area includes census tracts that have the highest equity priority, the area further away from the station (between half-mile and one-mile away) contains census tracts with middle, second highest, and highest equity priorities.



# Age characteristics

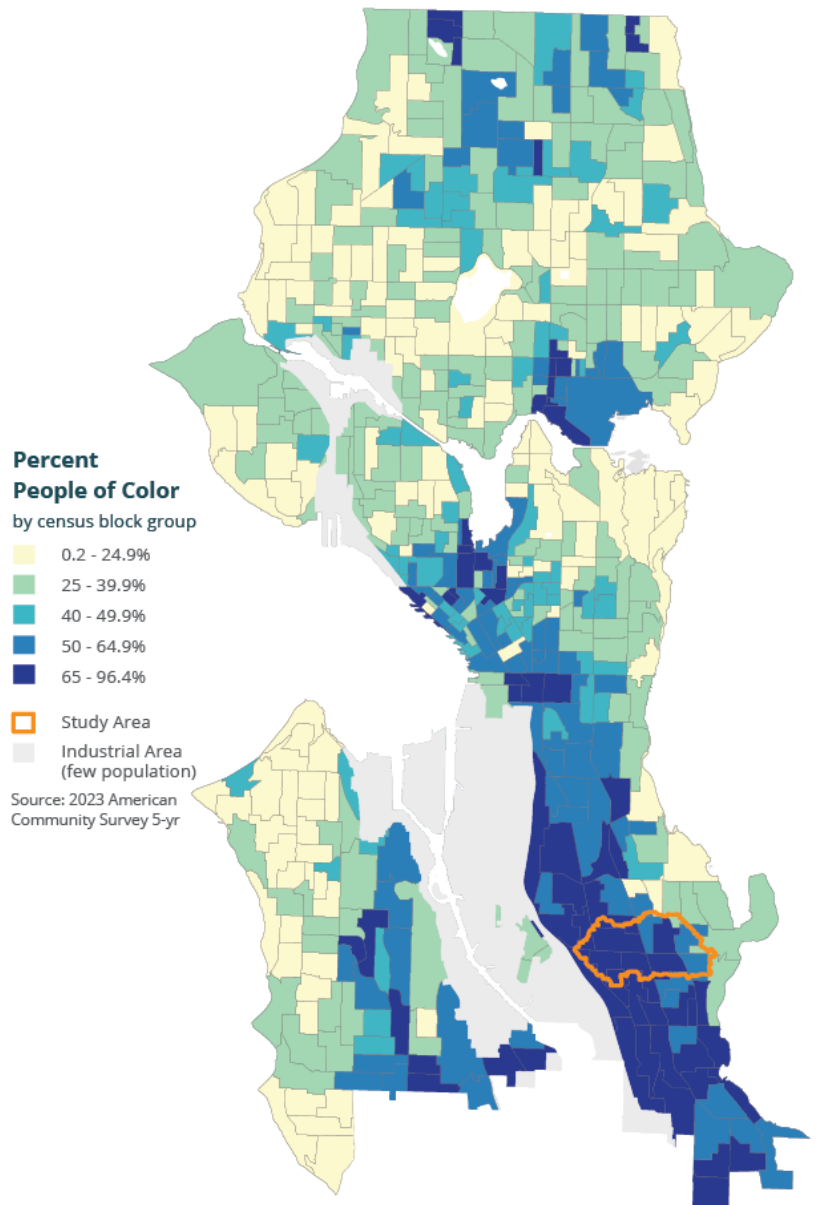
The Graham Street Station Area Planning Study Area is slightly older, with a median age of 37.9, compared to 35.5 for Seattle overall. However, the area also has a significantly higher number of people under 18 years of age, at 19.5% in comparison to 14.0% for Seattle. Those over the age of 65 comprise 14.4% of the area, slightly higher than 12.8% for the city. The higher number of children is likely due to the proximity to several elementary and middle schools.



## Race & ethnicities

The Graham Street Station Area Planning Study Area has a very diverse population, where almost four-fifths (78.3%) of the population identify as people of color, almost double that of Seattle as a whole (40.5%). The four largest race and ethnicity groups are Asians 42.9%, White 21.7%, Black/ African American 20.5%, and Hispanics/Latinx 8.1%. Note that the way U.S. Census Bureau categorizes racial identities does not necessarily align with how many people identify themselves, but it is still the best quantitative data source available to help us understand this topic.

Race & Ethnicities	Pop.	%
Total Population in Graham Street Study Area	<b>12,610</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
White (non-Hispanic)	<b>2,734</b>	<b>21.7%</b>
People of Color (not White non-Hispanic)	<b>9,876</b>	<b>78.3%</b>
Native Americans (non-Hispanic)	<b>30</b>	<b>0.2%</b>
Black/ African Americans (non-Hispanic)	<b>2,590</b>	<b>20.5%</b>
Asian (non-Hispanic)	<b>5,405</b>	<b>42.9%</b>
Pacific Islanders (non-Hispanic)	<b>68</b>	<b>0.5%</b>
Other (non-Hispanic)	<b>90</b>	<b>0.7%</b>
Multiracial (non-Hispanic)	<b>672</b>	<b>5.3%</b>
Hispanic & Latinx	<b>1,021</b>	<b>8.1%</b>

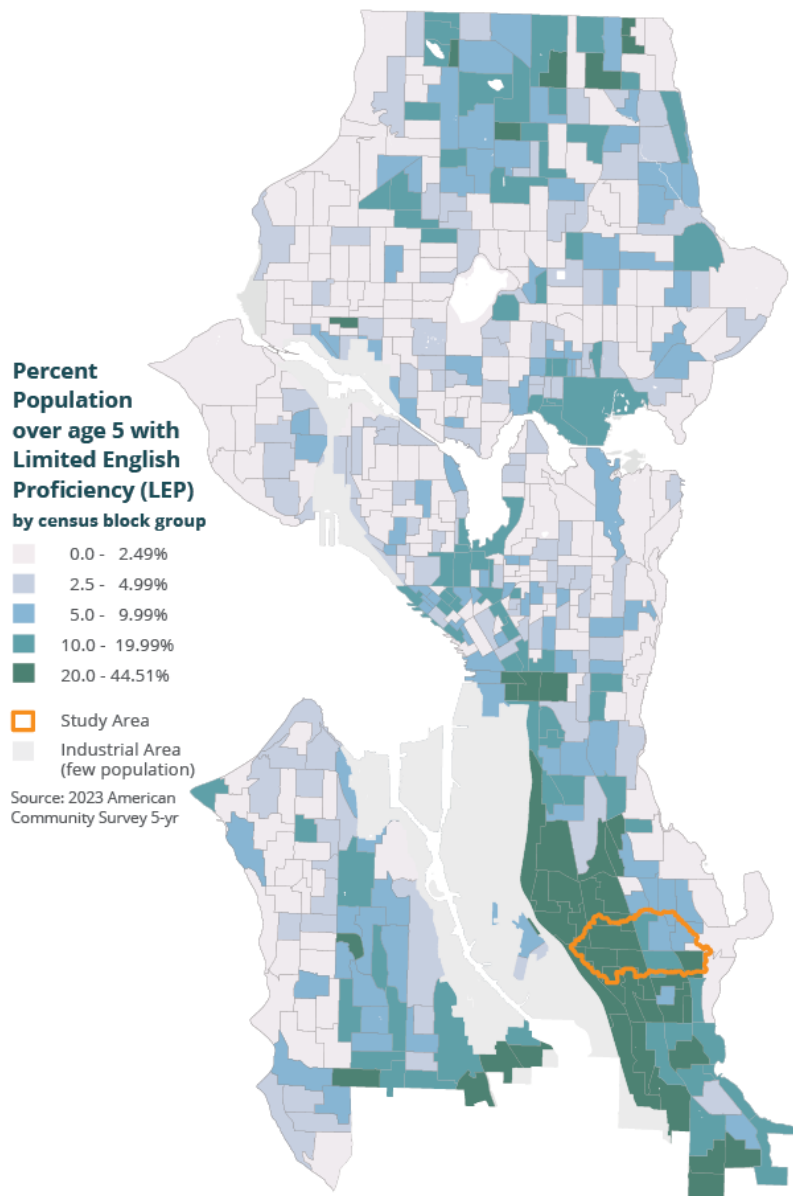


## Languages spoken at home

About 41.3% of people in the Study Area for Graham Street Station Area Planning speak a language other than English at home, which is significantly higher than 23.1% for the city. Half of this population in Graham Street Station area (22.9%) reported having limited English proficiency, which the Census Bureau identifies as those who “speak English less than very well”. Eight of Seattle’s top 15 languages other than English have a significant presence in the Graham Street Station area. In order of number of speakers, these languages are Chinese, Vietnamese, Spanish, Tagalog, and the four East African languages for which the Census Bureau does not provide a breakdown (Somali, Amharic, Tigrinya, Oromo).

Note that while Chinese varieties are the most spoken at home language group other than English, the majority of the small businesses in the area are run by Vietnamese speakers. We have conducted small business engagement in English, Vietnamese, Somali, Amharic, and Tigrinya.

The map below shows how the Study Area compares with the rest of Seattle in term of the percent of the population age five and older with limited English proficiency.





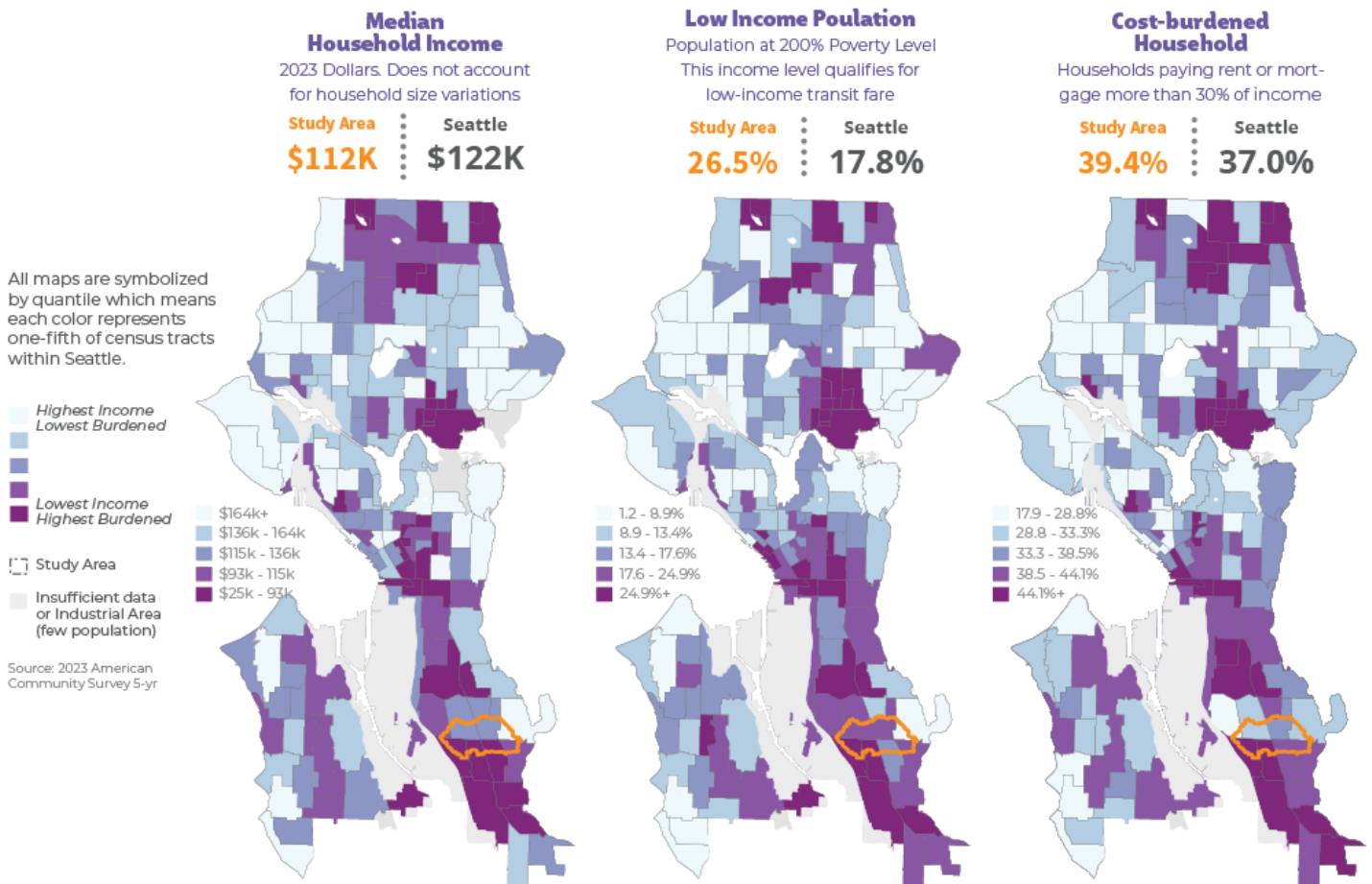
This table provides a detail breakdown of the type of languages spoken at home in the Graham Street Study Area and in Seattle as a whole. At the local (census tract) level, the Census Bureau has data for 12 languages and language groupings. This table shows number of speakers as tabulated by the Census Bureau as well as identifies the top 15 languages in Seattle in order of prevalence according to various sources in addition to Census Bureau, as [published by the Seattle Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs](#). This table also includes the number of speakers within each language grouping that have limited English proficiency.

<b>Language other than English spoken at home</b> (Data from US Census Bureau's 2023 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates which has data for 12 Top Languages Groupings. The 15 most spoken languages in Seattle are denoted in #)	<b>Graham Study Area</b>	<b>% of Graham Study Area</b>	<b>% of Seattle for comparison</b>
<b>Total population 5 years and older</b>	11,935	-	-
<b>Speak only English at home</b>	7,007	58.7%	76.9%
<b>Speak a language other than English at Home</b>	4,927	41.3%	23.1%
<b>Limited English Proficiency (LEP)</b>	2,734	22.9%	7.1%
<b>Spanish #1</b>	543	4.6%	4.6%
<b>Spanish Limited English Proficiency</b>	274	2.3%	1.3%
<b>Chinese #2</b> (including Mandarin, Cantonese, etc.)	1,507	12.6%	5.0%
<b>Chinese with Limited English Proficiency</b>	1,005	8.4%	2.1%
<b>Vietnamese #3</b>	674	5.6%	1.5%
<b>Vietnamese with Limited English Proficiency</b>	501	4.2%	0.8%
<b>Other</b> (including Somali #4, Amharic #7, Tigrinya #10, Oromo #12, among others)	1,206	10.1%	2.2%
<b>Other Languages with Limited English Proficiency</b>	562	4.7%	0.9%
<b>Tagalog #5</b>	472	4.0%	1.1%
<b>Tagalog with Limited English Proficiency</b>	211	1.8%	0.4%
<b>Other Asia Pacific Island Languages</b> (including Japanese #9, Telugu, Khmer, Lao, Thai, Tamil, Ilocano, among others)	256	2.1%	2.2%
<b>Other Asia Pacific Island Languages with Limited English Proficiency</b>	142	1.2%	0.6%
<b>Korean #6</b>	13	0.1%	0.8%
<b>Korean Limited English Proficiency</b>	0	0.0%	0.3%
<b>Slavic Languages</b> (including Russian #8, Ukrainian #15, among others)	12	0.1%	0.9%
<b>Slavic Languages with Limited English Proficiency</b>	2	0.0%	0.2%
<b>Other Indo-European Languages</b> (including Hindi #13, Punjabi, Persian, Portuguese, Italian, Gujarati, among others)	106	0.9%	3.1%
<b>Other Indo-European Languages with Limited English Proficiency</b>	14	0.1%	0.4%
<b>French #14, Haitian, or Cajun</b>	21	0.2%	0.7%
<b>French, Haitian, or Cajun with Limited English Proficiency</b>	6	0.1%	0.1%
<b>German or other West Germanic Languages</b>	50	0.4%	0.7%
<b>German or other West Germanic Languages with Limited English Proficiency</b>	0	0.0%	0.1%
<b>Arabic #11</b> (all varieties)	69	0.6%	0.3%
<b>Arabic with Limited English Proficiency</b>	17	0.1%	0.1%

# Household characteristics

The Graham Street Station Area Planning Study Area has a slightly lower median household income of \$112,000, compared to \$122,000 for Seattle as a whole; however, the low-income population at 26.5% is significantly higher than the 17.8% figure for the city. Low-income population is defined as people living in a household making 200% (double) the federal poverty level income. This is also the income level that qualifies for low-income transit fare in the region.

Overall, 39.4% of households in the area are cost-burdened, about the same as the citywide rate. A household is considered cost-burdened if it spends more than 30% of its income on rent or mortgage payments. Among renter households, the share is much higher: 53.1% of renters are cost-burdened, compared to 43.8% citywide.



# Land use

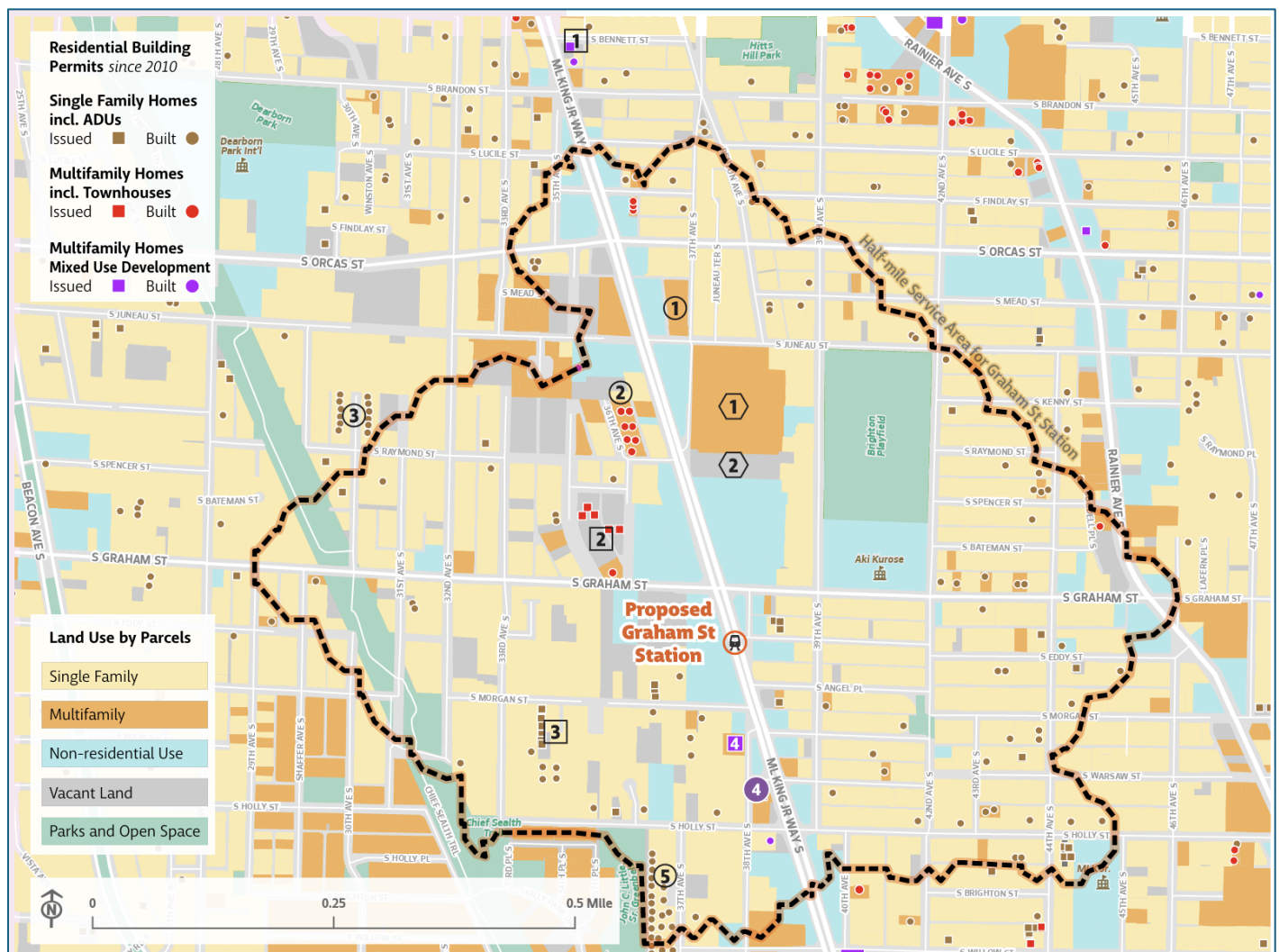
## Residential land use and recent development

Within the half-mile Station Area for Graham Street Station Area Planning, single-family residential is the primary land use, and only 454 housing units have been built between 2010 and 2024. The similarly sized areas around Othello Station and Columbia City Station saw significantly more new housing construction during the same time period, with about 2,500 units in each station area, likely reflecting the presence of established light rail stations.

This map below shows what type of residential buildings have been constructed in the area since 2010. Of the 456 housing units built, 246 units are apartments, 86 single-family homes, 72 townhomes, and 50 accessory dwelling units.

As of December 2024, building permits have been issued for 359 housing units, though it appears some developments are stalled. Two large projects that do not yet have permits may potentially increase housing supply in the area by an additional 949 units.

*Legend and table associated with the map on the next page.*



## Housing Units Built 2010-2024

Half-mile service area	Graham Station	Othello Station	Columbia City Station
Single Family Houses	86	51	143
Accessory Dwelling Units	50	32	46
Townhouses, Rowhouses, Live/Work Units	72	180	282
Apartments (incl. ground floor units)	246	2,110	2,104
Other	0	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>2,375</b>	<b>2,577</b>

Housing Units include all permits issued. Source: SDCI 2024

## Notable Housing Developments

### Built since 2010

- ① Filipino Community Village senior apts, 95 units, 2018 (Not part of calculations above)
- ② Townhouse development, 37 units, 2019-2020
- ③ Single family development, 12 units, 2011-2017
- ④ Apartment development, 131 units, 2025 (projected)
- ⑤ Single family development, 30 units, 2010-2012
- ⑥ Apartment development, 211 units, 2022

### Permit Issued

- ① Apartment development, 14 units, issued 2020
- ② Townhouse development, 20 units, issued 2020-2022 (stalled?)
- ③ Single family/ ADU/ Townhouse development, 16 units, issued 2024
- ④ Apartment development, 114 units, issued 2021
- ⑤ Apartment development, 195 units, issued 2024

### Permit Not Yet Issued

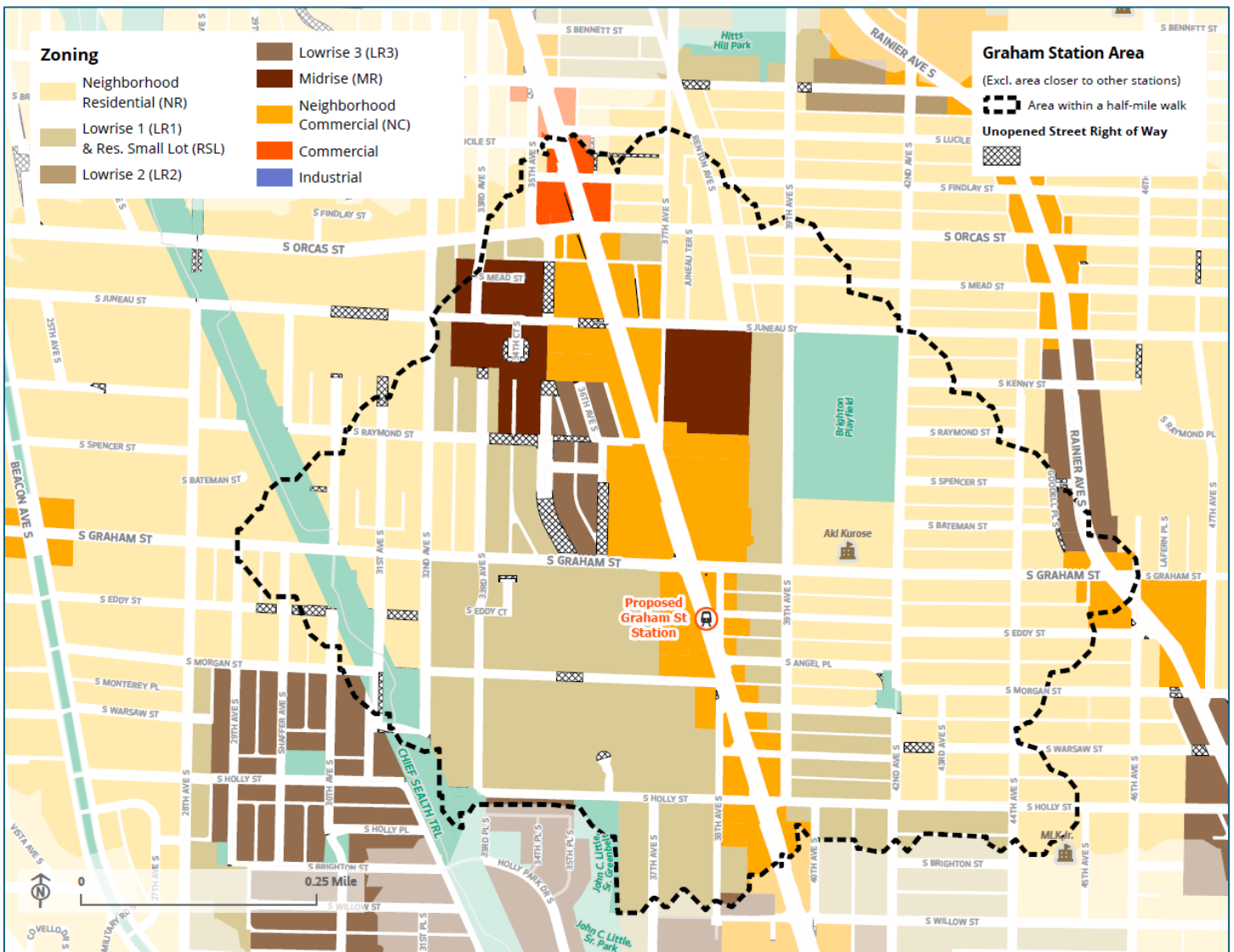
- ① Kingway Apartments Redevelopment - Major phased development, 761 units and 561 parking spaces Existing 164 units to be demolished
- ② Apartment development "Bode Othello" 352 units, no parking

# Existing Zoning

This map shows the current zoning (as of 2023) for the Graham Street Station Area. Lots along ML King Jr Way S are primarily zoned Neighborhood Commercial (NC), which is a mixed-use zone that encourages residential buildings with ground floor retail. The NC zone in this area has a height limit between 55 and 75 feet.

Just off the MLK corridor, many blocks are zoned as Lowrise 1 (LR1), which is a low-density residential zone that allows townhouse-style development, typically three stories. Few blocks in the area are zoned for higher-density residential, including Midrise (MR) and Lowrise 3 (LR3). MR zones allow residential buildings up to eight stories, while LR3 allows residential buildings up to five stories.

The Neighborhood Residential (NR) zone is the least dense residential zone, previously allowing only one primary and up to two accessory units, it now allows four residential units per lot in all areas, in compliance with Washington State House Bill 1110.



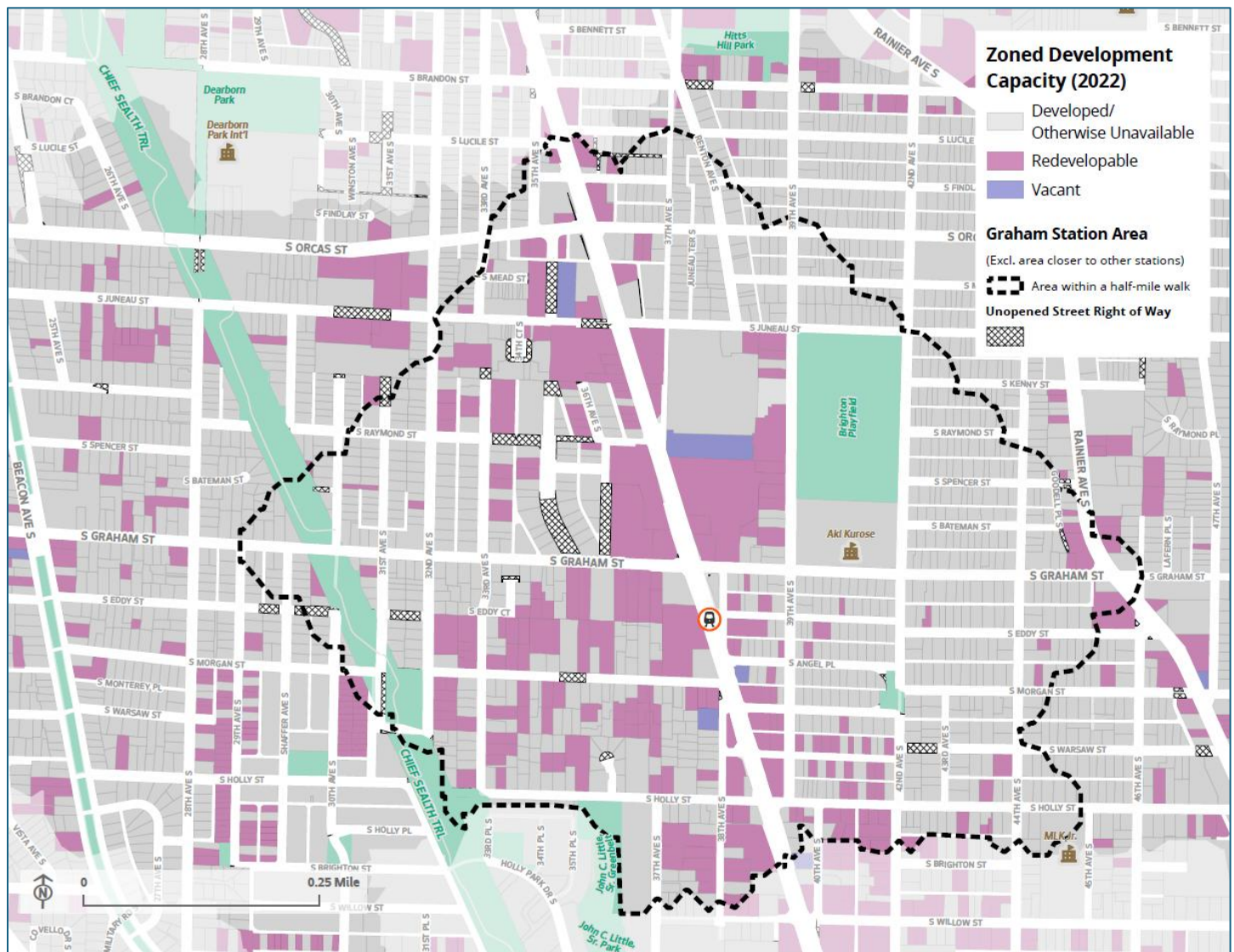
# Existing Zoned Capacity

The [Zoned Development Capacity Model](#) estimates potential development by comparing existing development to an estimate of what could be built using current zoning as of 2022. The difference between potential and existing development yields the capacity for new development, measured in number of new housing units and number of new jobs.

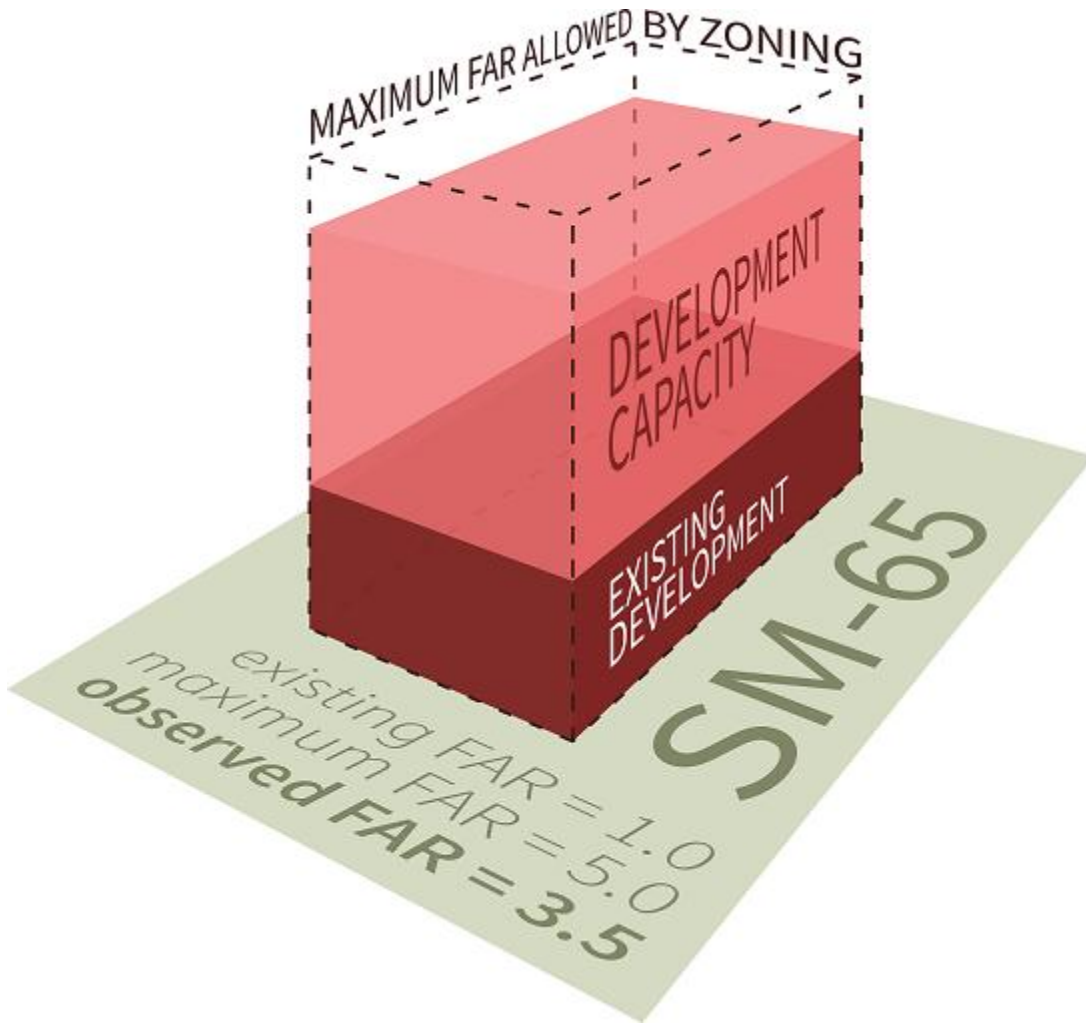
Within the Station Area (area within a half-mile walk to Graham Street Station), there are currently 1,436 housing units. Using current zoning, the Zoned Development Capacity Model estimates the area *could produce* an additional 3,708 units. The model also estimates job capacity based on imputed data. Currently there are 1,927 jobs in the area, if fully redeveloped, the area has a potential capacity of an additional 1,691 jobs.

Seattle's Development Capacity Model does not predict market demand, how much, or how quickly development could occur in the coming years. The analysis is for the purpose of understanding the supply that could eventually be produced.

See the following page for more information on how the Zoned Development Capacity Model was developed.



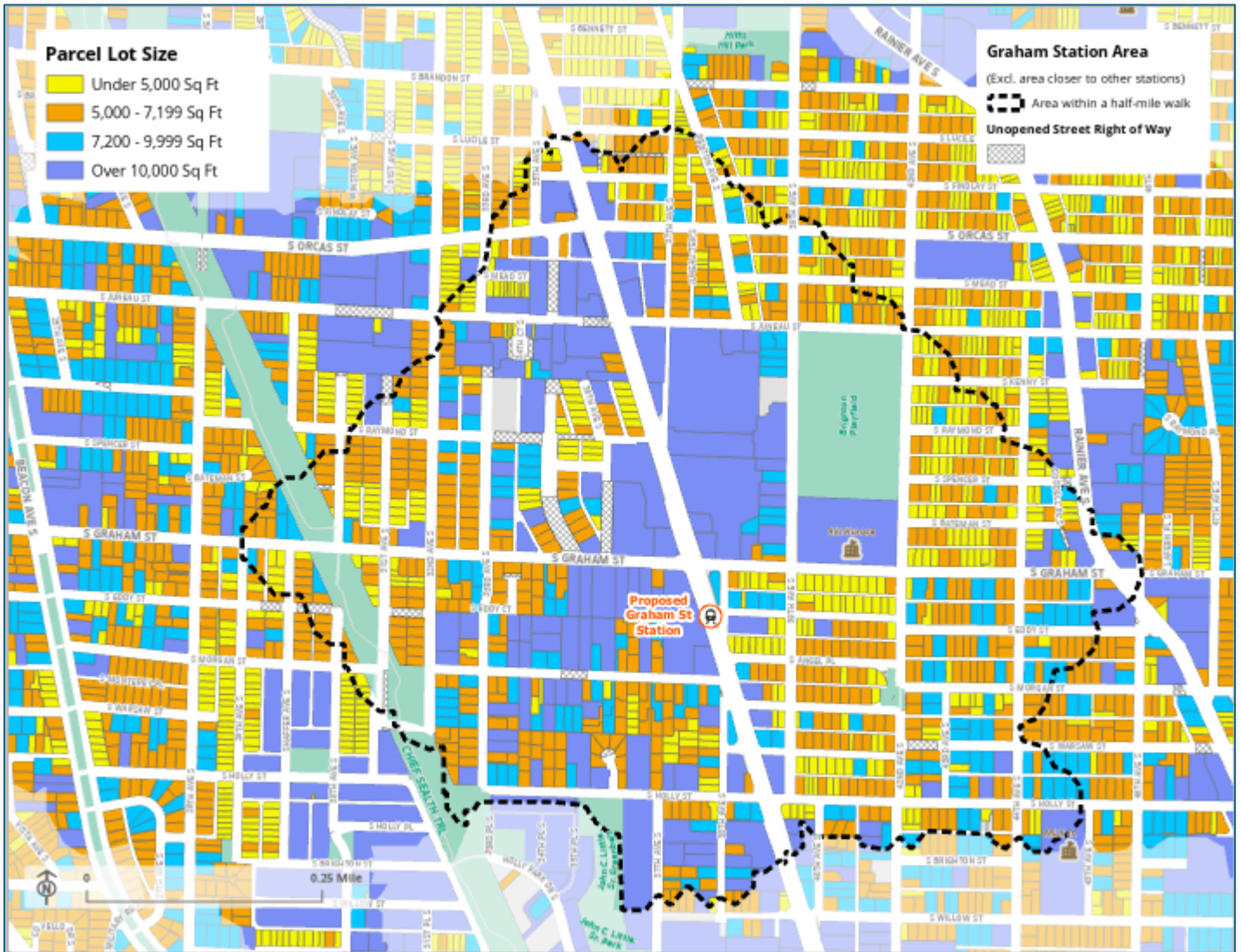
This figure shows the relationship of existing, observed, and maximum development. Development capacity is calculated using the developable land area times the future density assumption, minus the existing development. For more information please see the [Zoned Development Capacity](#) website.



# Block and lot sizes

Lot sizes range widely in this area. Areas closest to the proposed Graham Street Station have many large lots (bigger than 10,000 square feet); while many are commercial properties which are typically bigger, there are also many residential lots in this category. Most residential lots are typical single-family parcels under 7,200 square feet, while relatively few fall in the median size range between 7,200 and 10,000 square feet.

Long and large blocks can present challenges for walkability by increasing walking distances, creating a more monotonous, less enjoyable pedestrian experience, and limiting access to local destinations. Several large and long blocks with little pedestrian permeability are located directly adjacent to the proposed station.

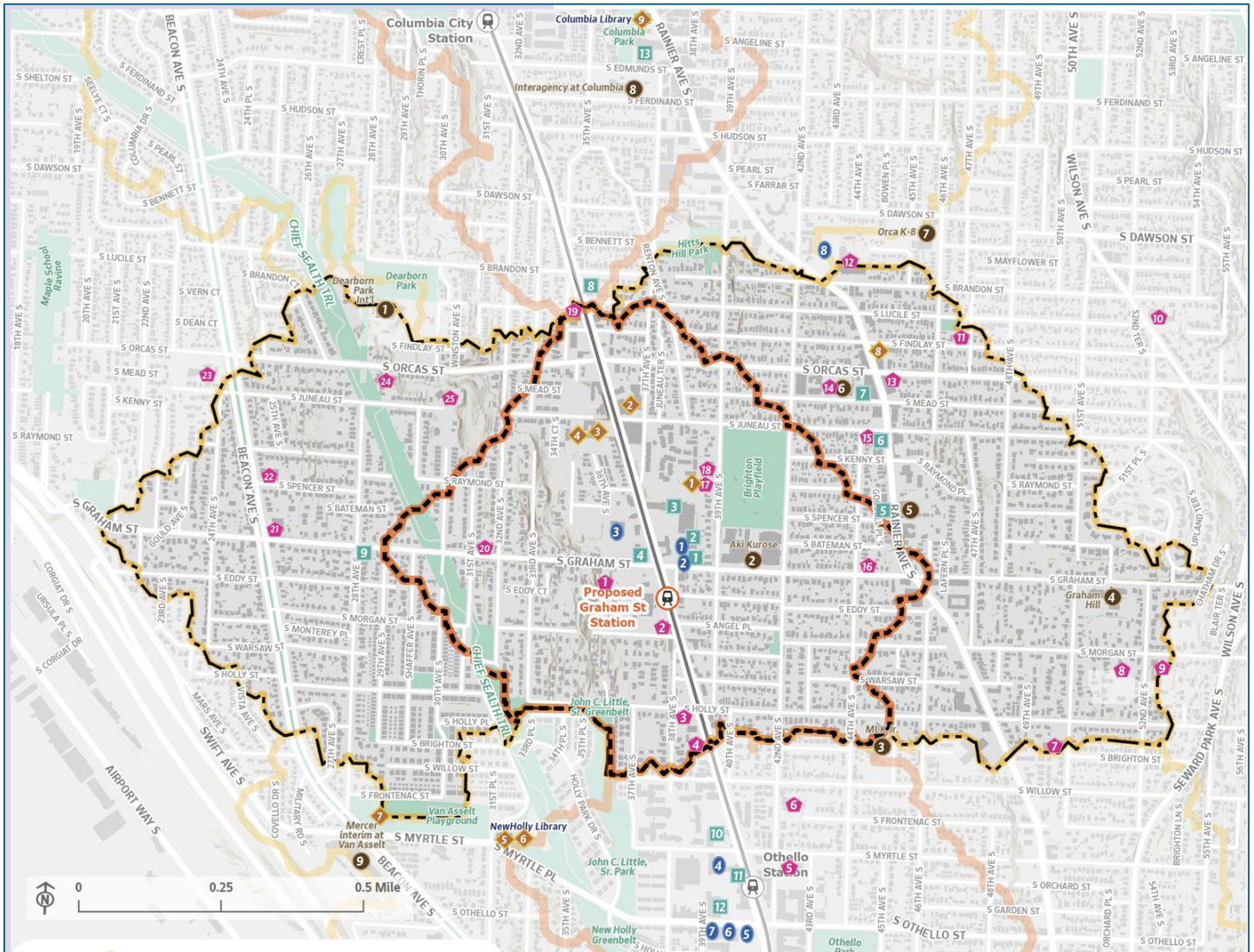




# Community & Economy

## Community institutions and amenities

This map shows a distribution of community institutions and amenities in the Graham Street Station area, broken out into five categories: Schools, Spiritual Centers, Community Assets, Groceries & Bakeries, and Medical & Government. Key institutions falling close to the walkshed boundary are included because of their significance as community destinations. Names of the places are listed on the following page.



Legend to the map on the previous page:

### Schools

- 1 Dearborn Park Int'l Elementary
- 2 Aki Kurose Middle School
- 3 MLK Jr Elementary School
- 4 Graham Hill Elementary School
- 5 Rainier Valley Leadership Academy (*private*)
- 6 Seattle Nativity School (*private*)
- 7 Orca K-8 School
- 8 Interagency Academy at Columbia
- 9 Mercer Middle (*Interimat Van Asselt*)

### Community Assets

- 1 Cham Refugee Community
- 2 Filipino Community Center
- 3 Somali Community & Cultural Innovation Hub
- 4 Amara
- 5 New Holly Branch Library
- 6 East African Community Services
- 7 Van Asselt Community Center
- 8 Black & Tan Hall
- 9 Columbia Branch Library

### Spiritual Centers

- 1 Co Lam Pagoda
- 2 Greater Glory Ministry
- 3 Chua Quan Am
- 4 Al-Noor Islamic Center
- 5 Iglesia ni Cristo
- 6 Buddhist Cultural Center of the NW
- 7 Minyan Ohr Chadash
- 8 Bikur Cholim Machzikay Hadath
- 9 Sephardic Bikur Holim Congregation
- 10 Congregation Ezra Bessaroth
- 11 New Light Christian Church
- 12 Columbia City Church of Hope
- 13 Al Karim Islamic Center
- 14 St Edward Catholic Church
- 15 Gambia Masjid
- 16 Seattle Christian Church
- 17 Masjid Jamiul Muslimeen
- 18 Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witness
- 19 Abubakr Mosque
- 20 Graham Street Church of Christ
- 21 Bethany United Church of Christ
- 22 St Marks Lutheran Church
- 23 Chinese Baptist Church
- 24 Seattle Chinese Alliance Church
- 25 Watt Dhammacakkaram

### Groceries & Bakeries

- 1 Vientiane Grocery
- 2 Q Bakery Sandwiches
- 3 Tony's Bakery & Deli
- 4 Sun Ta Tofu & Bakery
- 5 West Africa International Market
- 6 Gambia International Market
- 7 Sebhat Bakery & Grocery
- 8 Nazareth Market
- 9 Graham Street Grocery
- 10 Ba Mien Seafood Market
- 11 Phnom Penh Market
- 12 Safeway
- 13 PCC Community Market

### Medical & Government

- 1 Hillman City Medical
- 2 Sy Pharmacy
- 3 DSHS Rainier Community Services Office
- 4 Rainier Valley Optometric
- 5 Odessa Brown Children's Clinic Othello (Seattle Children's)
- 6 Southeast Customer Service Center (City of Seattle)
- 7 Holly Park Medical and Dental Clinic (ICHS)
- 8 Rainier Medical Center (Kaiser Permanente)

*For reference only, not an exhaustive list.*

# Business vitality

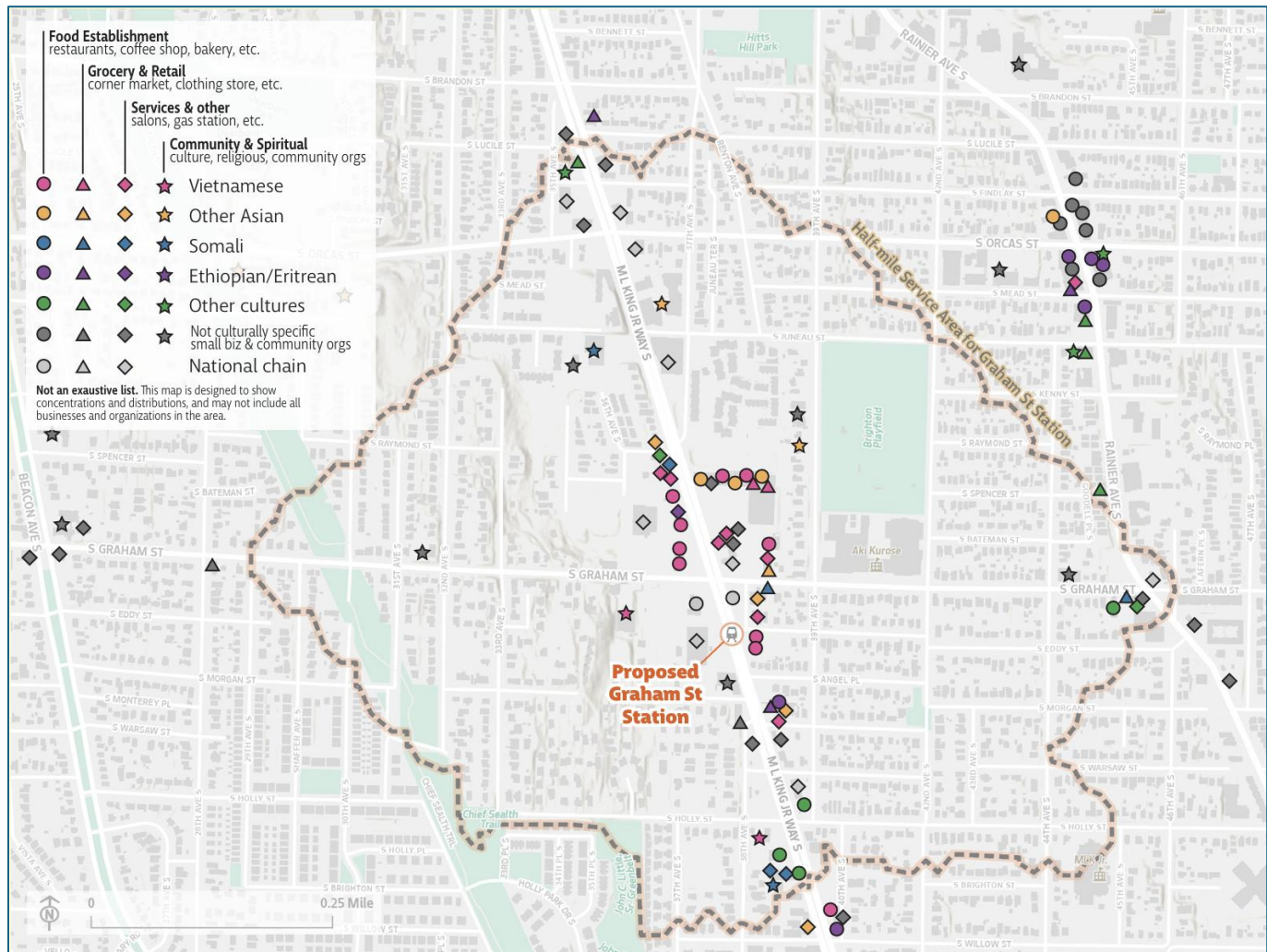
The Graham Street Station area has two main commercial cores, one at the intersection of ML King Jr Way S and S Graham St, and another running along Rainier Ave S and crossing S Orcas St (Hillman City). The MLK/Graham core is anchored by a large shopping plaza and parking lot (Empire Plaza) with many small BIPOC- and immigrant-owned restaurants and businesses, as well as a handful of national chains like U-Haul and McDonalds. Further east, a diverse array of local businesses and organization cluster along Rainier and make up the heart of the Hillman City neighborhood.

The MLK/Graham commercial core contains about 50 businesses. Based on store signage, about 40% are likely Vietnamese run and about 15-20% are owned by or serving East African communities.

The Hillman City commercial core has around 20 businesses, with about 25% being owned by or serving East African communities.

In the overall Graham Street Station Area (half-mile service area in the map below), there are 254 businesses based on business license data (2024), 124 of which are within the services employment sector, which include restaurants and cafes.

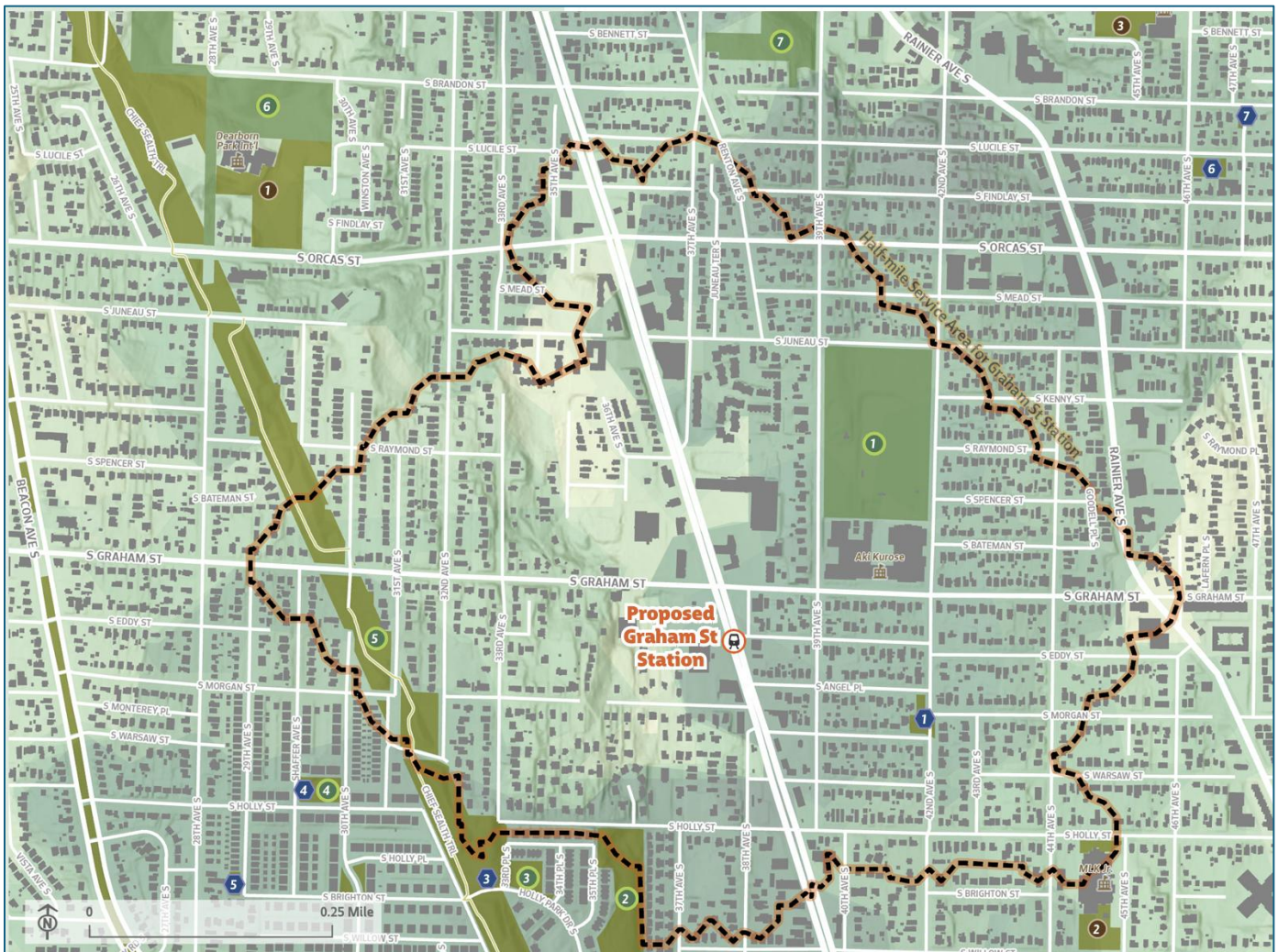
Note that the business districts are not officially designated, and the map is intended to show concentrations and distributions of the types of businesses in the area; it is not meant to be a comprehensive list of businesses and organizations in the area.



# Environment

## Access to Parks

This map shows the numerous parks and open spaces in the Graham Street Station area, the most prominent of which are the 12-acre Brighton Playfield and the linear Chief Sealth Trail, located within Beacon Hill's utility corridor. The underlying color of the map shows access to parks and open space amenities, with the lighter shaded areas having reduced access to parks and open space amenities. This map shows that the area northwest of the MLK/Graham intersection lacks access to many parks and open space amenities.



### Parks & Open Space

- 1 Brighton Playfield
- 2 John C. Little Greenbelt
- 3 Bamboo Park
- 4 Garden Park
- 5 Chief Sealth Trail
- 6 Dearborn Park
- 7 Hitt's Hill Park

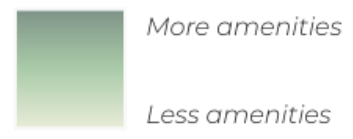
### Community Gardens

- 1 Angel-Morgan P-Patch
- 2 John C. Little P-Patch
- 3 New Holly Youth & Family P-Patch
- 4 Lucky Garden P-Patch
- 5 New Holly 29th Ave P-Patch
- 6 Hillman City P-Patch
- 7 Brandon Street Orchard P-Patch

### School Ground Open Space

- 1 Dearborn Park Elementary
- 2 MLK Jr Elementary
- 3 Orca K-8 School

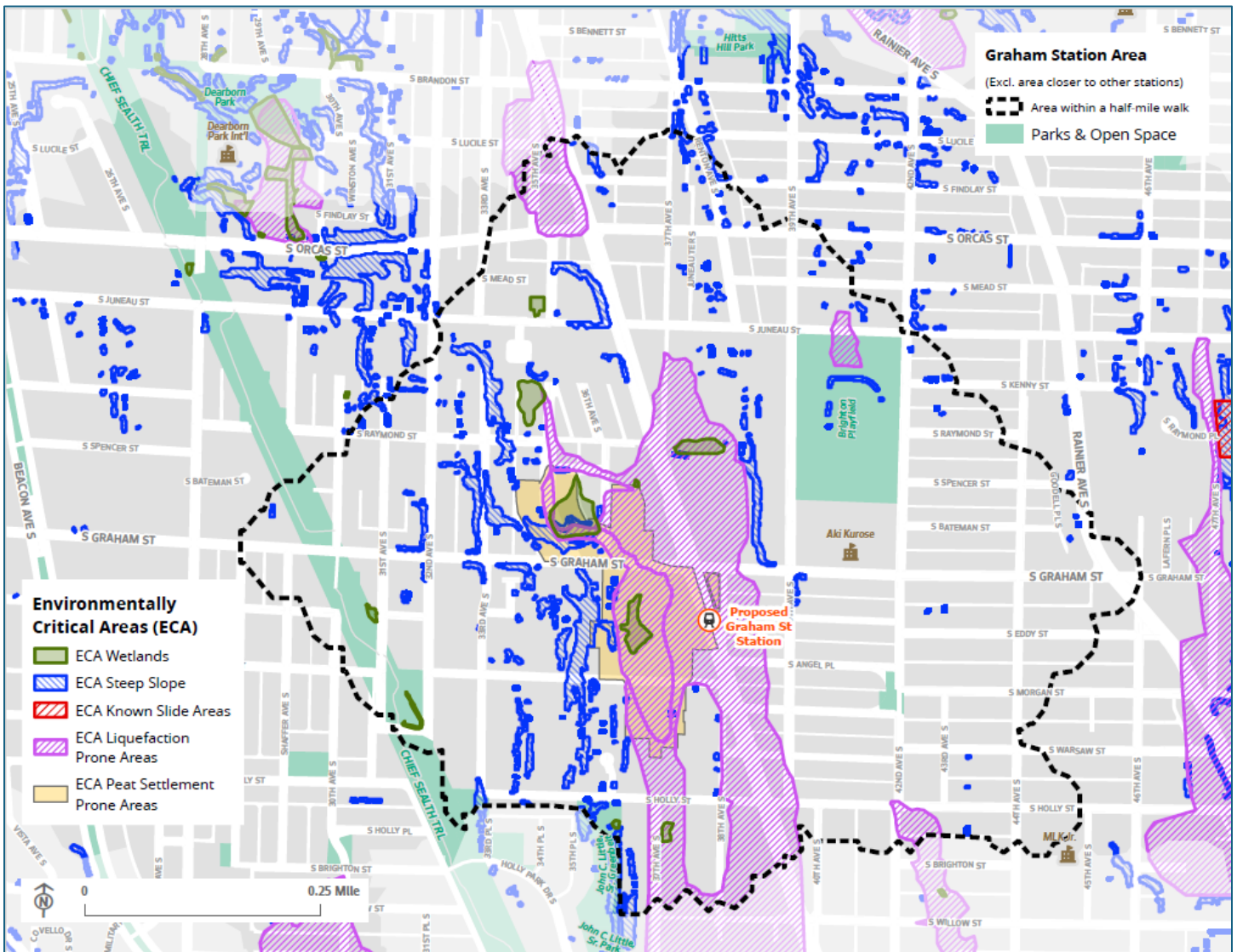
### Access to Park and Open Space Amenities



# Environmentally Critical Areas

The City’s Environmentally Critical Areas (ECA) Code governs areas of Seattle that provide critical environmental functions, such as wetlands that protect water quality and provide fish and wildlife habitat. Our ECA code also addresses areas with geological or other natural conditions that pose development challenges like landslide susceptibility. The goal of our ECA regulations is to effectively protect critical habitats and ecological function, and mitigate environmental hazards while allowing reasonable development in our growing city.

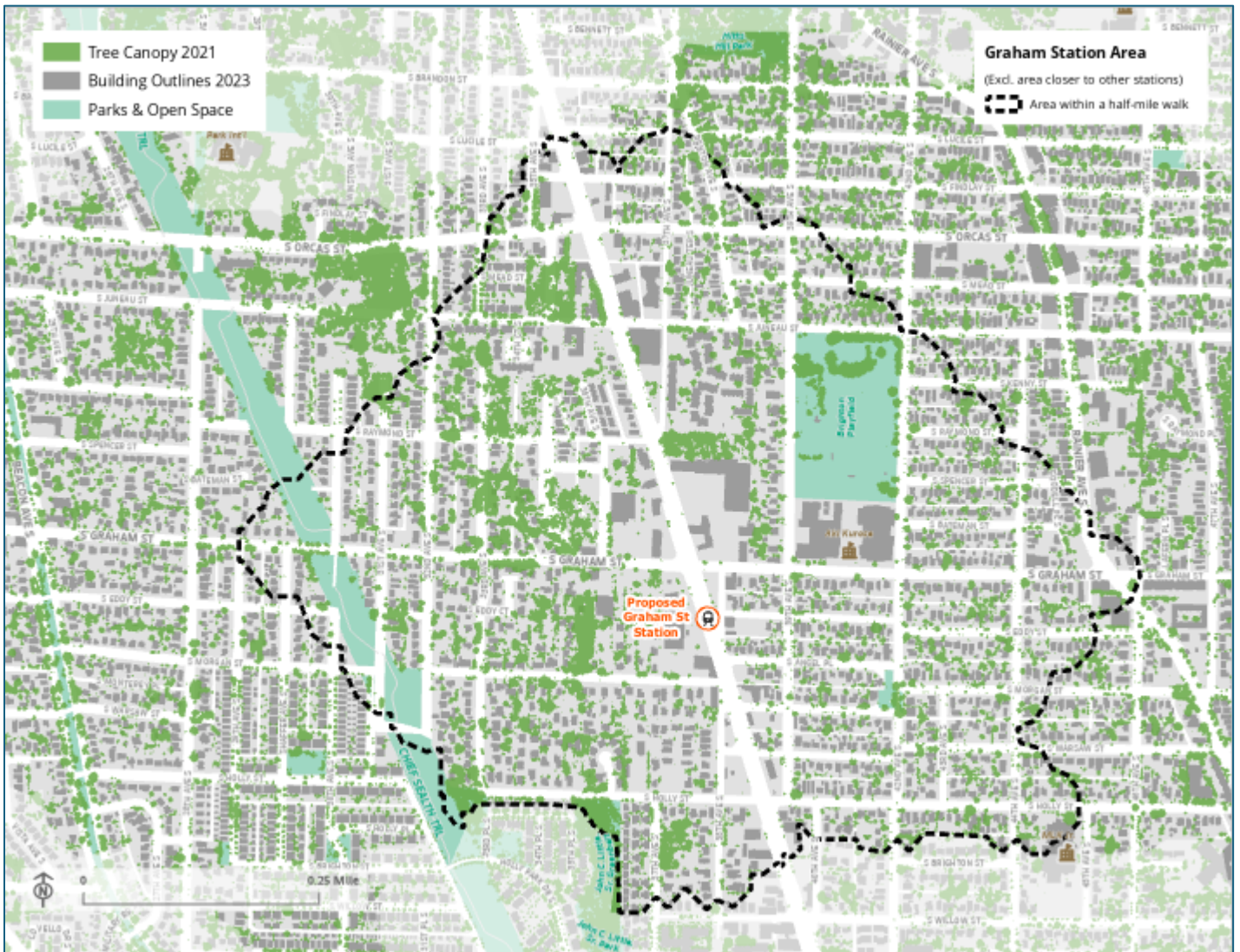
This map shows where ECA are in the Graham Street Station area. Most of the large lots surrounding the MLK/Graham intersection are within a liquefaction-prone area with some wetland conditions. The hills west of the station have steep slopes as well. Development of properties in ECA are subject to additional development standards in addition to zoning regulations.



# Tree Canopy

Canopy coverage refers to the percentage of an area that is covered by tree canopy, interpreted using satellite imagery. It is an important tool used by the City to understand the extent and distribution of trees in Seattle. The City's goal is to reach 30% canopy cover by 2037. The most recent assessment in 2021 found that 28.1% of Seattle is covered with trees. The Graham Street Station Area has a tree canopy coverage of 21.8%.

In Seattle, tree canopy is concentrated in residential areas, parks, natural areas, and along city rights-of-way.



# Transportation

## Pedestrian Network

The Graham Street Station Area Planning's Study Area corresponds to a one-mile travel distance from the proposed station. Significant parts of the sidewalk network in the Study Area are missing, especially along streets between ML King Jr Way S and Chief Sealth Trail, northwest of Brighton Playfield, and Graham Hill east of Rainier Ave S. Many streets also have substandard sidewalks that are significantly narrower than the current standards outlined in Seattle's *Streets Illustrated*.

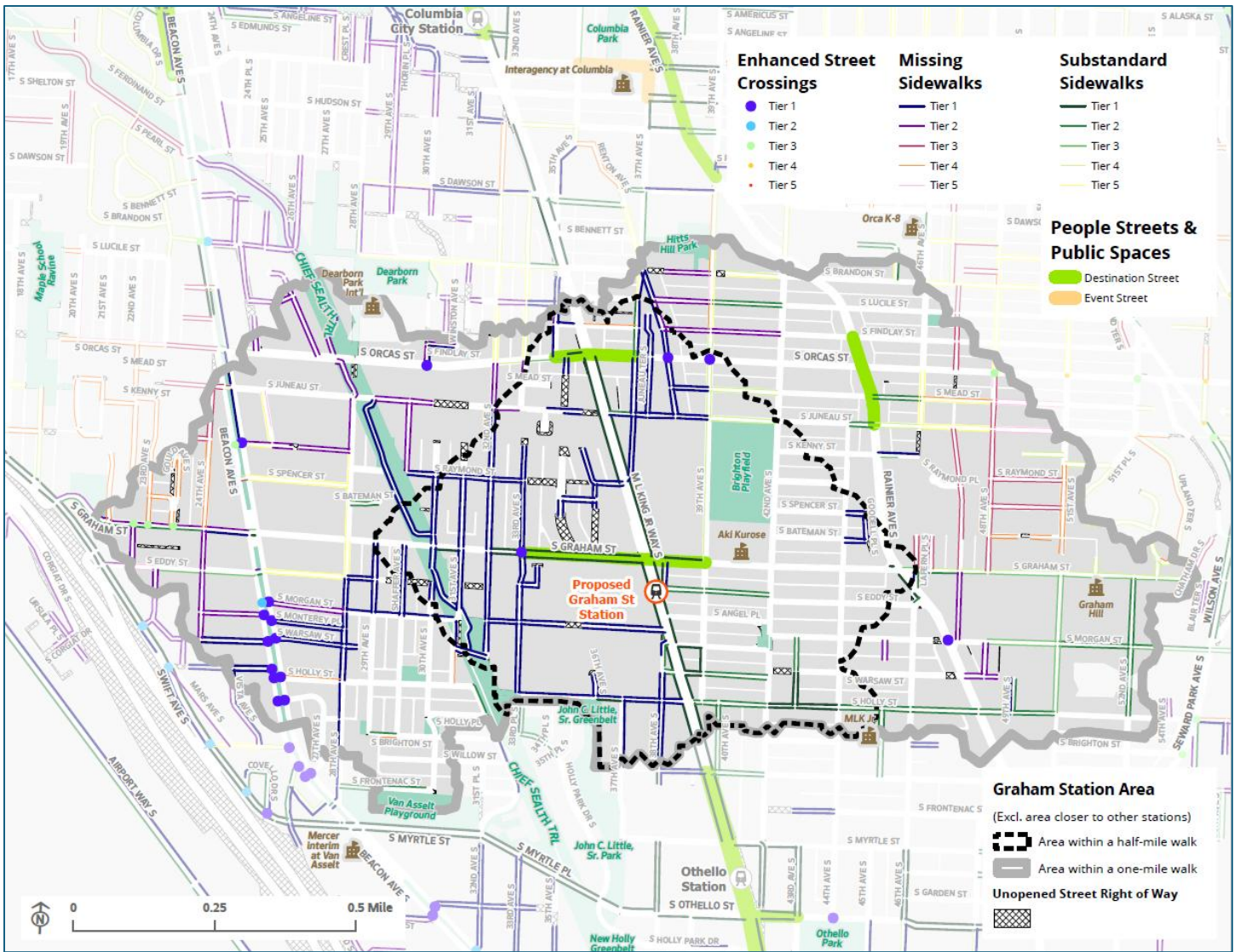
Several locations in the study area have been identified as needing street crossing enhancements. Enhancements could include marked crosswalks, all-way stops, or a signal to help pedestrians cross the street. The Pedestrian element in the Seattle Transportation Plan identified initial intersections for improvement by identifying those that are not currently enhanced and/or are 600 feet or more away from the closest enhanced crossing. Additional crossing enhancements are being identified through the engagement process.

## People Streets & Public Spaces

Streets play an important role not only in getting people to where they need to go but as public spaces. Many streets serve mobility needs and also support people who are strolling in their neighborhood, sitting and connecting with a friend, or waiting for a bus. **People Streets** in the Seattle Transportation Plan (STP) are streets that offer inviting spaces for people to linger, enjoy their surroundings, and connect with others. They support local business districts and business access. Examples of People Streets include Destination Streets, which are streets in the heart of a neighborhood with a high density of destinations, and Event Streets, which are designed to host community events, like farmers markets. **Public Spaces** are spaces that invite people to gather, play, and connect. Public spaces may incorporate public art, seating, games, trees and green infrastructure, or spaces for vendors and gatherings. They are often stewarded by community members and supported by the city.

The STP identified some potential people streets in the Graham Study Area, including several Destination Streets. We will continue to refine, adjust, and add ideas for People Streets through the Graham Street Station Area Planning process.

*See the following page for the map associated with Pedestrian Network and People Streets & Public Spaces.*



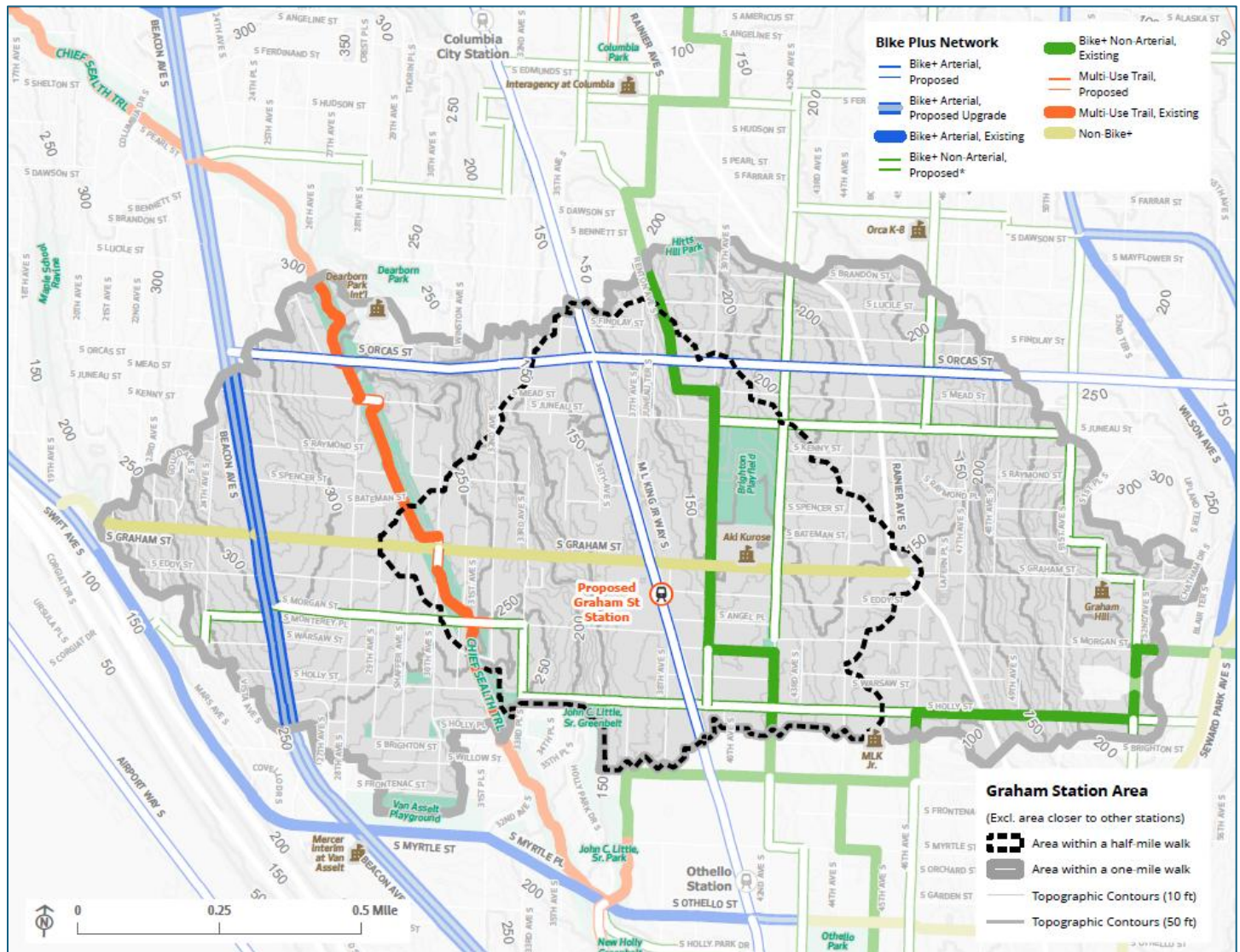
This map shows Seattle Transportation Plan’s Pedestrian Network and People Streets & Public Spaces.



# Bicycle Network

The existing bicycle network consists primarily of north-south streets. The All Ages and Abilities Bicycle Facilities network is shown by the Bike+ facilities on the map, which includes the Healthy Street on 39<sup>th</sup> Ave S and the Chief Sealth Trail. There are limited existing facilities that connect to the future Graham Street Station. There are no existing east-west Bike+ corridors. Steep topography in this neighborhood makes biking challenging for many ages and abilities.

The Seattle Transportation Plan proposed an expanded bicycling network, which will be further fine-tuned in the Graham Station Area Planning process. "Bike+ Arterial" includes protected bike lanes on arterial streets, "Bike+ Non-Arterial" include Neighborhood Greenways and Healthy Streets on non-arterial streets. Additionally, S Graham St is identified as "Non-Bike+" due to the narrowness of the street's right of way.

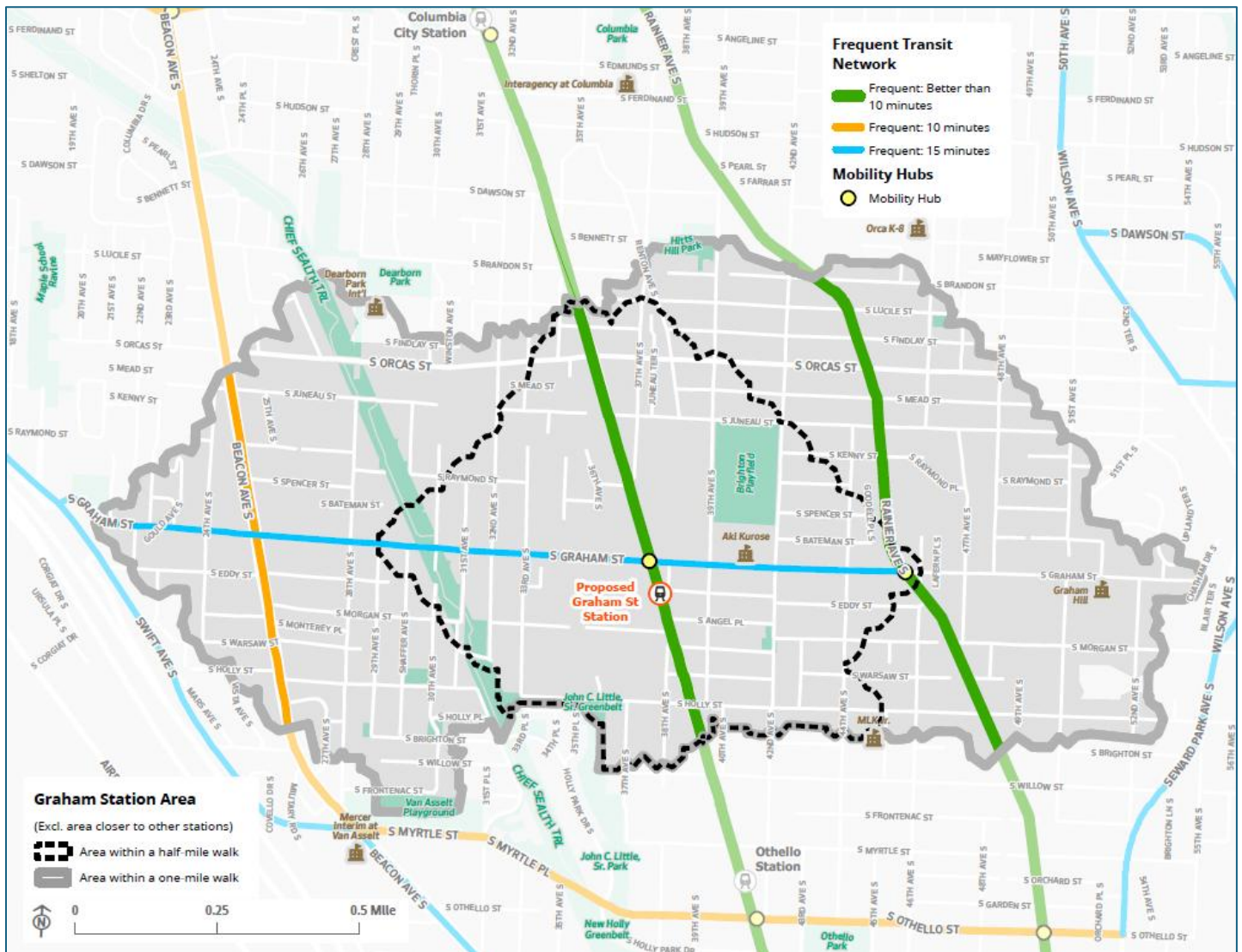


# Transit Network

The existing transit network in the Graham Street Station area includes north-south fixed transit service by King County Metro buses. Existing frequent transit routes follow ML King Jr Way S (Route 106), Rainier Ave S (Route 7), and Beacon Ave S (Route 36). King County Metro also runs an on-demand service, Metro Flex, that connects people from the Othello station to destinations as far north as S Orcas St. .

The Seattle Transportation Plan identifies an updated future frequent transit network. In addition to the existing frequent transit routes which all travel in the north-south direction, we are currently studying an east-west bus route along S Graham St. The addition of a new light rail station at S Graham St and ML King Jr Way S will add additional regional connectivity by high-capacity transit. It will bridge the 1.6 mile gap between the existing Columbia City and Othello light rail stations and increase neighborhood access to the larger Link light rail network.

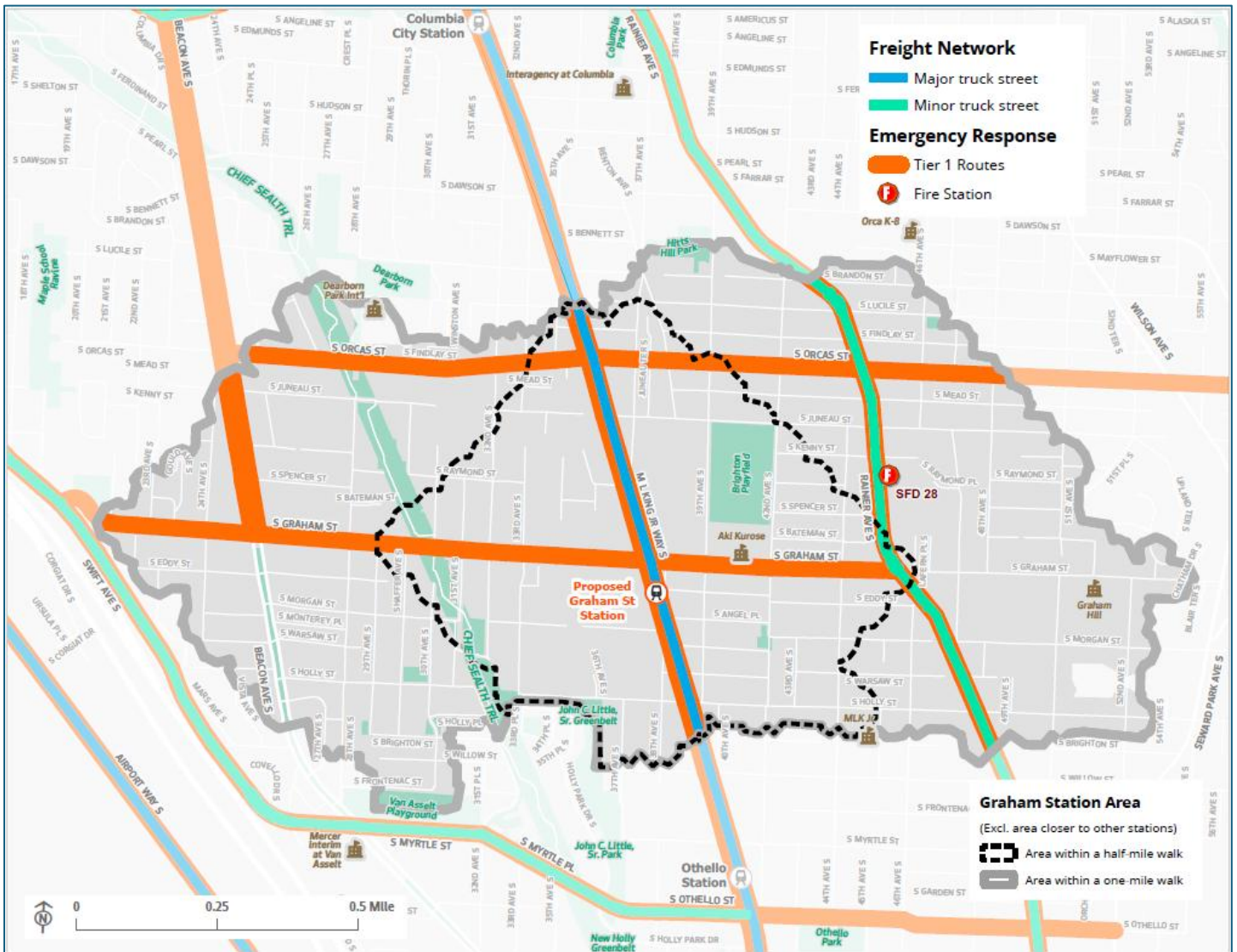
The Seattle Transportation Plan also identified Community and Mobility Hubs where S Graham St intersects with ML King Jr Way S and at the intersection of S Graham St and Rainier Ave S. Community and Mobility Hubs combine transportation options, information, and community spaces and are located along major transit routes. These are spaces where people may be waiting for transit or transferring between different routes or types of transportation.



# Freight & Emergency Response Network

Large vehicles need access to many of our streets for delivery, utility and services access, and for emergency response. In the Graham Street Station area, ML King Jr Way S and Rainier Ave S are designated Truck Streets, which help get critical goods and services to businesses and people in South Seattle. These streets provide vital connections for local businesses to the region.

Our streets must also accommodate Seattle Fire Department vehicles. Tier 1 emergency response routes are streets that are used to reach more than 300 responses per year or that provide critical connectivity. Any redesign of Tier 1 streets should consider impacts to emergency response times and be designed with sufficient space for emergency response vehicles to avoid traffic conflicts.

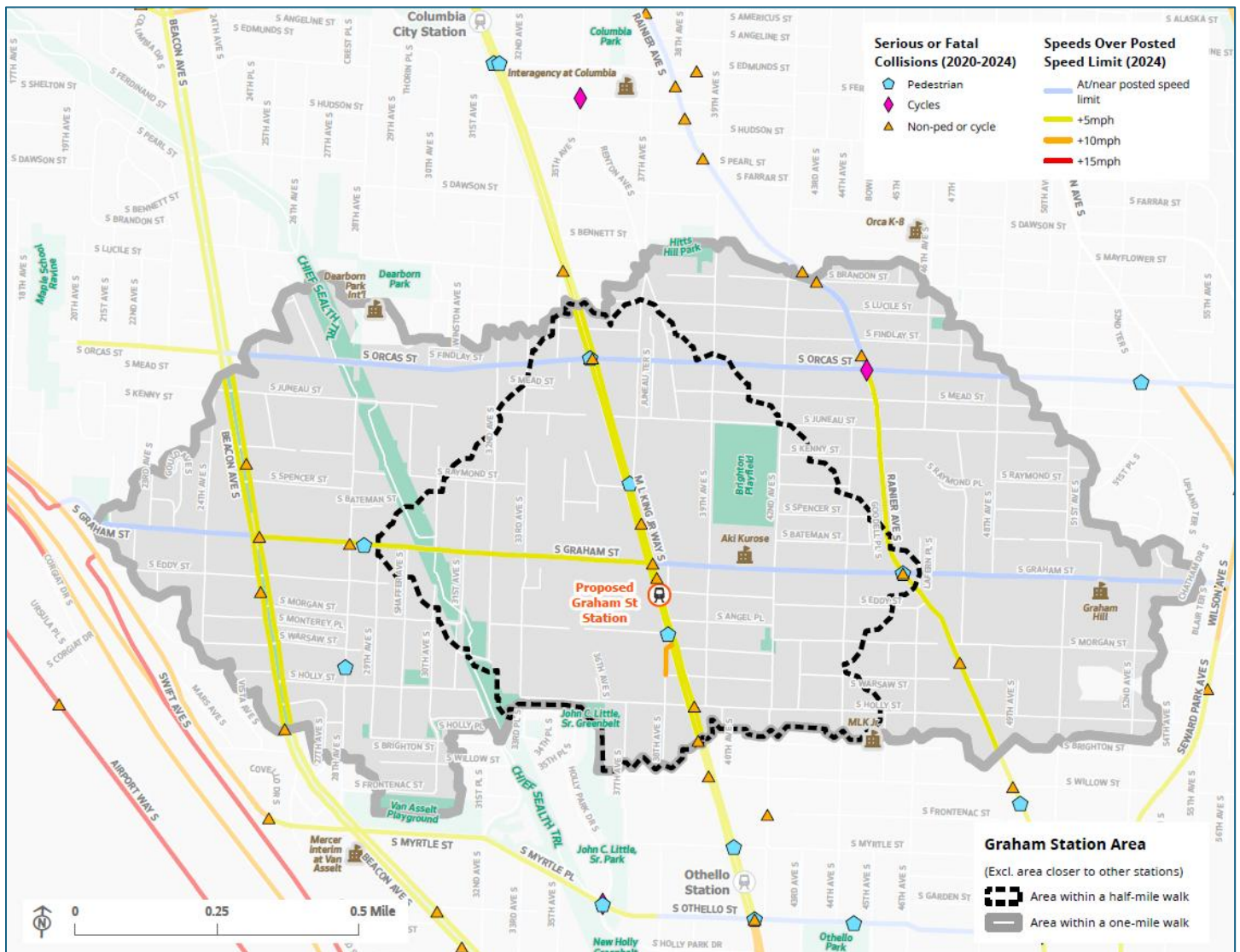


# Vehicle Network – Speeds & Collisions

Between 2020 to 2024, 23 collisions involving death or serious injury occurred within the Study Area. Four of these collisions resulted in a fatality, and two of the four fatal collisions involved pedestrians.

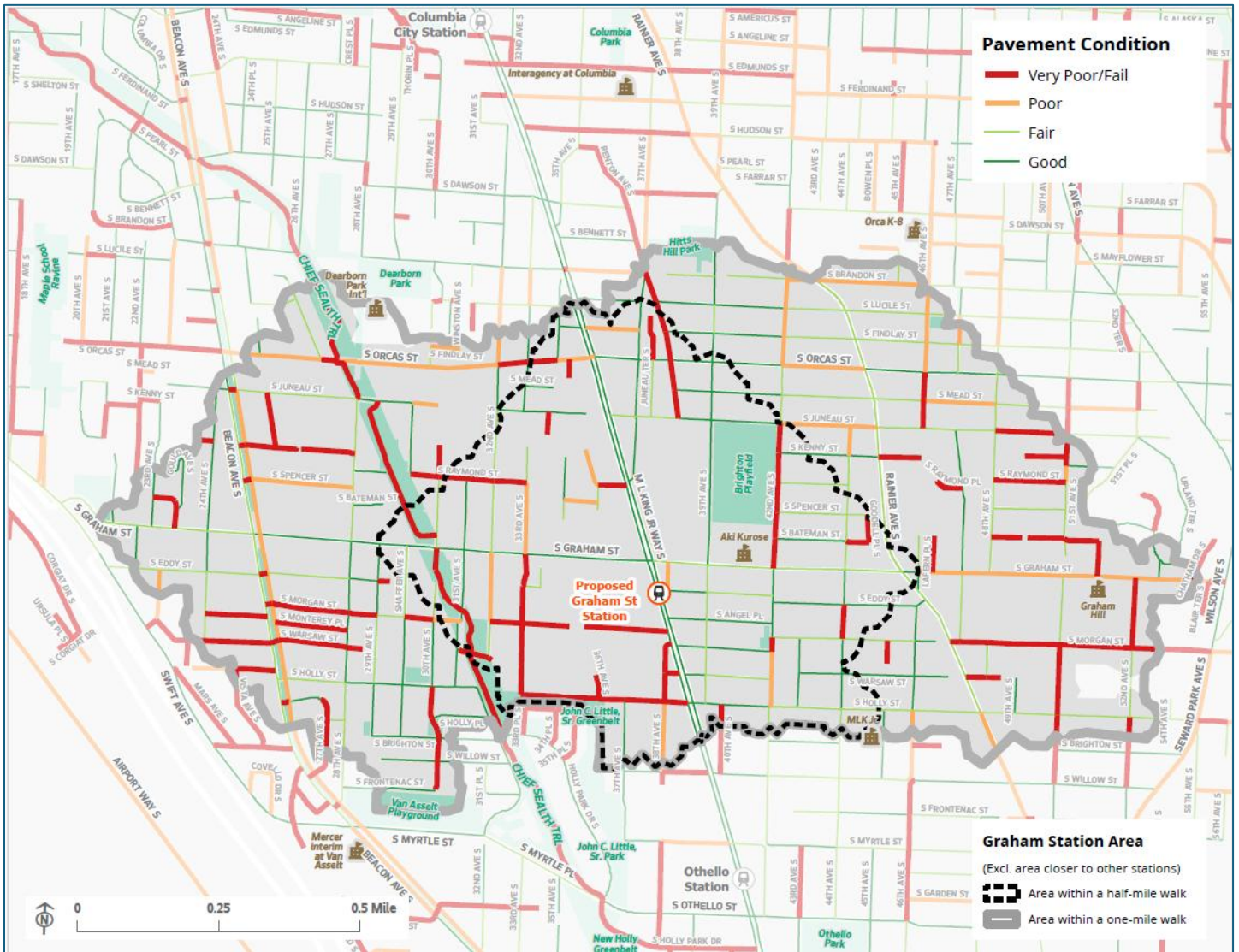
Of the other 19 collisions where someone was seriously injured, four involved pedestrians, and one involved a person on bike. The 23 collisions represent 1.7% of 1,357 serious or fatal collisions in the City in the same period. Collisions most frequently occurred along the north-south arterials of ML King Jr Way S and Rainier Ave S.

Speeding is a serious concern on many of the arterials within the Study Area. On average, drivers exceed the posted speed limit by 5th to 10 miles per hour. The most excessive speeding occurs right outside the study area, along Swift Ave S, with people speeding between 10 and 15 miles per hour over the limit.



# Vehicle Network – Pavement Condition

The condition of roadways is measured using a Pavement Condition Index (PCI). The PCI uses cameras and sensors to record pavement distress and measures structural integrity and operational surface condition. The PCI helps us determine if roads need routine or preventive maintenance, major maintenance, or will need to be reconstructed.



## Appendix: Urban Design

Urban design strategies have a substantial impact on the success of a transit-oriented community. Urban design influences the look, feel, and relationship between public and private spaces, including how roadways are divided between different users, how buildings interact with the right-of-way, and where public space is located. The Graham Street Station area is a rich community with established land uses, circulation, and building patterns that influence the type of design strategies that will have the greatest impact on quality of life for residents.

The following appendix calls out elements of the existing urban fabric as well as lessons learned from redevelopment near Othello and Columbia City Stations. This urban design study is intended to provide a foundation for future urban design strategies but does not currently represent a policy direction.

# Connectivity

Block size, street connections, topography, and quality of pedestrian and bicycle facilities all contribute to how easily people can move between key destinations. How long it takes someone to reach their destination and what it feels like along the way impacts how they experience their journey. A well-connected, safe, enjoyable connection between the station and the starting/ending destination is the goal.

## Block Size & Street Connections

1. The block northeast of the station is a particularly large obstacle, requiring pedestrians to walk ¼ mile between east-west connections.
2. Southwest of the proposed station, two large blocks impede travel in that direction—pedestrians either have to walk along busy ML King Jr Way S, or up a hilly portion of S Graham St before heading south on 33rd Ave S.
3. S Morgan St has a missing segment moving west from ML King Jr Way S, further limiting east-west connection.
4. S Juneau St does not connect to MLK Jr Way S moving west. A staircase provides a pedestrian connection.
5. A throughway between Aki Kurose Middle School and Brighton Playfield allows east-west pedestrian movement, including paths around the fields and towards S Juneau St and nearby Hillman City.
6. The angle of ML King Jr Way S truncates other N-S connections and reduces alternative routes, creating indirect travel paths for pedestrians to neighboring Othello Station looking for an alternative to walking along MLK.

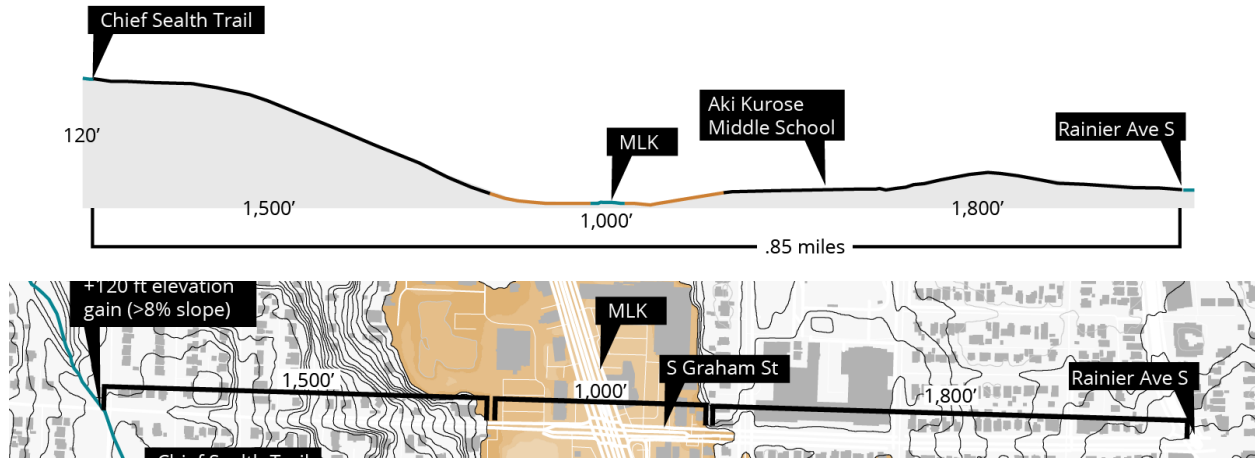


### CONNECTIVITY - KEY

- STATION LOCATION
- ★ Graham St Station
- BIKE + PED FACILITIES
- TRAILS
- - BIKE FACILITIES
- Parks

(Framework 2026)

## Topography



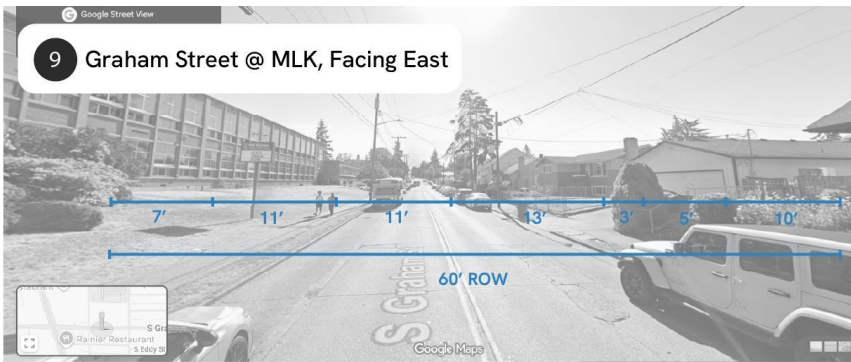
(Google Earth Pro 2026, Framework 2026)

The station area is bookended to the west by significant elevation changes. Flat, accessible area falls within 500 feet on either side of ML King Jr Way S. There is a 120-foot elevation increase between MLK and Chief Sealth Trail, a distance of 0.4 miles, the primary and safest N-S trail connection in the area. From Graham, the trail can be accessed by someone riding an electric bike or an electric standing scooter, and by able-bodied pedestrian and avid cyclist. The grade change limits the accessibility for people using wheelchair or mobility devices to within a block of west of MLK.

To the east, towards Rainier Ave S, the grade is less challenging; however, there is around a 10-foot increase between the edge of the shopping center and abutting properties off of 39th Ave S. This makes potential through block connections into the neighborhood more challenging.



## Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities



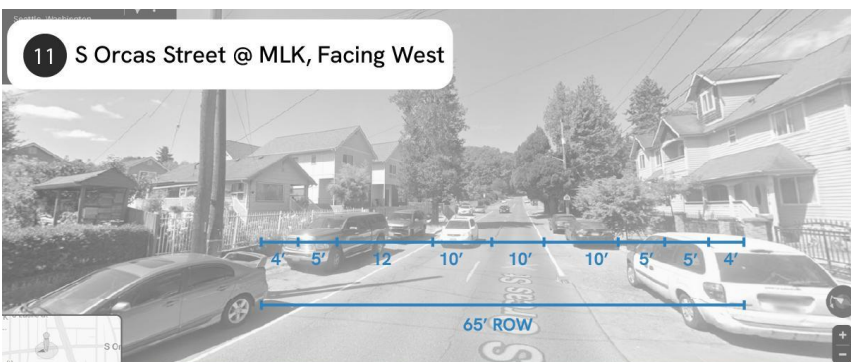
(Google Street View 2026, Framework 2026)

S Graham Street is somewhat pedestrian-friendly. With school zone speeds of 20-25mph and intermittent speedbumps, the sidewalk width of five feet with a three-foot buffer is reasonably comfortable, but not ideal for high pedestrian volume. For those walking the entire half mile east from the station to Rainier Avenue S, the lack of relationship between the buildings and the public to provide interest, the route may feel long.



(Google Street View 2026, Framework 2026)

S Holly Street lacks complete sidewalk facilities west of ML King Jr Way S — this is not an accessible route for pedestrians with disabilities. In the block pictured above, the new sidewalk was likely added as part of the new development.



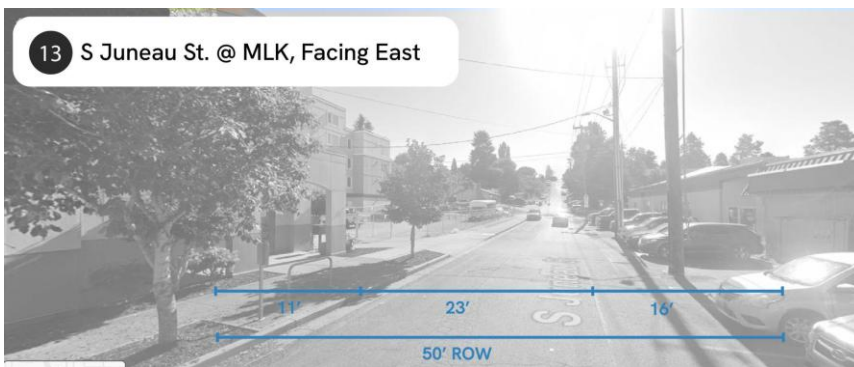
(Google Street View 2026, Framework 2026)

Moving west from MLK, S Orcas St has an urban residential form, with on-street parking and mature street trees. Further up the hill, the paved area narrows, with dense vegetation on both sides and no buffer between moving vehicles and pedestrians.



(Google Street View 2026, Framework 2026)

Apart from the Chief Sealth Trail, facilities within the station’s half-mile radius are all sharrows.



(Google Street View 2026, Framework 2026)

S Juneau St has five-foot sidewalks buffered by gravel used for street parking.

## Takeaways

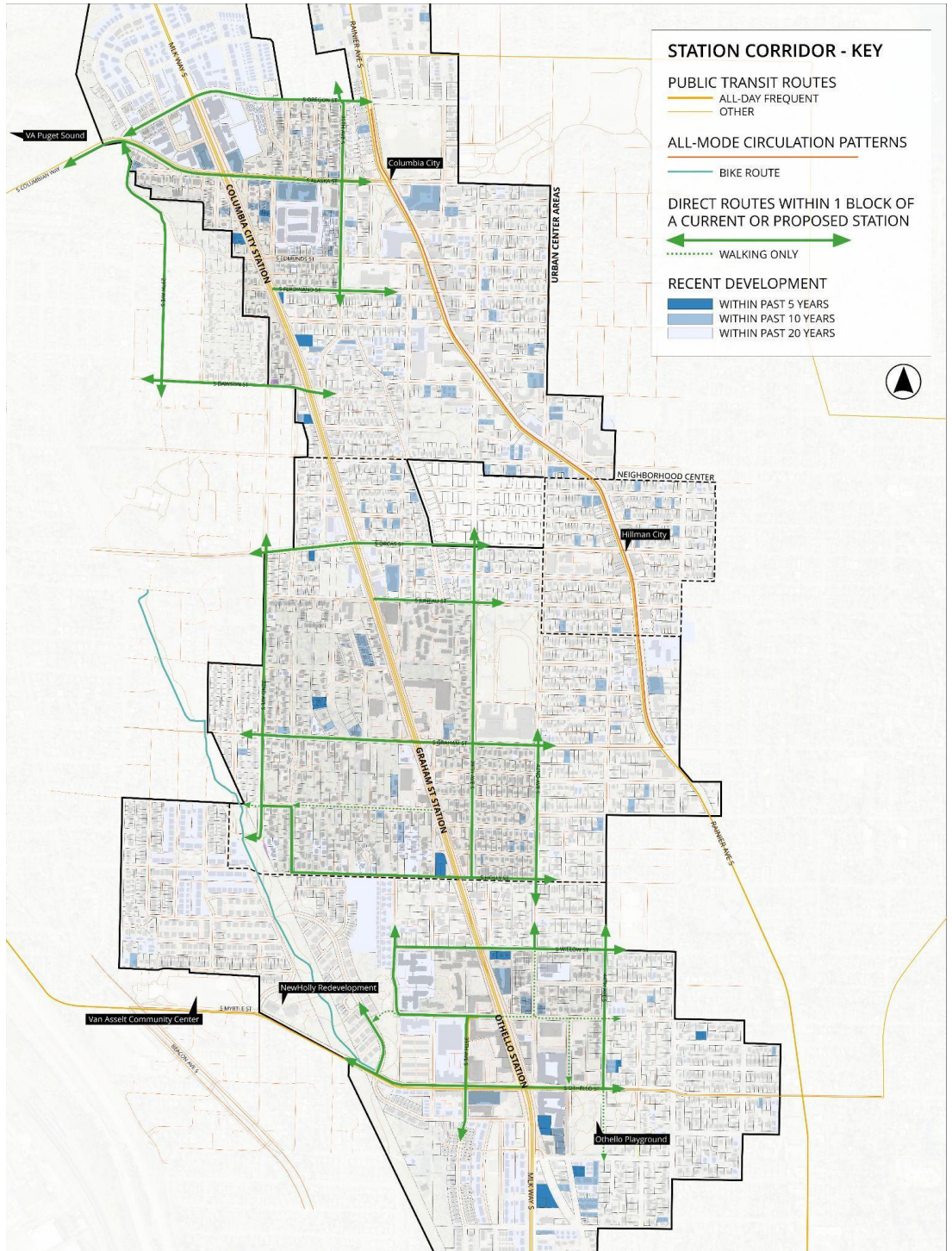
East-west connections are challenging in the proposed Graham Street Station area. Steep topography west of ML King Jr Way S poses a challenge for pedestrians and cyclists, and the grade change results in some truncated connections (i.e. the staircase on S Juneau St). Large blocks also reduce connectivity, making it less efficient for pedestrians and cyclists to get to their destinations. East of MLK, there are shorter blocks that reflect the residential pattern.

There are gaps in bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the area, especially west of MLK. Proposed bike facilities on S Orcas St, S Graham St, S Juneau St, and S Holly St would fill in some of these gaps, making it safer and more efficient to cycle from to and from the station. It’s likely that S Graham St will likely be the most efficient east-west connection light rail riders use to connect to their final destinations.

# Learning from Columbia City & Othello Stations

While recent development within existing station areas is largely clustered along ML King Jr Way S, both station areas benefit from pre-existing activity nodes. The Columbia City light rail station has two hubs: the urban center on Rainier Avenue in Columbia City proper, which saw new mixed-use development first, and the immediate station area along MLK, which has redeveloped more slowly. Othello, while considerably further from Rainier Ave than Columbia City, was a larger neighborhood hub prior to station development, with existing anchors such as the New Holly redevelopment, multiple shopping centers, and Othello Playground. Continuing this pattern of clustering new development along MLK without addressing gaps and challenges in the existing street network may limit overall accessibility and livability in the Graham Street Station area.

*(Open Street Maps 2025, Framework 2026)*





## Redevelopment year

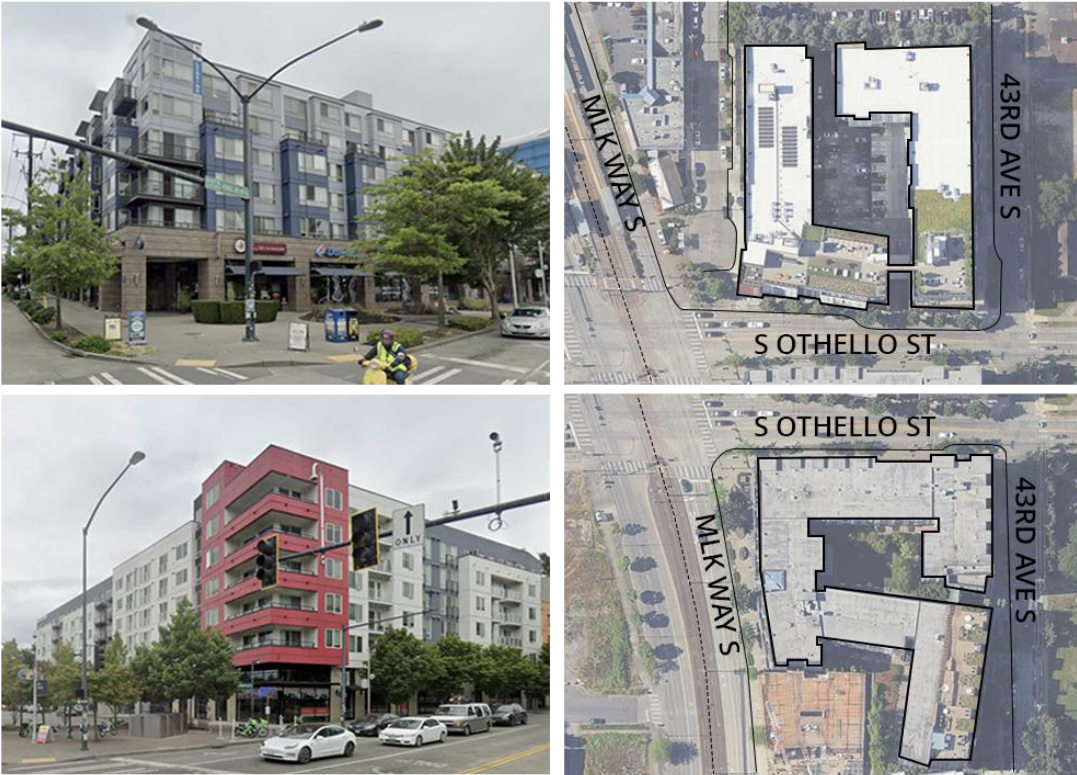


*Redevelopment near Columbia City and Othello stations since 2009 (1-Line Opening). Hashed lines show footpaths including new through-block connections (King County Assessor 2025, Open Street Maps 2025, Framework 2025).*

Both Columbia City and Othello stations benefit from strong east-west routes connecting ML King Jr Way S to destinations on Beacon Hill, including the VA Medical Center and Van Asselt Community Center on S Columbian Way and S Myrtle St respectively. Recent development around both stations has maintained or produced a relatively fine-grain urban fabric, supporting more direct and varied pedestrian circulation despite increased building scale. Compared to these station areas, Graham Street Station riders may need to walk further to access their destinations due to large blocks, dead ends, and incomplete bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. As it currently exists, the Graham Street Station area may not have the pull of community hubs that its neighbor stations do.

Expanding development opportunities beyond the MLK corridor in the Graham Street Station area would support district connectivity in multiple ways: enabling a finer-grain network of streets and pedestrian paths with more direct routes between the station and other destinations, distributing development opportunities and pedestrian activity across a broader area and encouraging growth of new community hubs, and supporting a more comfortable pedestrian environment between the new station, Rainier Ave S, and Hillman City.

Recent development patterns at Columbia City and Othello also reflect a shift in how setbacks are used, moving open space from the street edge to the interior of sites. Many newer projects maintain similar ratios of open space to building area as older developments, but rather than setting buildings back to provide large strip mall parking lots, they remove the setback and relocate open space away from ML King Jr Way S into interior courtyards or spaces between buildings. This approach introduces more options for how open space is used, with courtyards used as parking and/or green space, and creates a safer pedestrian environment, with fewer curb cuts and less vehicle movement across sidewalks. Reducing street-facing parking setbacks at Graham Street and relocating open space to interior streets or courtyards would improve quality and usability of open space while also creating more continuous street edges, reducing curb cuts, and improving pedestrian safety and comfort along MLK.



*Two recent developments at Othello station with reduced setbacks and aggregated open space in interior courtyards. (Open Street Maps 2025, Framework 2026).*

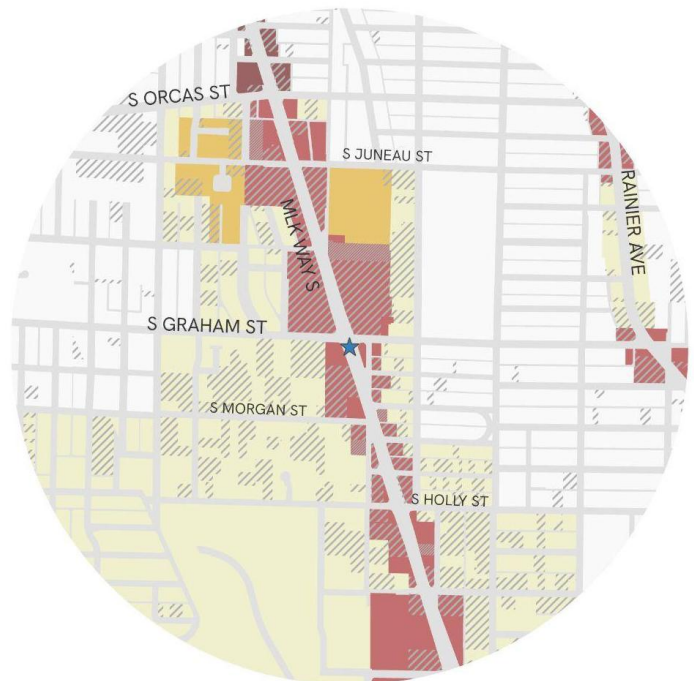
# Urban Fabric

## Zoning & Development Pattern

Beyond the street network, the urban fabric of the station area – made up of different parcel sizes, densities, building types, and land uses — shapes how activity and development are distributed and how people move between destinations within a station area.

Nearby Columbia City and Othello Station Areas illustrate some of the development patterns that have emerged following the introduction of light rail stations. Within the immediate one or two blocks of each station, redevelopment has replaced former retail and surface parking sites with large mixed-use and residential developments, including some affordable housing development. On adjacent blocks, development transitions to smaller residential forms, much of which consists of large market-rate townhouses. Townhouses and small-lot single-family housing add some density while maintaining relatively modest building footprints and enabling more gradual, incremental redevelopment. These smaller-scale, incremental developments help reinforce a finer-grain urban fabric and pedestrian-scale blocks. Around Graham Street, introducing additional forms of small- to mid-scale infill, such as small-lot apartments or neighborhood-scale mixed-use buildings, could further support housing diversity, provide additional space for local businesses, and enable redevelopment that enhances pedestrian permeability and connectivity across the broader station area.

The Graham Street Station area already exhibits a distinct fine-grain commercial fabric, even within larger parcels and buildings, but the pattern is not necessarily visible in parcel or assessor data.



0 0.13 0.25 0.5 Miles

### ZONING + DEVELOPMENT - KEY

#### STATION LOCATION

★ Graham St Station

#### DEVELOPMENT STATUS

/// Redevelopable

■ Vacant

#### ZONING CATEGORY

■ Commercial

■ High-Density Multi-Family

■ Lowrise Multi-Family

■ Neighborhood Commercial

■ Neighborhood Residential

(Framework 2026)

## Business Type Distribution

The station area includes a diverse and well-established commercial corridor along ML King Jr Way S. The map below shows a rough survey of retail spaces identified using publicly available data from Google Maps, City of Seattle business license data, and on-the-ground observations. The commercial pattern reflects the role of Graham as a service hub for a diverse set of immigrant communities. There are a large number of service providers and businesses to help residents navigate living and working in Seattle, including money transfer services, small grocery stores serving specific cultural communities, travel agencies, restaurants, specialized salons, translation services, places of worship, medical clinics, and social services. These businesses are often located in add-ons or within other larger businesses. A typical strip development in the area hosts four or five small businesses, often serving similar cultural communities.

Maintaining similarly sized commercial spaces, as well as options for informal arrangements or multiple businesses within a single stall, could support the existing business ecosystem as redevelopment occurs. Similar principles could be applied across all kinds of development; dispersing activity and focusing new mixed-use development across smaller-scale, connected commercial nodes, rather than concentrating redevelopment in one or two large hubs in the immediate station area. This could help preserve the fine-grain character of the existing commercial fabric while building neighborhood connectivity and supporting incremental residential density.

### Here is a breakdown of business type and median sizes for businesses along ML King Jr Way S within one-half mile of S Graham St:

- **Around seven grocery stores, with a median size of 2,170 square feet.**
- **Around seven clinics/pharmacies, with a median size of 2,764 square feet.**
- **Around 12 restaurants, with a median size of 2,023 square feet.**
- **Around nine salons/barbers, with a median size of 838 square feet.**



(Google Maps 2025, Framework 2026)

# Street Edge & Pedestrian Experience

The street edge plays an important role in pedestrian comfort, safety, and activity through setbacks, frontage conditions, and right-of-way design. ML King Jr Way S acts as both a major thoroughfare and barrier, defining much of the pedestrian experience in the station areas. Observations along the corridor reveal a range of both intentional and incidental approaches to how development interfaces with the street, offering useful lessons for future development in the Graham station area.

## Observations

Variations in setback and frontage treatment along ML King Jr Way S, including setback depth, facade transparency, ground-floor uses, and landscaping, shape how buildings engage or disengage the street. In many locations, minimal or no setbacks place pedestrians adjacent to fast-moving traffic, with limited buffering. Developments with setbacks that incorporate landscaping, weather protection, and other features, create a more buffered edge between pedestrians and the roadway. High-transparency façades are present in both conditions, regardless of available buffering or sidewalk width.



*Mixed-Use/Commercial Frontage Conditions: (A) A new mixed-use development with zero setback and high ground-floor transparency, (B) A mixed-use development incorporating deeper setbacks, landscaped buffers, public art weather protection, and active commercial frontages (Framework 2025).*

There are many different treatments of residential and commercial frontages along ML King Jr Way S. Some attempt an ‘active’ frontage with high transparency facades, pedestrian amenities, and plaza delineation. However, with lack of adequate buffering from the MLK’s busy traffic volume, the environment feels exposed and not conducive to prolonged activity. On the other end, there are frontages that completely disengage from the street edge, creating more privacy and buffer for interior uses but a hard, impermeable edge for pedestrians. The most comfortable streetscapes are framed by frontages that strike a balance between privacy and pedestrian buffer, typically through some amount of setback, landscape elements, and facade articulation.





*Private Frontage Conditions: (C) Residential development with a deep setback paved as a plaza, but lacking seating, bike racks, or other pedestrian amenities. (D) Residential ground floor with minimal setbacks, low transparency, and street trees along the curb. (E) Residential development with direct unit entries to the street. The facade incorporates very low transparency but varied materials, facade articulation, and a street tree buffer. (F) The Filipino Community Center incorporates modulation and more windows on a secondary frontage, but the MLK frontage has high windows and low transparency, creating a more closed edge (Framework 2025).*

Pedestrian “walls” occur where ground-floor uses limit transparency or access, like at the Filipino Community Center (F), as well as in areas with dramatic topographic change. Different treatments of topographic shift include hard, impermeable walls (G) as well as more varied, natural-looking tiers (H). More literally, there are retaining walls of various scale and character that result from the topographic difference.



*(G) Wall and staircase mediating between ML King Jr Way S and higher topography to the west. (H) Rocky retaining wall on S Graham St (Framework 2025).*

The pedestrian experience is also heavily influenced by unclear boundaries between car and pedestrian space. A significant portion of the street edge at Graham Street is currently dedicated to auto-oriented uses, including wide driveways, surface parking lots, drive-through businesses, and a gas station. Where sidewalk abuts asphalt in parking lots, it can be unclear where circulation is meant for pedestrians versus cars. Further, curb cuts disrupt sidewalk continuity and increase risk of potential conflicts or collisions.



*Much of the street edge surrounding the future Graham station is used for cars: wide driveways, parking lots, drive-throughs, and a gas station, fragmenting essential pedestrian infrastructure (Framework 2025).*

Leftover triangular spaces created by the intersections of the diagonal ML King Jr Way S with cross streets are often absorbed into adjacent parking areas and underutilized, actually limiting overall functionality and circulation of parking areas. Some businesses are improvising to create outdoor space for seating, vending, or improved pedestrian access, but there is currently a lack of dedicated infrastructure to support these activities.



*(M) Businesses at MLK and Graham added a sidewalk to clarify entrances and separate pedestrians from a wide vehicle lane. (N) A business at MLK and Graham spills out into the parking lot to create informal outdoor vending space (Framework 2025).*

## Takeaways

Curb to curb, ML King Jr Way S is unlikely to change; the roadway will remain a hub for cars, freight, and rail, with two lanes of fast-moving traffic in each direction. The proposed addition of protected bike facilities will add a multi-modal option as well as a buffer between cars and pedestrians, but the street will remain a fast-moving corridor rather than a meandering pedestrian hub. As such, making MLK safer for pedestrians may require other types of mitigation including visual friction such as landscaping, and creating more pedestrian space along private frontages.

The current combinations of low-to-no setbacks and high transparency facades and plaza setbacks without adequate buffers from the street reflect 'pedestrian-friendly' urban conditions that are mismatched to the roadway design. Places in Seattle with similar frontages, such as the station area on Broadway in Capitol Hill, benefit from the added buffer of bike facilities, wider sidewalks, a narrower roadway, and crosswalks every 420'. Treatment of MLK around Graham should respond to how people will use the space, likely as a connecting corridor between more walkable streets. Enhancing pedestrian comfort and safety will thus rely on careful frontage and setback design for new development: using building setbacks, landscaping, benches, and bike racks to create safe, usable pedestrian space without attempting to turn MLK into a plaza-lined or downtown-like pedestrian corridor. Side street and building courtyards are better suited for spaces that encourage lingering, social activity, or downtown-style activation.

Open space, parking, and other uses should be intentionally located to reduce underutilized areas and align with specific pedestrian and business needs. Leftover triangle areas can be creatively repurposed to support pedestrian amenities, buffers, or transit-oriented infrastructure.

## Urban Design Key Takeaways

**Build a finer-grain network.** The Graham Street station area is currently scaled to car movement, functioning more as a corridor than a network. There are few alternative routes to ML King Jr Way S and a limited number of east-west through-connections. Large blocks, missing connections, and topographic barriers reinforce this pattern. There is a need for more pedestrian- and bike-friendly connections in both north-south and east-west directions. New developments should incorporate mid-block connections and pedestrian through-ways to reduce reliance on MLK, distribute density and movement across a broader, more cohesive network, and make station access more direct and intuitive. Redevelopment is an opportunity to introduce new circulation routes, break down large blocks, incorporate pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and build a vibrant public realm.

**Create an east-west connector.** Development, and potentially a new corridor of commercial zoning, could focus along S Graham St, a fairly flat east-west route with potential to become a pedestrian-friendly path to destinations. While S Orcas St and S Juneau St connect more directly to Hillman City, the grade increases steeply off of MLK, making them somewhat less viable as commercial corridors.

**Support infill and connectivity through urban form.** Focusing on small- to mid-scale infill development can build on existing patterns of small commercial stalls and distributed neighborhood hubs to increase options for housing and small business operations, increase density, and improve pedestrian movement.

**MLK is a major thoroughfare and the public right-of-way is likely not going to change.** ML King Jr Way S will continue to function as a high-capacity transit and vehicular corridor. Design strategies along MLK should prioritize safe, comfortable, and efficient pedestrian and cyclist movement, but should not reflect patterns better suited for “people streets.” Frontages on MLK should focus on layered buffering including setbacks, landscaping, and widened pedestrian zones. Auto-oriented frontages (including surface parking lots) should be avoided, and there should be clear, direct connections to adjacent side streets and pathways where more social and pedestrian-oriented activities can occur.

**Expand and improve the public realm.** Spaces intended for lingering, gathering, and community use should be strategically designed and located to create more usable, comfortable public spaces. Shifting more of these spaces away from MLK and into select side streets and interior block networks can reinforce a more distributed pattern of activity across the station area while expanding overall public space in the district. With limited area in the right-of-way, implementing frontage standards on MLK to emphasize setbacks, landscaping, and commercial-adjacent public space will create a more consistent, pedestrian-friendly environment in the station’s immediate vicinity without overloading the corridor.

**Repurpose leftover and irregular spaces.** The triangle and other residual spaces created by the MLK corridor are better used as pedestrian-supportive spaces rather than as add-ons to surface parking. Explore creative options for utilizing these spaces as pedestrian shortcuts, landscaped buffers, and more.