

Land Use Technical Report

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Prepared for: Seattle Downtown Regional
Center Plan

Prepared by: Seva Workshop



Seattle
Office of Planning &
Community Development

Land Use

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Downtown Regional Center Subarea Plan
AUGUST 2024

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DOWNTOWN IN CONTEXT

Seattle's Downtown is a central anchor for the city and region. Its western boundary is shaped by the waterline to Elliott Bay and I-5 delineates the eastern edge, except for part of the Chinatown-International District (CID) that extends east of I-5. The northern border is set by Denny Way, with Uptown and South Lake Union as neighbors. The south transitions into Seattle's industrial district (SODO) and maritime port. Downtown is designated as one of six Regional Centers in Seattle's Comprehensive Plan and includes 568 acres of property. See Exhibit 1. The regional transit systems of Link Light Rail and Sounder Rail are oriented to move people into, out of, and around Downtown. King County Metro's bus service, the City's Streetcar grid, Washington State Ferries, and the federal interstate highway system all contribute to the transportation landscape that allows over 188,000 workers and 32,000 residents to access their jobs and homes.¹



¹ Job and population estimates from City of Seattle “Urban Center Housing Employment/Housing Units Growth Reports”, 2022.

Exhibit 1: Downtown Context Map



Regional Role

Downtown Seattle is the economic engine of the interconnected metropolitan region that is home to over 4 million people and \$517 billion GDP.² Its landmark attractions include the skyscrapers that form Seattle’s skyline, cultural institutions such as the Olympic Sculpture Park and Seattle Art Museum (SAM), the shopping districts of Pike Place Market and Westlake Center, entertainment venues like Lumen Field and the Paramount Theater, and the historic neighborhoods of Pioneer Square and the Chinatown-International District (CID). Downtown is also a seat of government, home to City Hall and many City, County, and State administration buildings. The region’s public transit networks collaborate to ease the movement of as many people as possible into and out of this core.

Historic Development Context³

Prior to the presence of White settlers in the region Seattle, and the area around Downtown, was inhabited extensively by Coast Salish peoples for thousands of years. The Indians of the Eastern Puget Sound lived in relatively small, autonomous villages and spoke variations of the Lushootseed (txʷəlšucid, dxʷləšúcid), one of the Coast Salish languages. Indigenous people lived in permanent villages of longhouses or winter houses, and traditionally left their winter residences in the spring, summer, and early fall in family canoes to travel to temporary camps at fishing, hunting, and gathering grounds. At the time of the first White settlements around 1850, natives were living in more than 90 longhouses, in at least 17 villages, in modern-day Seattle and environs. Many of these longhouses were burned by White settlers and Indigenous peoples temporarily took residence in inhospitable environments such as Ballast Island – part of today’s waterfront – until they were ultimately displaced again.⁴



“Indian Camp on Ballast Island”, Image Source: [DuwamishTribe.Org](https://www.duwamishtribe.org/)

² Population from 2022 ACS; GDP from St Louis FED, 2022

³ [Historylink Downtown Seattle](#); [Historylink Denny Regrade](#); [NPS Chinatown Historic District](#); [Waterfront Seattle Program](#); [Sound Transit History](#); [Seattle Streetcar](#); [MyNorthwest COVID-19 timeline](#); [BLM Alliance WA](#)

⁴ [Ballast Island History](#)

In the decades following colonization, European settlers changed the topography and ecology to form the modern day Seattle landscape. Henry Yesler built a steam-powered sawmill in this new village, securing its economic importance into the future. Maritime trade of lumber and salmon were the first industries in Seattle for these settlers. The railroads arrived in the 1880s, fueling population growth. Pioneer Square was built as the city’s downtown but burned to the ground in 1889 in the Great Seattle Fire. The city was rebuilt in stone and brick and was elevated 12 feet above its existing level to avoid perennial flooding issues. The “Seattle underground” preserves segments of the old city and serves as a modern-day tourist attraction. The city’s next boom came in 1897 with the Klondike Gold Rush. Pike Place Market was established during this era in 1907. As commercial enterprise expanded the footprint of Downtown, engineers took on the massive project of what is now known as the Denny Regrade. The project started in 1897 but was not complete until over 30 years later. The high point of Denny Hill was lowered by more than 100 feet to create the mostly flat area now known as Denny Triangle.

Waves of immigration from the 1860s onward resulted in a robust community in the neighborhood presently known as the Chinatown-International District (CID). Chinese immigrants were among the first and were housed in “Chinese quarters” near the waterfront for easy access to the dock where they worked. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 slowed this migration and, in 1886, White Seattleites drove out many Chinese residents out with mobs and riots. The Great Fire in 1889 further decimated the community. Eventually, the remaining Chinese community moved inland along 2nd Avenue South and Washington Street. As property values grew in this area, the Jackson Regrade project commenced, and the Chinese were again displaced. This third move landed in the location on King Street that remains the heart of today’s Chinatown. Japanese immigration started at the end of the 19th century and the beginnings to Japantown were established two blocks north of King Street. By the 1920s, Japantown stretched from 4th Avenue to 7th, along Main Street. During this time period, Filipino Americans started to arrive, replacing many Chinese dock workers and establishing a Manilatown in the area around Maynard Avenue and King Street. Everything changed in 1942, when the federal government forcibly removed and detained people of Japanese ancestry. Japanese and Japanese American residents lost their land and were forever scarred by the internment. Many who returned to the area relocated, as they no longer had claim to their homes or businesses. During their removal, a wave of African Americans came to Seattle for military duty and to fill wartime jobs. Many lived in buildings abandoned by the interned Japanese, and a new scene of clubs and jazz halls were established.



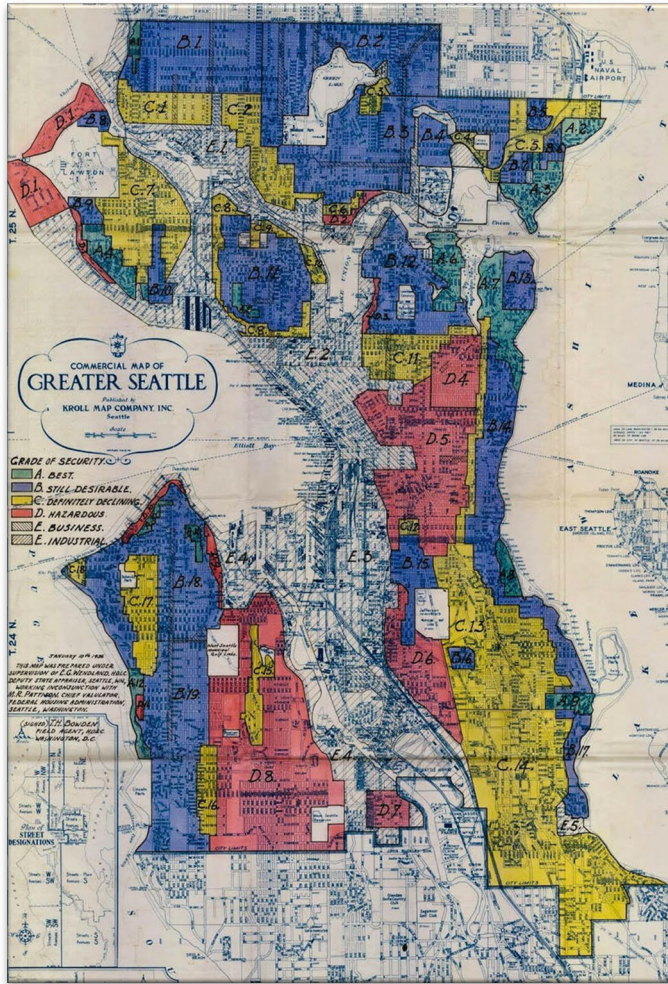
Militia lined up during anti-Chinese riot in Seattle, February 1886.

Image Source:
[Museum of History and Industry](https://www.museumofhistoryandindustry.org/),
 Seattle.

Major infrastructure development during the 20th century fundamentally changed Downtown, increasing access to and from the commercial core and fragmenting the existing communities along the alignments. These corridors included the Pacific Highway built in the 1920s (later renamed US 99 and then SR 99 after construction of I-5), the elevated Alaskan Way completed in 1936 and subsequent double-deck Alaskan Way Viaduct built in three phases from 1949 through 1959, and the Seattle Freeway (now I-5) constructed in the 1960s. With these three large projects, Seattle’s waterfront became an interstate highway, and a harsh eastern border to the Downtown was set. The construction of I-5 displaced many families and businesses in the CID as it bifurcated the neighborhood. These corridors continue to define much of the mobility into, out of, and within Seattle’s Downtown, with the exception of the viaduct, which was removed in 2019. The scars of displacement, poor air quality, and increased noise remain in today’s CID.

Post-war settlement expansion occurred in Seattle when racial discrimination in housing practices was rampant. Racially restrictive covenants dictated who was allowed to live in Seattle neighborhoods. Redlining maps, such as the one in Exhibit 2, show how lending institutions used their power to block homeownership in the CID —identified as “Hazardous” for its concentration of immigrants and non-White communities. Much of Downtown is considered unsuitable for housing altogether, simply identified as “business” or “industrial.” This history of restriction set the stage for decades of race-based segregation in Seattle’s Downtown.⁵

⁵ https://depts.washington.edu/civilr/covenants_map.htm

Exhibit 2: Kroll Commercial Map of Greater Seattle, 1936.

This map from 1936 illustrates the racial segregation perpetuated by the mortgage lending industry. The blue areas, seen in neighborhoods to the north, Queen Anne, West Seattle, and along the eastern coast were designated “still desirable” and housed predominantly White communities. Residents in these neighborhoods received favorable lending rates. In contrast, the yellow and red areas were labeled “definitely declining” and “hazardous,” which discouraged banks from giving loans to residents in these areas. Coupled with racially restrictive covenants, these tools were effective at excluding BIPOC homeowners and were particularly discriminatory toward Black residents until they were outlawed under the Fair Housing Act of 1968.

The Housing Appendix of Seattle’s Comprehensive Plan takes a city-wide look at historical exclusion patterns and their impact on communities of color in Seattle.

In the 1970s and 1980s, major development projects and new waves of immigration continued to shape Downtown. Pushes to redevelop large swaths of Downtown led to the establishment of historic districts in Pioneer Square (1970), Pike Place Market (1971), and the Chinatown-International District (1973). The Kingdome stadium was built on the site of today’s Lumen Field, completed in 1976. In 1975, waves of immigration from Vietnam led to the creation of Little Sài Gòn, east of the CID. Construction booms continued Downtown into the 1980s. This wave of development includes Columbia Center, which remains the city’s largest tower today, and the Convention Center. A large department store, Frederick & Nelson, anchored the Westlake shopping district. As part of this, Pine Street between 4th and 5th Avenues was closed to cars, creating a triangular pedestrian zone in this mall area. In response to the high-rise development of this decade, the Citizens’ Alternative Plan was passed in 1989, limiting building heights to 30 stories. This restriction remained in place until 2006.

In the decades from 1990-2020, Downtown developed into a mixed-use and transit-oriented center, adding many more residential units and options for transit connection. In the 1990s, many cultural institutions were introduced or revitalized, and residential development expanded. Among cultural institutions of this decade, the Seattle Art Museum opened in its current location in 1991 and Benaroya Hall opened in 1998. During this era, the pedestrian district by Westlake reopened to cars at the insistence of Nordstrom, which took over the Frederick & Nelson's building when they departed. New condominiums and apartments appeared across Denny and Belltown. In the 2000s, energy and activism coalesced around concepts for reimagining Seattle's waterfront. This led to the establishment of the Waterfront Seattle Program in 2010, which would go on to develop the design for the removal of the Alaskan Way Viaduct and a complete reshaping of how Seattle connects to its shoreline along Elliott Bay. Transit systems expanded in the 2000s with the introduction of Sounder Rail between Seattle and Tacoma and, 3 years later, northern connection to Everett. At the end of 2007, the Seattle Streetcar opened to passengers, with a limited line running between Westlake and South Lake Union. Light rail service started in 2009, with the initial line running from Westlake to Sea-Tac Airport. Subsequent extensions to the north have connected Downtown up to Northgate via Capitol Hill and the University District. In 2016, the streetcar system expanded with a second line connecting Capitol Hill, First Hill, Yesler Terrace, the CID, and Pioneer Square.

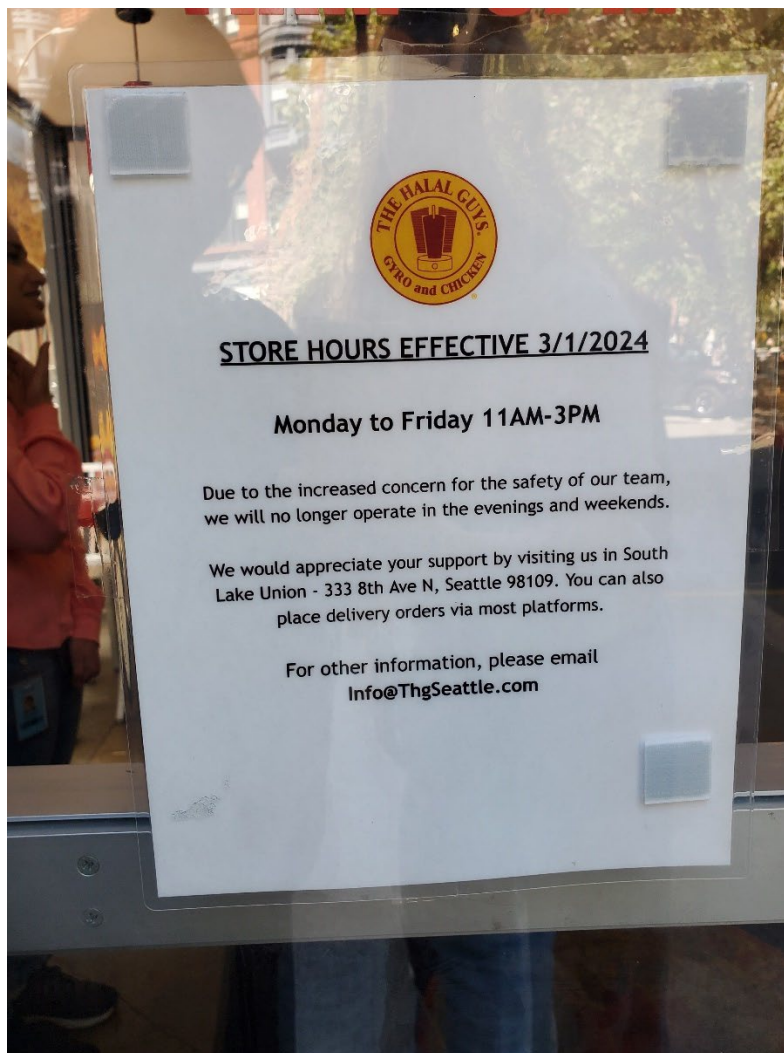


Opening day of the light rail system announced in the Seattle Times on Sunday, July 19, 2009.

Image Source:

<https://www.historylink.org/File/2071>
1

Most recently, Downtown has been shaped and impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and calls for racial justice in the aftermath of George Floyd’s murder. Public health orders to stay at home began in March 2020 and lasted through June 2021 in various forms. Because many office commuters began to work from home, the daily life and economy of Seattle’s core fundamentally changed. While mandates have lifted, many offices are still functioning in hybrid or permanently remote status for the long-term. This has resulted in many vacancies, stalled commercial real estate development, and the closure of businesses. In parallel, national waves of anger and unrest were released in response to police brutality toward Black communities. The murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020 fueled the existing Black Lives Matter movement nationwide, and Downtown Seattle was a venue to many protests, marches, and demonstrations in the months and years that followed. This activism has elevated questions of how policing and public safety are conducted, how reparations for historic harms can be adequately addressed, and how communities can move forward in centering anti-racist policy frameworks.



Downtown businesses today face issues with attracting enough street traffic and safety concerns which has led to vacancies and reduced hours at many local businesses.

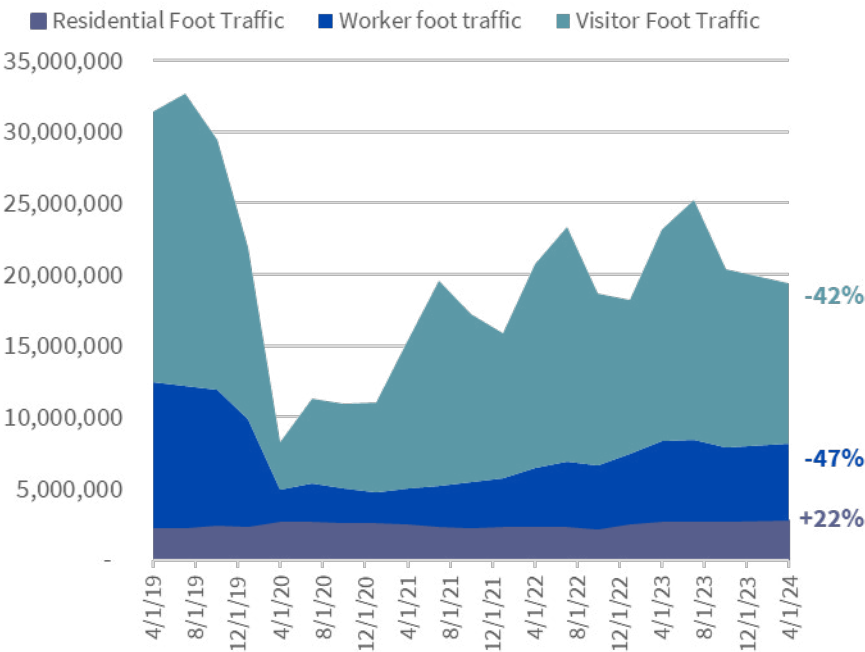
Photo taken 7/16/2024.

Current Context

Today, work is afoot to reconnect Downtown with its waterfront after the removal of the viaduct, reimagine its role in a post-pandemic economic environment, and prepare for new light rail stations and connections with system expansion. The new waterfront connects pedestrians from adjacent neighborhoods and Pike Place Market to directly access a waterfront promenade, public parks, and entertainment experiences. Scheduled for completion in 2025, this project critically improves the city’s climate resilience and enhances Seattle’s relationship to Elliott Bay.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shifted the way visitors and residents experience Downtown. The large cohort of office employees that have long filled Downtown Seattle’s streets and businesses during the weekday are now settling into hybrid work environments, with many employees working from home for some or all days of the week. Visitors—both out-of-town tourists and locals who live in other neighborhoods—are back, but not yet at pre-pandemic numbers. Residents are the only users of Downtown who have increased in number over the past 5 years but remain the smallest proportion of foot traffic numbers. See Exhibit 3.

Exhibit 3: Foot Traffic Downtown by Visitor Type, 2019-2024.



**Downtown
2023: Key Stats**



Size: **934 acres**



Population: **47,859**



Housing Units: **33,698**



Jobs: **187,799**



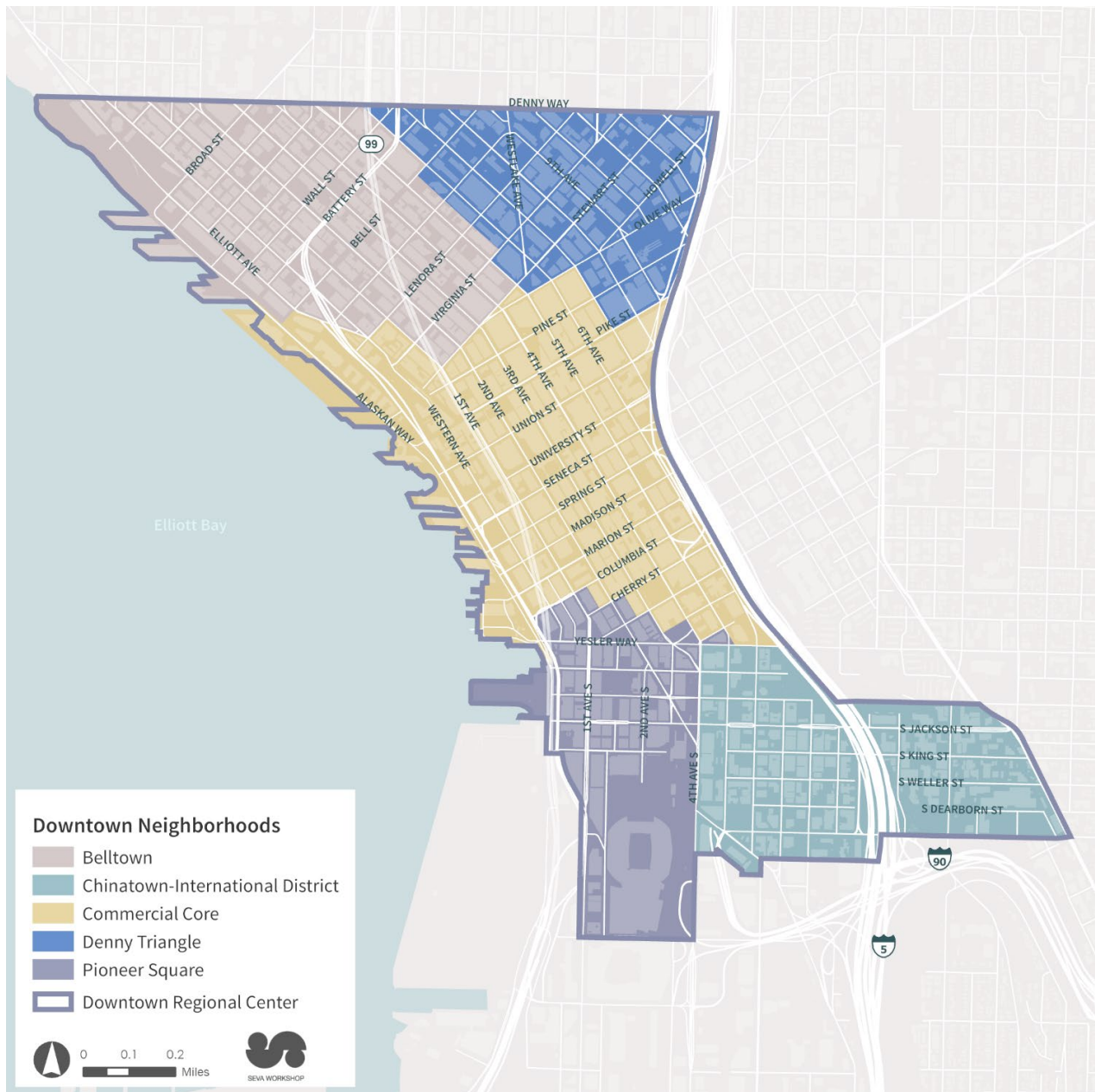
Activity Unit Density: **252 au/acre**

Sources: Size calculated from King County Assessor data, 2023; Population from City of Seattle summarized OFM data, 2022; Housing Units from City of Seattle summary of King County Assessor data, 2022; Jobs based on ESD estimates for 2022; Seva Workshop, 2024.

(to left) Sources: DAP Dashboard hosted by OED, 2024; Seva Workshop, 2024.

For purposes of this report, Seattle’s Downtown is organized into 5 distinct neighborhoods or sub-districts: Belltown, Denny Triangle, Commercial Core, Pioneer Square, and the Chinatown-International District. Each of these neighborhoods brings a unique character and set of attributes that contribute to this diverse and attractive Regional Center. These neighborhood designations are based on Seattle’s 2015 Comprehensive Plan and available datasets. See a map of these neighborhood boundaries below. This subarea is a geographically large area, exceeding the 640-acre size guidance provided by PSRC, however this reflects the area’s connection to high-capacity transit.

Exhibit 4: Downtown Map with Neighborhoods.



Many Downtown neighborhoods and institutions are planning for change. Recent plans have been published to vision for the future of the CID, Pike Place Market, the industrial zones to the south (inclusive of Lumen Field), and 3rd Avenue. King County is undergoing a Civic Campus Plan for its 2.3 million square feet of presence in the center of Downtown.⁶ The Downtown Activation Plan (DAP) has initiated a series of events and interventions across neighborhoods to re-energize Downtown. Detail on these planning efforts and how they inform this land use study are summarized on [page 17](#). In some areas, preparation for local events has created urgency around improvements and upgrades, such as hosting several games for the FIFA World Cup in 2026.

Planning Framework

The City of Seattle’s planning framework is set by the statewide Growth Management Act (GMA). Counties under the GMA are assigned growth targets, with allocations to cities made at the regional level through the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC). PSRC’s regional framework for housing and job growth is then adopted by each of its four counties. Local comprehensive plans align with this growth strategy. See Exhibit 5. The Downtown Regional Center Plan nests under Seattle’s Comprehensive Plan, which outlines the citywide growth targets and neighborhood-specific targets. These allocations are important factors that guide investments in infrastructure and services, as well as land use policy development.

Exhibit 5: Planning Framework for Coordinated Statewide and Local Growth.



Image Source: PSRC, 2024.

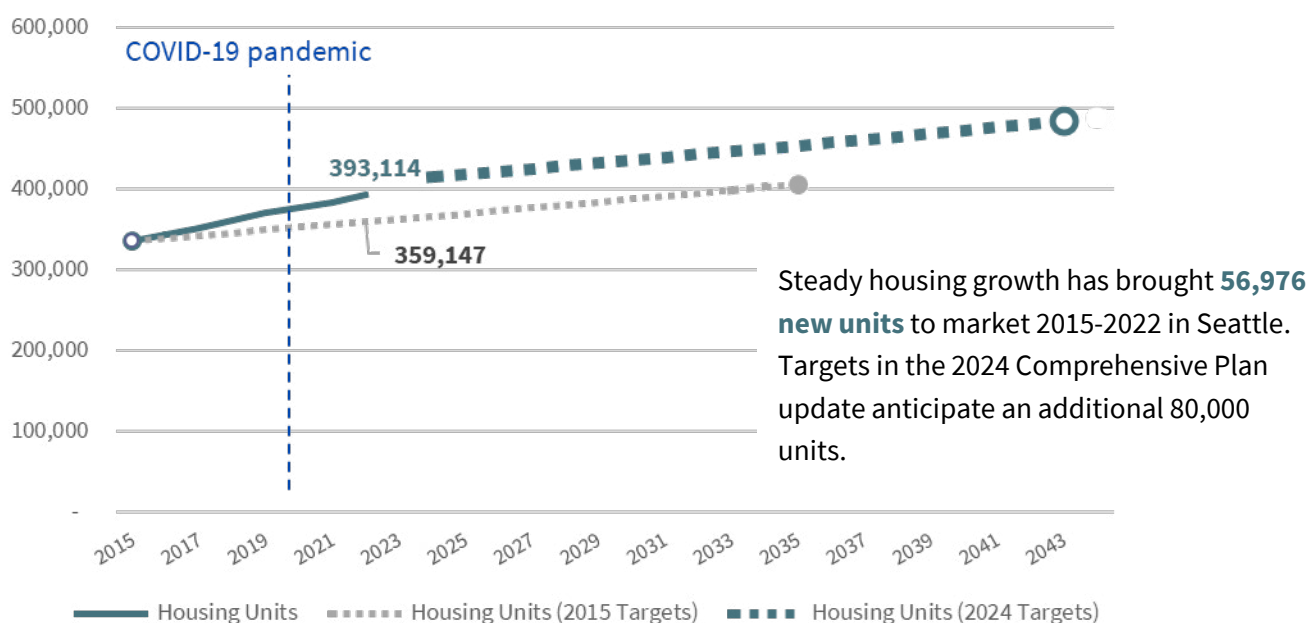
Downtown Seattle is a critical component of success for PSRC’s 65/75 goal. A cornerstone of achieving the greenhouse gas (GHG) targets established in VISION 2050 is for 65% of population growth and 75% of employment growth to occur within walkable access to high-capacity transit

⁶ <https://kingcounty.gov/en/legacy/initiatives/civic-campus-master-plan>

and within regional growth centers. Aligning growth with identified transportation corridors offers stability and clarity for business owners and developers to be able to concentrate investments in ways that support sustainability for generations to come. Downtown Seattle is the transit hub for the Sounder Rail, Link Light Rail, and local and regional bus networks. Downtown neighborhoods represent the densest concentrations of housing, transportation, and jobs in the region.

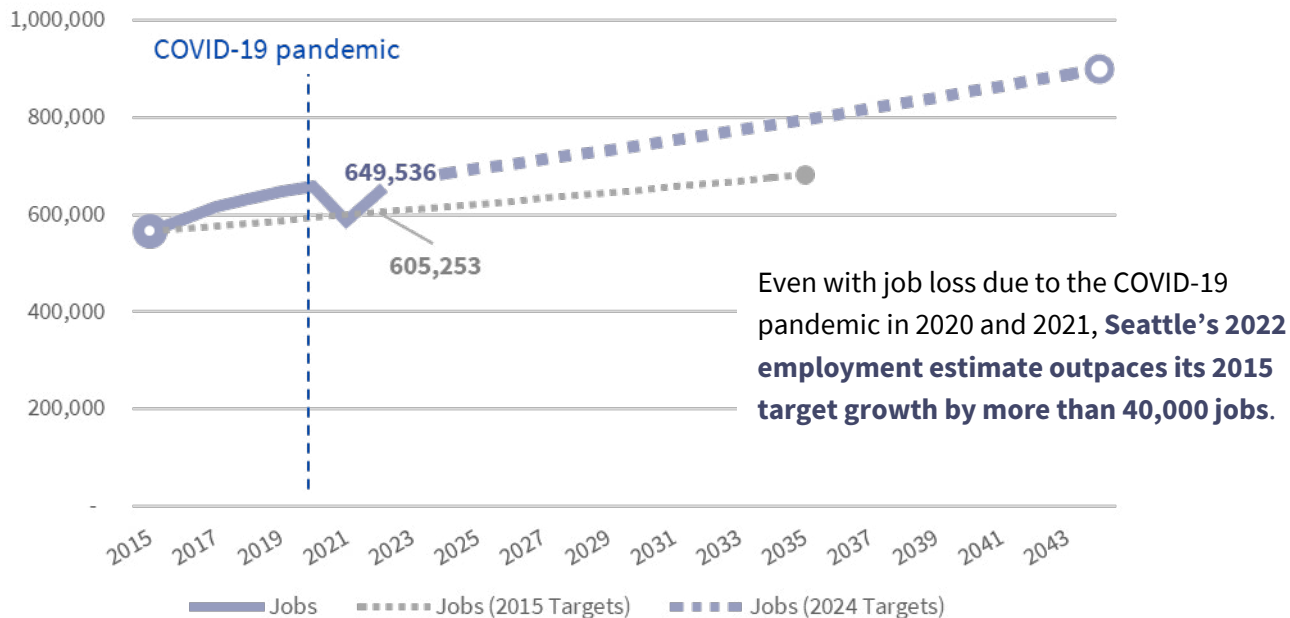
Seattle has outpaced its growth targets from the 2015 Comprehensive Plan. For both housing and jobs, Seattle has been growing at a faster rate than anticipated in 2015. Much of this exponential growth can be attributed to the explosion of the tech sector in South Lake Union. The 2024 Comprehensive Plan sets new growth targets for housing and jobs that align with higher expectations for future growth. See Exhibit 6 and Exhibit 7. Land use policy will be adjusted to align with these revised expectations.

Exhibit 6: Seattle Housing Units, Actual and Targets from 2015 & 2024 Comprehensive Plans



Note: Pace of growth from 2015 housing targets set based on a consistent CAGR to achieve 2035 targets.

Sources: City of Seattle “UCUV Housing Growth Report”, 2023; Seva Workshop, 2024.

Exhibit 7: Seattle Jobs, Actual and Targets from 2015 & 2024 Comprehensive Plans

Note: Pace of growth from 2015 housing targets set based on a consistent CAGR to achieve 2035 targets.

Sources: City of Seattle, 2023 “UCUV Job Growth Report”; Seva Workshop, 2024.

Seattle’s growth strategy is to develop a network of centers across the city where higher densities accommodate future population and employment growth.⁷ Downtown is one of six designated Regional Centers, where the highest intensities of future growth are expected to concentrate. The other Regional Centers are South Lake Union, Uptown, First Hill/Capitol Hill, Northgate, and the University District. Hub Urban Villages and Residential Urban Villages add connective nodes of activity across the city’s geography. These designations align with investments for public transportation corridors and other planning efforts. See map in Exhibit 11.

Since the 2015 Comprehensive Plan, Regional Centers have doubled the pace of population growth than the city overall. Downtown has added the most housing units, with 8,444 new units from 2015-2022. Housing units in South Lake Union have more than doubled over this timeframe, adding another 6,614 units. The six Regional Centers combine to account for 48% of all Seattle housing growth in this time period. See Exhibit 8.

⁷ ["Evolving Seattle's Growth Strategy"](#), Seattle Planning Commission, 2020.

Exhibit 8: Housing Units in Seattle and by Regional Center, 2015-2022.

	Downtown	SLU	Uptown	First Hill/ Capitol Hill	Northgate	University District	All Regional Centers	All Seattle
2015	24,345	4,537	7,557	29,445	4,535	9,951	80,370	336,138
2016	24,675	5,564	7,623	30,521	4,535	10,256	83,174	342,799
2017	27,360	6,609	7,864	31,304	4,540	10,734	88,411	351,766
2018	28,143	8,534	8,023	32,678	4,509	10,927	92,814	360,258
2019	29,928	9,774	8,229	33,970	4,863	11,443	98,207	370,418
2020	30,732	9,774	8,588	34,758	4,871	12,049	100,772	376,161
2021	31,667	9,962	9,040	35,810	4,888	12,492	103,859	382,862
2022	32,789	11,151	9,207	37,048	4,992	12,747	107,934	393,114
Change								
2015-2022	8,444	6,614	1,650	7,603	457	2,796	27,564	56,976
% Change	35%	146%	22%	26%	10%	28%	34%	17%

Sources: City of Seattle summaries of permit data in “UCUV Growth Report”, 2023; Seva Workshop, 2024.

Job growth has been less consistent across the Regional Centers. Downtown and First Hill/Capitol Hill grew at pace with the citywide rate and South Lake Union doubled its job count. However, Uptown saw no net change and both Northgate and the University District experienced employment loss. The three regional centers that experienced growth over this timeframe account for 87% of all new Seattle jobs from 2015-2022. See Exhibit 9. Despite overall job growth Downtown, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted employment, leading to job loss in 2020-2021. Reported employment figures have yet to recover to pre-pandemic levels.

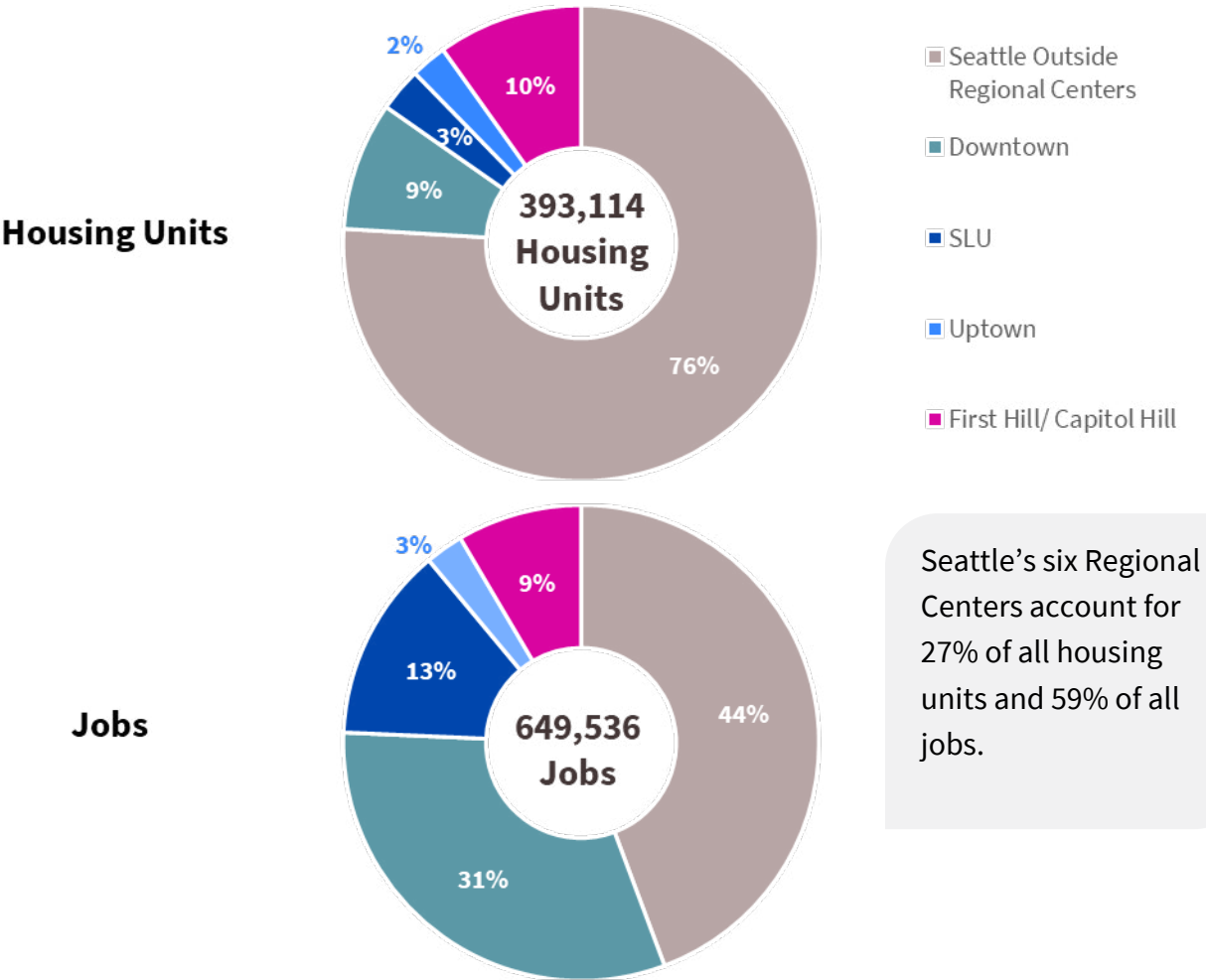
Exhibit 9: Jobs in Seattle and by Regional Center, 2015-2022.

	Downtown	SLU	Uptown	First Hill/ Capitol Hill	Northgate	University District	All Regional Centers	All Seattle
2015	164,502	38,762	15,483	43,628	12,876	47,678	322,929	567,393
2016	171,833	44,060	15,541	45,554	13,327	48,355	338,670	590,124
2017	179,524	53,328	15,152	47,295	12,930	49,849	358,078	615,488
2018	188,243	62,414	15,638	47,755	12,759	45,233	372,042	631,727
2019	196,469	65,278	15,649	50,755	12,216	42,407	382,774	647,723
2020	200,029	76,773	15,340	51,454	10,883	41,589	396,068	658,939
2021	175,319	75,735	1,268	45,703	10,035	38,308	346,368	586,969
2022	188,258	79,328	15,477	50,867	10,250	39,834	384,014	649,536
Change								
2015-2022	23,756	40,566	(6)	7,239	(2,626)	(7,844)	61,085	82,143
% Change	14%	105%	0%	17%	-20%	-16%	19%	14%

Sources: City of Seattle summaries of ESD estimates, 2023; Seva Workshop, 2024.

Downtown accounts for 8% of the city’s housing units and 29% of its jobs. The Regional Center has a job-to-housing ratio of 5.7, reflecting the regional draw of its employment pool. A summary of today’s housing and jobs distribution across the city and its regional centers is shown in **Exhibit 10**.

Exhibit 10: Housing Units and Jobs for Seattle and its Regional Centers, 2022.



Sources: City of Seattle UCUV Growth Reports, 2022; Seva Workshop, 2024.

Exhibit 11: Seattle’s Urban Villages, 2023.

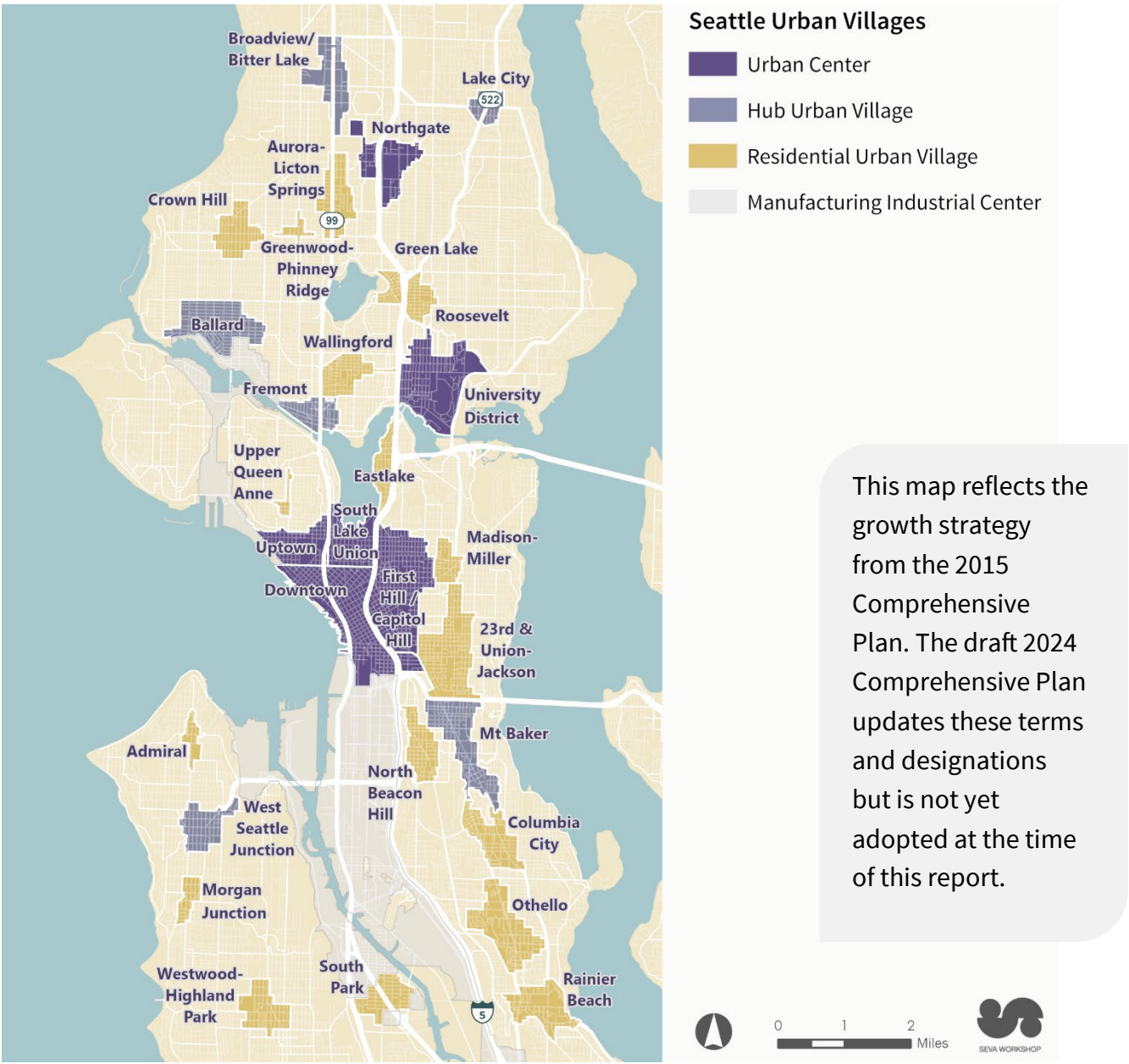


Image Source: Seattle OPCD; Seva Workshop

The Downtown Regional Center Plan is being developed in parallel with the City of Seattle 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update. The population and employment targets used in this Plan align with allocations from the City and County, falling under the overarching vision of PSRC’s VISION 2050 and Seattle’s Comprehensive Plan. It is one small piece of this larger framework for responsible and coordinated growth for the Puget Sound region. The draft Comprehensive Plan anticipates an additional 80,000 housing units and 159,000 jobs in the 2024-2044 timeframe.

The 2024 Comprehensive Plan update references **Regional Centers, including Downtown, as places of regional importance due to their housing, office, retail, and/or cultural and entertainment uses.** Policies specific to Regional Centers highlight the importance of allowing a wide range of higher-density housing types and non-residential uses (including most of the city's office development), and adopting subarea plans that respond to the unique challenges and opportunities of each designated center.

For the 2024-2044 planning horizon, 46% of Seattle's housing units and 61% of its job growth are allocated to its 6 Regional Centers. In 2022, Downtown had over double the total number of jobs than the next Regional Center and was the second largest subarea in terms of housing units. By targets, Downtown is expected to maintain its lead in the job market and become the largest housing center in Seattle as well. Planning, investments, and policy supports are needed to ensure that this growth is equitable and sustainable.

Previous and Concurrent Planning Efforts

Waterfront Redesign

In 2010, Seattle embarked on a program to re-envision the Downtown waterfront. A volunteer advisory group called the Central Waterfront Committee developed a Strategic Plan in 2012, outlining a concept and designs for a more connected and accessible waterfront. Since 2017, components of this vision have been in motion. Notably, the viaduct was removed in 2019 and replaced with a surface-level street along Alaskan Way. Work is ongoing to complete the vision for redesigned piers, pedestrian and bike connections, and a 20-acre public park. The full program construction is anticipated for completion in 2025. **This work redefines Downtown Seattle's relationship to the water, providing long-desired improvements to pedestrian access, public space, and connection to adjacent neighborhoods.**

Seattle Transportation Plan Update & EIS

The Seattle Transportation Plan (STP) is the City of Seattle's long-term vision for the future of transportation in Seattle. **The STP addresses mobility, access, and public space needs in a single document as a unified system. This effort incorporates several city initiatives like Seattle's Vision Zero, the Race and Social Justice Initiative, the Climate Action Plan, the Transportation Electrification Blueprint, and others.** Additionally, the STP references plans created by other regional transportation agencies. In highest density areas, such as Downtown, the STP focuses on supporting transit, improving pedestrian and bike infrastructure, enabling effective freight access, and establishing more people-focused places in the public right-of-way.

Light Rail Expansion Plans (ST3)

The ST3 light rail expansion includes a suite of projects to enhance mobility across the region. Downtown is most directly impacted by new stations and connections developed as part of the Ballard Link Extension Project. **Nine new stations are proposed, three of which are directly**

located Downtown: Denny (right at the border of the Downtown Regional Center boundary), Midtown (location of station TBD – alternatives are being studied), and a new station in the International District. Enhanced connections will be offered at Westlake. Progress on this extension has been delayed as public comment has fueled additional rounds of study for the proposed alignments. Sound Transit hopes to begin service on this line in 2039 and cost estimates for the project have ranged from \$53 billion - \$142 billion.⁸

CID Neighborhood Strategic Plan

This community-led effort establishes a 10-year vision and planning framework for the CID. The process included a survey (580 responses) and extensive engagement including 60 in-depth interviews, 3 focus groups, and feedback from an advisory group. **The top concerns identified in this plan are public safety, maintaining cultural identity, and centering the experience of residents and business owners.** The key issues and topics addressed in the plan are economic strength, neighborhood character, culture and history, housing, transportation and mobility, public space, and community dynamics. The work identifies shared goals, along with areas where perspectives differ among stakeholders. Follow-up work is underway to assign specific action steps to achieve this vision.

Little Sài Gòn Action Plan

Published in 2022, the Little Sài Gòn Action Plan sets a vision for the future of the Little Sài Gòn neighborhood, a small but mighty component of the CID. **The plan includes a detailed roadmap with actions to support the identified goals: diverse small businesses, housing affordability, reduced crime, cleanliness, infrastructure and amenities, and collaboration.** High priority actions, identified by the Leadership Committee who guided the development of the plan, include partnering with the City to ensure implementation of the vision, redevelopment of vacant or under-used sites (particularly if publicly owned), and specific interventions such as pedestrian safety interventions under the I-5 overpass and at intersections along S Jackson St.

Pike Place Master Plan

This plan takes a 50-year look at this anchoring site in Seattle's Downtown. The draft released in 2024 addresses financial uncertainties, declining patronage, aging infrastructure, and other market pressures impacting Pike Place. **The three foundational goals of the plan are to: ensure long-term financial sustainability; increase local patronage; and advance a diverse, equitable, and inclusive market.** Strategies to achieve these goals include working with farmers to increase their presence at the Market, lowering barriers to entry for local entrepreneurs and craftspeople, investing in physical infrastructure improvements at entrances and connecting to the new Waterfront Park, and strengthening partnerships to amplify the Market's message and

⁸ <https://www.soundtransit.org/sites/default/files/2017-financial-plan.pdf>; [Seattle Times "Sound Transit to Choose New CEO in Closed-Door Talks"](#), 2022.

role in the community. A potential tax levy in 2028 could help fund the implementation for this plan.

Industrial-Maritime Strategy

In 2023, the Industrial and Maritime Strategy was approved. These land use changes aim **to support job growth, strengthen protections for core industrial and maritime areas, and encourage modern and higher-density industrial development in areas near light rail stations**. Industrial districts directly border the Downtown Regional Center to the south, with overlap of the Urban Industrial zone covering Lumen Field, and along the waterfront to the north. Seattle’s industrial lands are key to the economic health of the city and region.

Third Avenue Strategic Forum

This 2024 report studies the transportation corridor of 3rd Avenue in Downtown, from Battery Street to Yesler Way. Corridor improvements center on four areas of emphasis: **activations and programming, infrastructure and maintenance, communications, and policy**. Short-term actions include interventions such as improved lighting and increased programming of events for activation. 5-year strategies center on the creation of a Public Development Authority that would manage the street, coordinate programming, and supplement public safety teams.

The Downtown Activation Plan (DAP)

The DAP launched in June 2023 with a focus on attracting more people Downtown. Strategic interventions and events have defined this initiative, such as the opening of a youth arts hub in King Street Station and a summer concert series. The focus areas of the program are safety, housing, retail, workers, culture, tourism, and going green. The DAP has also called for longer-term “Space Needle Thinking,” which includes the following initiatives:

- A “Culture Connector” streetcar that links the existing SLU and First Hill lines via 1st Avenue.
- Revisioning Westlake as the heart of Downtown, with a pedestrian plaza and art installations.
- A massive, indoor/outdoor recreation facility.
- Thinking vertically about building neighborhoods with more towers that have mixed-use ground levels (including one or more schools) and mixed-income housing above.
- Achieving 30% tree canopy coverage, including the lidding of I-5.
- Introducing a BIPOC Mercado for small businesses, creating spaces such as shared commercial kitchens to support community-based organizations.
- Opening a Makers Campus where students, entrepreneurs, educators, and businesses can co-mingle to create a thriving center for innovation and opportunity.

King County Civic Campus Plan

King County has proposed an initiative to overhaul its Downtown campus and consolidate its footprint in Seattle. This would have major ripple effects for the surrounding area, especially as Sound Transit has planned a light rail station near this campus which would greatly benefit its

employees. In 2017 a data gathering phase started. Several reports have been published since then, including a more recent 300-page Strategic Plan that outlines a conceptual vision for a mixed-use neighborhood on the existing site. The timeline shown in this document outlines a 15-year process to change across the campus buildings, including rehabilitation of the King County Courthouse facility as a larger office complex allowing for the disposition of large sites like the Chinook Building and King Street Center.⁹

LAND USE AND ZONING

Citywide Future Land Use

The Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map (FLUM) is a policy map of the 20-year vision of preferred land use patterns within the city. Four land use area types implement the urban village strategy—Regional Centers, Hub Urban Villages, Residential Urban Villages, and Manufacturing/Industrial Centers (MICs). Four other land use types—neighborhood residential areas, multi-family residential areas, commercial/mixed-use areas, and industrial areas—are meant to suggest specific uses outside of the urban villages. The FLUM also designates major institutions, cemeteries, and city-owned open space.

The future land use designations are implemented by a corresponding range of zoning districts and development regulations established in [Title 23 of the Seattle Municipal Code \(SMC\)](#). Zoning overlays also exist in certain locations, such as around major institution overlay districts and in master planned communities. Property located within an overlay district is subject both to its zone classification regulations and to additional requirements imposed for the overlay district. The overlay provisions apply if they conflict with the provisions of the underlying zone.

Exhibit 12: FLUM and Implementing Zones, 2023.

Future Land Use Designation	Typical Implementing Zones ¹
Urban Centers² Urban Centers are the densest Seattle neighborhoods. They act as both regional centers and local neighborhoods that offer a diverse mix of uses, housing, and employment opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Downtown (DH1, DH2, DMC, DMR, DOC1, DOC2, and DRC)▪ Pike Market Mixed (PMM), Pioneer Square Mixed (PSM), and International District Mixed and Residential (IDM and IDR)▪ Seattle Mixed (SM)▪ Lowrise, Midrise, and Highrise Multifamily (LR3, MR, and HR)▪ Neighborhood Commercial (NC2, and NC3)▪ Commercial (C1 and C2)

Sources: City of Seattle and BERK “One Seattle” Draft Plan EIS, 2023.

⁹ <https://www.theurbanist.org/2024/06/12/countys-plan-for-downtown-campus/>;
<https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/executive-services/buildings-property/facilities-management/major-projects-capital-planning/civic-campus-initiative>

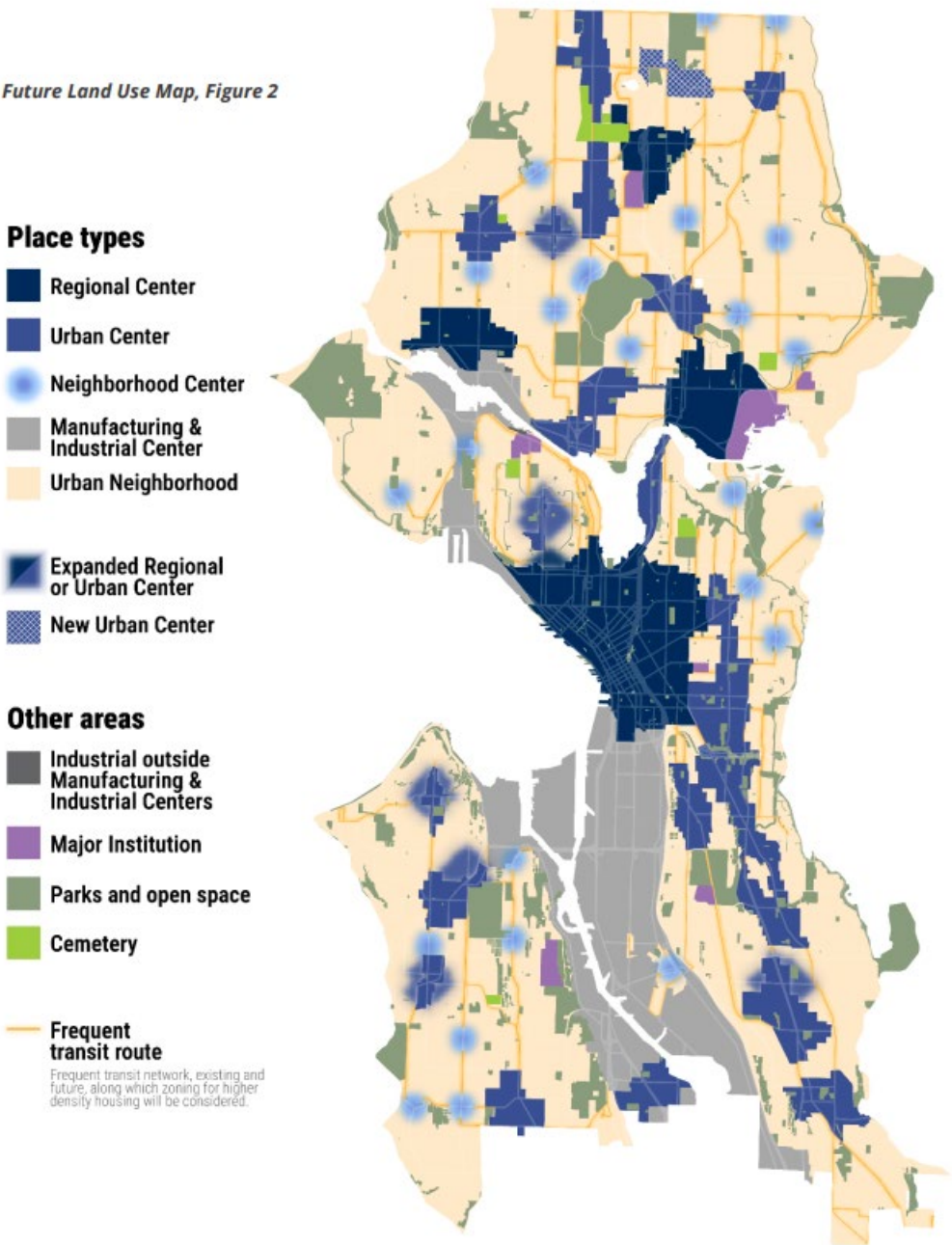
The City of Seattle is currently updating its Comprehensive Plan. One shift proposed in this update is that the term “Urban Center” is changed to “Regional Center”. Also, Ballard is added as a seventh Regional Center. “Urban Villages” and now called “Urban Centers” and a new category, “Neighborhood Centers” is identified in smaller activity nodes across the city. As the comprehensive plan is in draft form during the development of this subarea plan, these updates are not yet reflected in this document (created August 2024). Another change shown in the FLUM, shown in Exhibit 13, is that there are no land uses for “multi-family residential” or “commercial/mixed-use areas” outside of identified centers. Instead, these areas are all designated “Urban Neighborhood” which is defined as a place outside of centers “appropriate for primarily residential development” although there are provisions for “mixed-use and commercial development along major streets along with at-home businesses, corner stores, and small institutions located throughout”.

Land area in the City of Seattle encompasses approximately 84 square miles (53,651 acres).

The largest future land use designation category in the city is Urban Neighborhood, accounting for 55% of the city. Another one-quarter of the city is designated as a Center (26%) with 7% in Regional Centers, 14% in Urban Centers, 5% in Neighborhood Centers, and 11% in MICs. Of the remaining quarter of the city, 10% is designated as parks and open space, 1% is designated as major institution, and land designated as cemeteries or industrial areas outside the MICs account for less than 1% each.¹⁰

¹⁰ Draft EIS for One Seattle Comprehensive Plan, March 2024. Urban neighborhood calculation includes both ‘urban neighborhood’ and ‘corridors’ designations in the report.

Exhibit 13: Citywide Future Land Use Designations



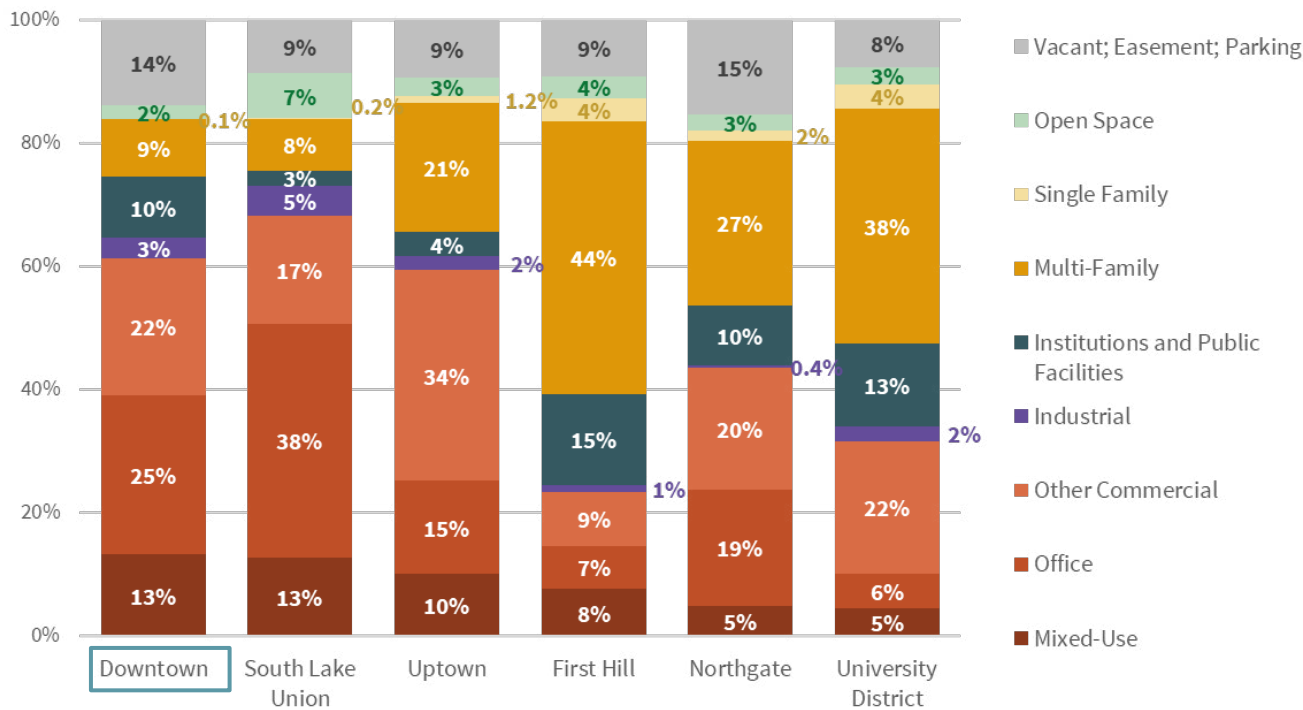
Sources: City of Seattle “One Seattle” Draft Plan, 2024.

Existing Land Use for Urban Centers

There are currently 6 Urban Centers, 6 Hub Urban Villages, 18 Residential Urban Villages, and 2 Manufacturing Industrial Centers (MICs) in the city. The six urban centers (Downtown, Uptown, South Lake Union, First Hill/Capitol Hill, University Community, and Northgate) and two MICs (Greater Duwamish MIC and Ballard–Interbay–Northend MIC (BINMIC)) are also designated PSRC Metro Regional Growth Centers (RGCs) and Employment MICs, respectively. These regionally designated centers are part of the regional growth strategy in VISION 2050 to focus growth in urban areas with access to transit.

The six urban centers represent the most densely populated areas in Seattle. Land use across these neighborhoods reflects a concentration of commercial and multi-family properties. Downtown has 60% commercial land uses (including mixed use). It is one of three Urban Centers with more than 50% of its acreage dedicated to commercial use—along with South Lake Union and Uptown. This reflects the strong commercial identity of central Seattle and the more residential influence in the Centers outside of this connected core. The remaining three centers—First Hill, Northgate, and University District—have higher proportions of land dedicated to fully residential use. Downtown has the second highest allocation of land to parking lots, vacancy, and/or easements (14%). Only Northgate is higher at 15%. See Exhibit 14.

Exhibit 14: Land Use by Parcel Acreage Across Urban Centers, 2023.

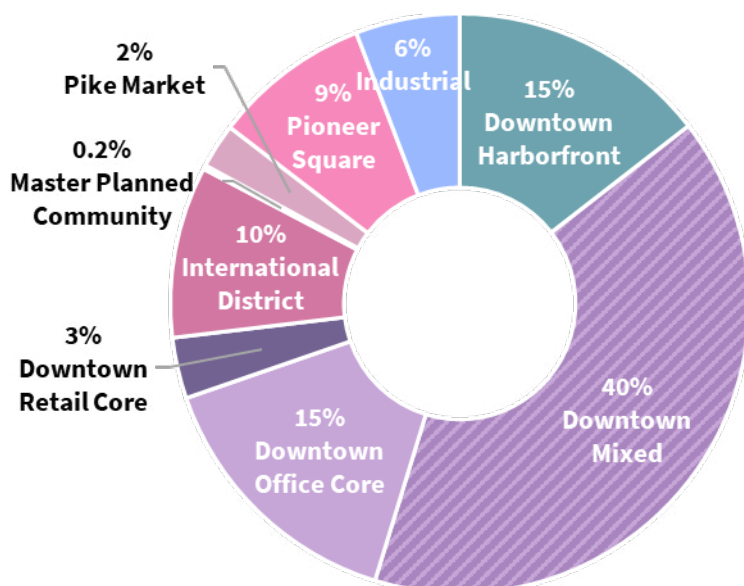


Sources: King County Assessor as organized by City of Seattle, 2023; Seva Workshop, 2024

Existing Zoning Downtown¹¹

Today, Downtown zoning can be grouped into nine primary categories. The largest amount of land (40%) is designated as “Downtown Mixed.” Next, the Downtown Harborfront and Downtown Office Core zones each make up 15% of Downtown property. The International District zone is 10%, Pioneer Square zone is 9%, and Industrial zones are 6%. The remaining land is dedicated to the Downtown Retail Core (3%), Pike Place Market (2%), and 0.2% zoned as Master Planned Community. See Exhibit 15. These categories are described below and mapped in Exhibit 16.

Exhibit 15: Downtown Land Acreage, by Zone.



Sources: City of Seattle 2023; Seva Workshop, 2024.

- 40% of Downtown is zoned DMC or DMR (Downtown Mixed Commercial/Residential).** These zones function as buffers to the densest office core areas and are broadly applied in Belltown and the CID east of I-5. They are intended to concentrate housing and commercial activity near transportation services, although they are not earmarked for direct proximity to mass transit service. In DMR/C zones, height limits are extended from a base if residential uses are incorporated. Height limits ranges include areas with a 75' base, extending to 95' or 170'.
- 15% of Downtown is zoned DH-1 and DH-2 (Downtown Harborfront).** This corresponds with the Waterfront and all of its recent redevelopment. DH-1 applies to waterfront lots and adjacent harbor areas while DH-2 applies to the supporting areas near, but not directly on, the waterfront. This includes office, commercial, retail, and residential uses.

¹¹ Source information for zoning districts comes from [SMC 23.49](#), [SMC 23.50A](#), and the City of Seattle's [land use maps](#).

Heights are restricted to ensure view corridors are intact from upland public spaces, ranging from 45' in DH1 areas and 55-85' in DH2 areas.¹²

- **15% of Downtown is zoned DOC1 and DOC2 (Downtown Office Core).** The DOC zones are centrally located and support Downtown's role as home to much of Seattle's office-based workforce. Low-density commercial uses are prohibited outright, such as drive-in businesses, outdoor storage, manufacturing, and waste management.¹³ Parking lots are allowed, but with restrictions. For example, flexible-use parking garages for short-term use are permitted as a conditional use, while flexible-use surface parking areas are prohibited in DOC1 zones and an administrative conditional use in DOC2 zones. Accessory parking garages are permitted outright, although no parking is required. Maximum parking limits are detailed in [Section 23.49.019](#), with requirements such as no parking at street level on Class I pedestrian streets or green streets and in non-residential uses the parking maximum is one space per 1,000 square feet. Allowed building heights range from 290'-500' and, in some areas, do not have an upper limit.
- **International District zoning includes Mixed and Residential, and is applied for 10% of Downtown acreage, in the CID west of I-5.** This district is covered by special review criteria and design guidance, as outlined in the International Special Review District section of the land use code.¹⁴ Height limits vary across the ID zones. Allowed ranges include 75'-85', 85'-170', 65'-150', 125'-270', and 170'. For most areas, upper limits of height are allowed only for residential uses. This district includes the CID light rail station and King Street Station.
- **Pioneer Square Mixed zoning covers 9% of Downtown.** It includes all of the neighborhood except the portions dedicated to the stadium and waterfront. Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) regulations do not apply in much of this area. Height limits are lower in this District to maintain its historic character. Across most of Pioneer Square, heights are limited to 100', with an additional 20' or 30' allowed in some areas if residential use is incorporated and certain building requirements are met. There is a small pocket abutting the CID that allows 120' outright and up to 150'. Another pocket directly north of the stadium allows only 85' but up to 120', and even 240' for a subsection, if affordable housing, among other requirements for public benefit, is included.
- **6% of Downtown is covered by industrial zones – Urban Industrial (UI) and Industry & Innovation (II).** These areas are at the northern and southern ends of the Urban Center. Lumen Field and directly adjacent areas are covered by the UI zone, intended for certain commercial uses and some limited opportunities for workforce housing. The northern

¹² View corridors are identified in map 1D, as described in [SMC 23.49.024](#). A1 view corridors are along: Broad, Clay, Vine, Wall, Battery, and Bell Streets west of First Avenue. A2 view corridors are on University, Seneca, Spring, Madison, and Marion streets west of Third Avenue.

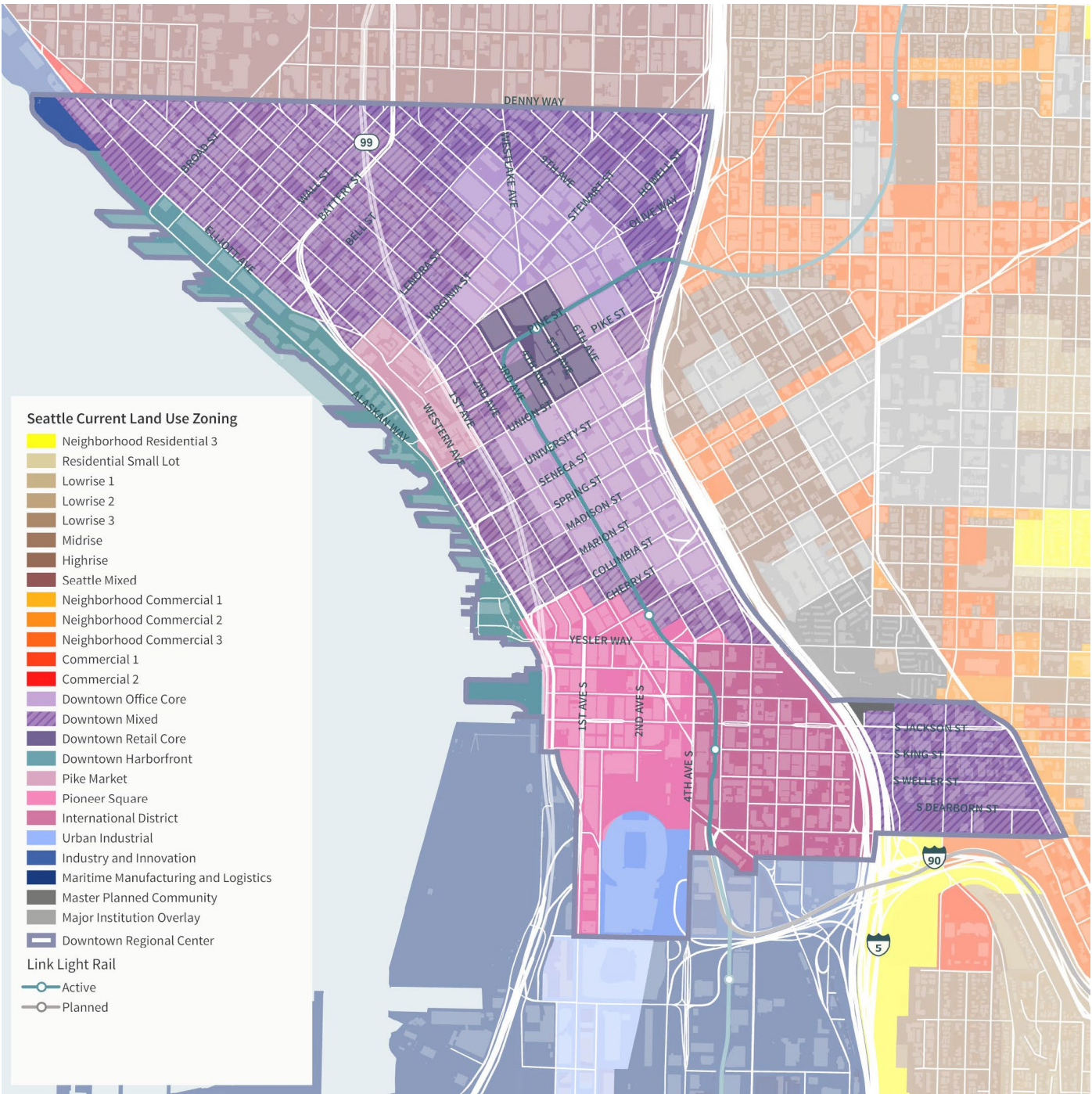
¹³ A full list of prohibited uses can be found in [SMC 23.49.044](#)

¹⁴ SMC 23.66.302

edge of the Waterfront is covered by the II zone, which allows industrial and certain commercial uses. This area connects to the commercial/industrial district above, known as Interbay. The scale of these zones notably contrasts with surrounding areas, with the large stadium footprint and height defining a distinct experience in south Downtown and the II zone to the north introducing large commercial campus sites in a distinct departure from more mixed-use areas to its south.

- **Downtown Retail Core (DRC) zoning applies in the area known as Westlake, occupying 3% of the Urban Center acreage.** Residential and commercial uses are permitted here, but height limits are lower than in surrounding areas (85' is allowed outright, up to 170' for incorporation of residential uses). This area covers the Westlake light rail station.
- **Pike Market Mixed (PMM) zone covers 2% of Downtown, centered on Western Avenue between Union and Lenora Streets.** This aligns with the Historic District boundaries and the Historical Commission determined allowed uses in this zone. Areas directly outside this boundary have certain restrictions on use, such as prohibitions of drive-in businesses, outdoor storage, or major marijuana activity.

Exhibit 16: Downtown Seattle Zoning Map, 2023.



Sources: City of Seattle, 2023; Seva Workshop, 2024.

Special Design Districts¹⁵

There are eight special review districts in Seattle, three of which are located in the Downtown Urban Center. These areas are subject to unique development regulations, and permits for construction work in the districts involve permit review by an independent governing body. Some of this area is exempt from Downtown’s MHA regulations.¹⁶

Pioneer Square Preservation District

Pioneer Square was Seattle’s first national historic district, established in 1970 with boundaries that expanded in 1973 and again in 1987. Its boundary includes most of the defined neighborhood, with the exception of the Lumen Field footprint and Pier 48. The station area around the International District-Chinatown light rail station is also included, as shown in Exhibit 17. This is a unique site covered by both the Pioneer Square and CID Historic District boundaries. The goal of the District is to preserve the architectural and historic character of the neighborhood, while ensuring that building renovation and restoration projects promote a healthy economy. Part of the District’s motivation at its founding was protecting Pioneer Square from development pressures associated with the stadium to its south and the skyscrapers to its north. The Board reviews any permits for:

- Alteration, demolition, construction, reconstruction, restoration, or remodeling of any structure
- Any aesthetic changes to a structure’s façade or to the public right-of-way
- New construction, removal, or alteration of signage
- Changes in use for any structure or space

Design guidelines for this District are outlined in SMC 23.66.030. These regulations allow Pioneer Square to maintain its unique aesthetic and quality of pedestrian realm. This results in buildings of lower heights than the adjacent Commercial Core, façades of stone and brick, streets lined with trees, cobblestone paving in public spaces, and a diverse selection of retail and restaurants on the ground floor.

¹⁵ <https://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/historic-preservation/historic-districts>

¹⁶ [SMC 23.49.007](#)

Exhibit 17: Pioneer Square Historic District Map.



Pike Place Market Historical District

Pike Place Market is the oldest continuously operating public market in the country. In 1971, the area covering the Market was established as a protected Historical District, with a Historical Commission formed to steward this unique city asset through changes and challenges over time. The Commission reviews all applications for changes in use, ownership, and design within the District. This District is unique in its role and level of oversight for a specific entity within Seattle's Downtown.

The goals of the Commission are to preserve the Market as a place for farmers to sell their own produce, local shoppers to buy food, low- and moderate-income households to find affordable goods and services, and a varied shopping area with many small, owner-operated specialty businesses. Certain actions by the Commission are prohibited, such as restricting merchants to specific brands of product lines, preventing new merchants that might serve as competition to others, or establishing monopoly control. The Market Guidelines also establish zones for the concentration of certain uses that preserve the Market's character, such as food.

International Special Review District

This District was established in 1973 to preserve the unique Asian American character of this neighborhood. It encourages rehabilitation of buildings for use as housing and pedestrian-oriented businesses. The boundaries of the District align with the neighborhood boundaries, inclusive of the CID on both sides of I-5. The Board consists of seven members, five elected by the community and two appointed by the mayor. They review any permits requesting:

- Changes to the outside of a building or structure
- Installation of a new or changes to an existing sign
- Installation of a new awning or canopy
- Any change to a building interior that affects the exterior
- New building addition, construction, or remodel
- Proposed new business or service
- Change in the public right-of-way or other public spaces
- Demolition of any building or structure
- Exterior painting

This designation and framework ensures a higher standard of design and promotes a cohesive aesthetic, balance of complementary uses, and preservation of the neighborhood's unique identity and character. During stakeholder engagement, local businesses noted complaints about these additional burdens of cost, time, and paperwork in a neighborhood that has been disproportionately burdened by public action throughout its history.

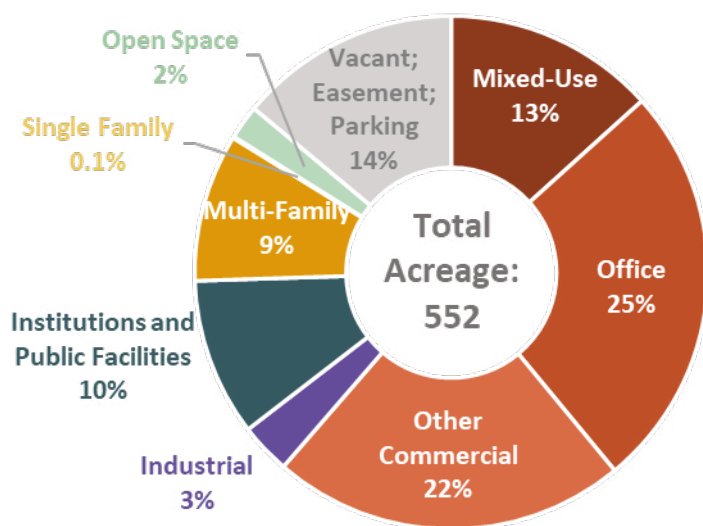
Exhibit 18: International Historic District Map.



Existing Land Use Downtown

The Downtown Urban Center today consists primarily of commercial uses: office (25%), retail/ other commercial (22%), and mixed-use (13%) properties. Institutions and public facilities account for another 10% of acreage and multifamily properties make up 9%. 14% of land acreage is either vacant, an easement, or in use as a parking lot. There are scattered sites with single family homes, industrial uses, and park spaces—each use accounts for 3% or less. See a breakdown by type in Exhibit 19 and a map of Downtown land uses in Exhibit 20.

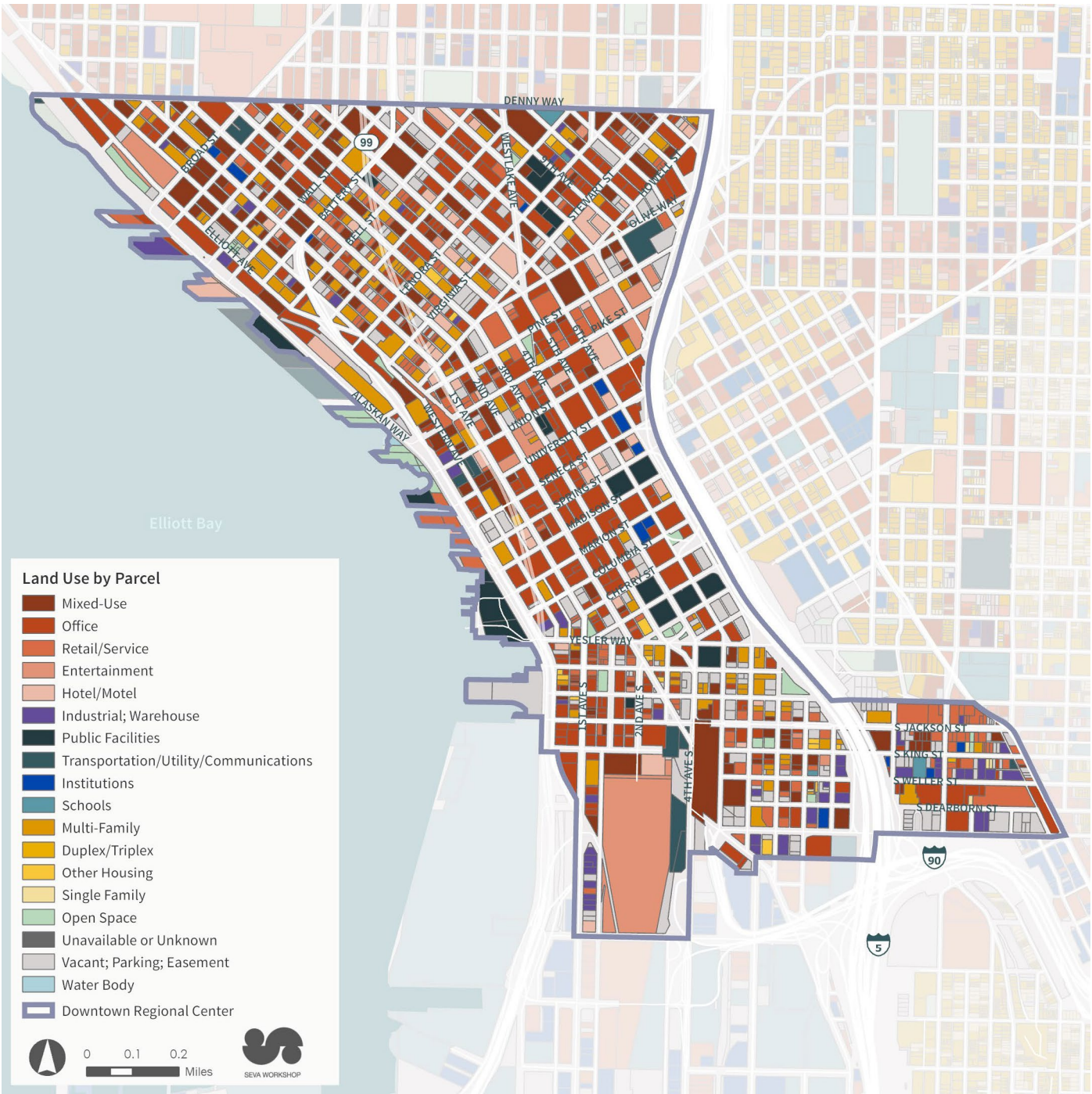
Exhibit 19: Downtown Land Use by Acreage, 2023.



Sources: City of Seattle summary of King County Assessor data, 2023; Seva Workshop, 2024.

Land use patterns Downtown vary across its neighborhoods. The central part of Downtown, or its Commercial Core, is characterized by larger, full-block parcels. This includes the retail district at Westlake and many of the city's large office towers. Other Downtown neighborhoods are less uniform at the street level, as observed with smaller parcel sizes and greater variation in use on the map. Lumen Field, at the south end of the Urban Center boundary, is the largest site in the subarea and straddles the commercial district of Pioneer Square and the industrial areas to the south. This stadium is on land owned by the state and is home to Seattle's professional football and soccer teams. A series of piers extend Downtown's presence over the water and a complete reimagining of this space has been underway since 2017, with the removal of the Alaskan Way Viaduct, replacement of the Elliott Bay Seawall, enhanced pedestrian connections, and expanded public space on the waterfront.

Exhibit 20: Downtown Land Use, 2023.



Sources: King County Assessor data as organized by City of Seattle, 2023; Seva Workshop, 2024.

Mixed Use

There are 76 acres of property and 28.7 million square feet of interior building space designated as mixed use in Downtown Seattle. See Exhibit 21. Mixed-use buildings house 55% of all housing units Downtown. These buildings are most prevalent in the CID, Belltown, and Denny Triangle, which combine to account for 78% of all interior square footage for this type. Many of these properties are multifamily buildings with ground floor retail. The largest mixed-use site is located in the CID—a 7.8 acre site that covers Union Station and the International District/Chinatown light rail station. The site includes five buildings with a mix of office and retail, as well as a multilevel parking structure. Mixed-use buildings offer the opportunity to promote an activated pedestrian realm while increasing residential or commercial density in the stories above. Colocation of office or housing units with restaurants and retail can also be mutually beneficial, with building tenants acting as patrons at the businesses. Much of Pike Place Market is designated as mixed-use commercial property.

Exhibit 21: Downtown Mixed-Use Properties, 2023.

Downtown Property	Mixed-Use
Parcel Count	173
% Total	13%
Acreage	76
% Total	13%
Building Square Footage (gross)	28,660,551
% Total	20%

Sources: King County Assessor data as organized by City of Seattle, 2023; Seva Workshop, 2024.



Pike Place Market

Few places capture the Seattle spirit more than Pike Place Market, a celebration of PNW food culture and crafts. Shoppers can buy food, flowers, local art, and a wide variety of other goods at its many stalls and shops. This market was first established in 1907. Today, the Market faces financial challenges and is actively revisioning its future.

Office

There are 146 acres of property and 67.9 million square feet of interior building space designated for office use in Downtown Seattle. See Exhibit 22. Office use is the largest land use category Downtown and associated employment is why Downtown is the center of the regional mass transit system. The Commercial Core and Denny Triangle house the highest concentrations of office space, combining to account for 83% of all office square footage Downtown. This category includes iconic and skyline-defining properties such as Columbia Center, Safeco Plaza, Smith Tower, and Seattle City Hall. Employment in these office towers has fueled Downtown’s daytime hustle and bustle for decades. Recent changes in employment trends, driven by COVID-19 and the shift to working from home, have left many of these buildings with low attendance from tenant companies and high vacancy rates. This fundamental shift in patterns of work impacts street life and the viability of the supportive service and retail businesses that rely on employee foot traffic.

Exhibit 22: Downtown Office Properties, 2023.

Downtown Property	Office
Parcel Count	342
% Total	25%
Acreage	146
% Total	25%
Building Square Footage (gross)	67,890,644
% Total	47%

Sources: King County Assessor data as organized by City of Seattle, 2023; Seva Workshop, 2024.

Image source (right): The Seattle Times



Columbia Center

Columbia Center is Seattle’s tallest building. At 76 stories tall, it has a defining presence in the Downtown office core. The building assumes the entire block on Columbia Street between 4th and 5th Avenues and its offices benefit from remarkable Seattle views. Current vacancy for its office space is estimated at 23% (Costar, 2024).

Retail/Other Commercial

There are 127 acres of property and 19.6 million square feet of interior building space designated for other commercial uses in Seattle’s Downtown. See Exhibit 23. This category includes commercial typologies such as retail, entertainment, and hospitality. Pioneer Square and the Commercial Core dedicate the most land to these commercial uses, together comprising 54% of all its acreage Downtown. The largest commercial property in the subarea is Lumen Field in Pioneer Square, which has a footprint of over 30 acres. The retail corridor of Westlake is included here, as well as many cultural and nonprofit properties, with some larger examples of the Olympic Sculpture Park in Belltown, the Seattle Art Museum in the Commercial Core, and the Goodwill warehouse in the CID. These commercial uses add vibrancy, character, and supportive services to Downtown neighborhoods. These uses contribute to neighborhood livability, support Seattle’s tourism industry, and build identity for Downtown as a center for art, culture, and entertainment. Street-level use requirements in core retail areas, such as Westlake and along 1st and 3rd Avenue, require active ground floor across a range of types including retail, libraries, child care, and religious facilities.¹⁷ The Downtown Retail Core (DRC) zone which covers Westlake around the light rail station increases restrictions on uses such as parking lots and public facilities, along with lower street-level space allowed for non-retail commercial uses.¹⁸



Exhibit 23: Downtown Other Commercial Properties, 2023.

Downtown Property	Other Commercial
Parcel Count	277
% Total	20%
Acreage	127
% Total	22%
Building Square Footage (gross)	19,612,370
% Total	14%

Sources: King County Assessor data as organized by City of Seattle, 2023; Seva Workshop, 2024.

¹⁷ See map of street-level use areas [here](#), Map 1G. Full list of allowed uses found in [SMC 23.49.009](#).
¹⁸ See [SMC 23.49.090](#) for details of all requirements in DRC zones and [SMC 23.49.009\(B\)\(2\)](#) for street-level restrictions beyond other areas in the 1G map.

Multifamily

There are 53 acres of property and 15.9 million square feet of interior building space designated for multifamily housing Downtown, including both ownership condominiums and rental apartments. See Exhibit 24. Belltown is home to the most multifamily property (6.9 million square feet), followed by the Commercial Core (3.5 million square feet) and Denny Triangle (2.5 million square feet). These buildings span from luxury towers boasting expansive views over Elliott Bay to affordable housing and assisted living communities. Residents enjoy walkable access to employment, entertainment, and transit. They provide important eyes on the street that cultivate a sense of safety and community in Downtown neighborhoods.

Exhibit 24: Downtown Multifamily Properties, 2023.

Downtown Property	Multifamily
Parcel Count	175
% Total	13%
Acreage	53
% Total	9%
Building Square Footage (gross)	15,9473,432
% Total	11%

Sources: King County Assessor data as organized by City of Seattle, 2023; Seva Workshop, 2024.

Institutions and Public Facilities

There are 57 acres of property and 5.5 million square feet of interior building space designated for institutional and public facility use in Downtown Seattle. See Exhibit 25. This includes private schools, transportation facilities, utilities, and other institutional or public facility sites. There are no public schools Downtown. Uses from this category are largely concentrated in the Commercial Core, home to two-thirds of the overall Downtown land acreage in this category. Major Downtown institutions and public facilities include the ferry terminals and piers owned by the Port on the waterfront, the King County campus, the Federal Courthouse building, and the Washington State Convention Center. Many of these sites are large and some serve as landmarks of Downtown, such as the Seattle Public Library’s central branch. These sites serve important functions for the city and region but can be imposing and detract from street life in the surrounding blocks if not activated. This has been an issue in recent years for the King County campus which occupies a large section of the Commercial Core but has experienced a decline in employee attendance leading to the closure of its large Administration Building.¹⁹

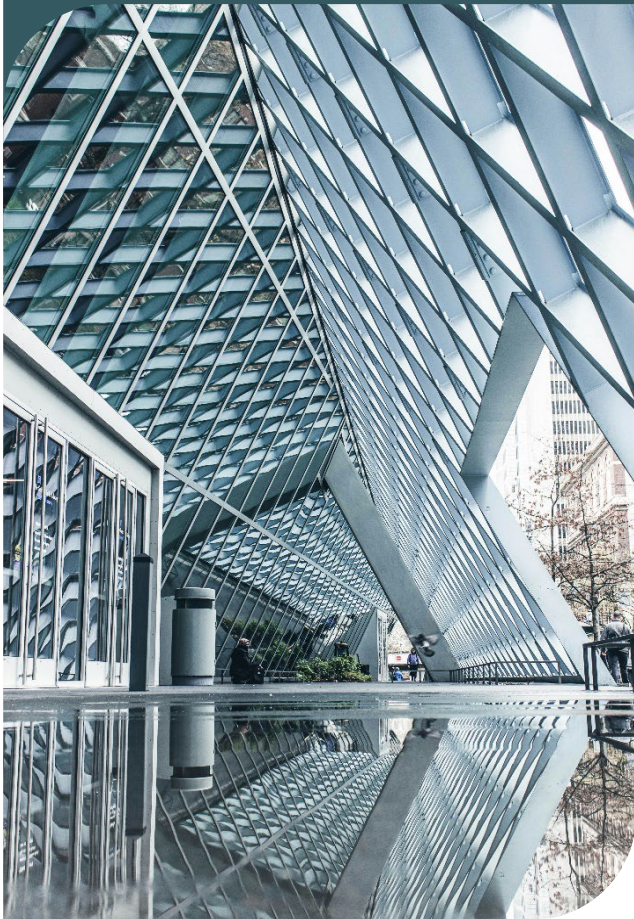
Exhibit 25: Downtown Institutions and Public Facilities Properties, 2023.

Downtown Property	Institutions and Public Facilities
Parcel Count	54
% Total	4%
Acreage	57
% Total	10%
Building Square Footage (gross)	15,943,432
% Total	11%

Sources: King County Assessor data as organized by City of Seattle, 2023; Seva Workshop, 2024.

Seattle Public Library

The central branch of Seattle’s Public Library opened in 2004. Its 11 floors include special collections, meeting rooms, dedicated spaces for children and teens, and the “Seattle Room” which includes over 50,000 items that document and explore history specific to Seattle and the Pacific Northwest. Event spaces welcome authors and guest speakers from around the world and host free community events such as baby story time, citizenship exam prep classes, and assistance preparing tax returns.



¹⁹ [The Seattle Time, 2022](#)

Vacant/Parking Lots

There are 79 acres of property currently vacant or used as a parking lot in Downtown Seattle, including 4.4 million square feet of parking structures. See Exhibit 26 and a map of these sites in Exhibit 27. The CID and Pioneer Square have proportionally high percentages of land in this category, with 23% and 21% of the total area in each sub-district, respectively. Large sites that are vacant or used as parking lots detract from street life and sense of place in a dense city center. The largest site with “vacant” use is Pier 48, occupying 10 acres within Pioneer Square’s section of the waterfront (see more on this site in the sidebar. The largest parking areas Downtown include the parking lot under I-5 on S Jackson Street in the CID and a county-owned parking deck in the Commercial Core, serving office building on the County campus.

Exhibit 26: Downtown Vacant/Parking Properties, 2023.

Downtown Property	Vacant/Parking
Parcel Count	244
% Total	18%
Acreage	79
% Total	14%
Building Square Footage (gross)	4,442,769
% Total	3%

Note: ‘Building Square Footage’ for this category is predominantly parking structures, as well as interior space of vacant buildings.
Sources: King County Assessor data as organized by City of Seattle, 2023; Seva Workshop, 2024.

Pier 48

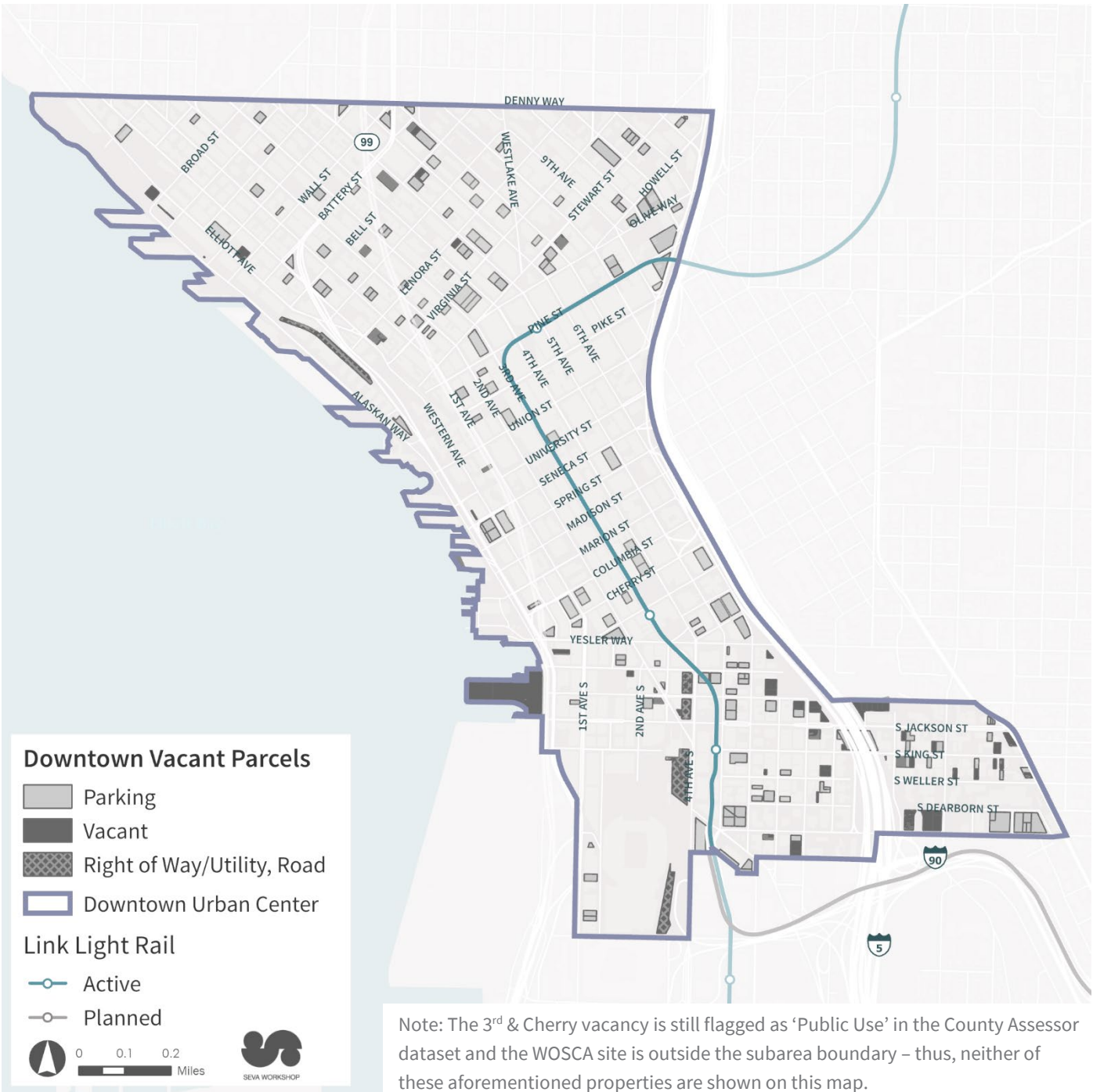
Pier 48 is the last vacant lot on the Seattle waterfront. The location has a long history and ties to many different cultural communities of Seattle. Conversations are ongoing about the future use of this space. It is located south of the passenger ferry terminal and currently is used for overflow parking for cars waiting for larger ferries.

Some vacancies don’t appear on the land use map for a variety of reasons, yet impact the Downtown experience:

- At 3rd and Cherry, a 1.3-acre vacant site has experienced stalled construction timelines since its demolition in 2005, with dreams of redevelopment as a Civic Square.²⁰ It is a key site, located right at the Pioneer Square light rail station. The project has faced many delays and setbacks but current plans show a 57-story tower with condominium residences, ground floor retail, and a maintained vision for a 25,0000 square foot public plaza at the street level.²¹
- A 5-acre parcel between Lumen Field and the waterfront, and just outside the Regional Center boundary, is commonly known as the “WOSCA” site and has a highly debated future. Its vision is being set as part of a [separate planning process](#). Temporary uses are being considered in connection with the 2026 World Cup Games but long-term plans are not set.

²⁰ [Seattle Times, 2007](#)
²¹ <https://bosadevelopment.com/project/339-cherry-street/>

Exhibit 27: Downtown Vacant, Parking Lot, and ROW Parcels Map, 2024.



Patterns of Ownership²²

Public agencies own over half (56%) of land Downtown, meaning that much of the Downtown experience is shaped by City, County, and State entities. This is a great opportunity for coordination across landowners to implement a cohesive vision for the Downtown experience. It also means that a significant portion of space is tied up in institutional uses and is unavailable for attracting private investment and generating property tax revenue. Public right-of-way accounts for 38% of this acreage and the remaining 18% is found on land divided into parcels. The ratio of land ownership by entity is inconsistent across Downtown’s sub-neighborhoods, however, as shown in Exhibit 28. Note that these tables focus on land divided into parcels and excludes right-of-way.

Pioneer Square has the highest of proportion of public land, Belltown has the highest proportion of privately-owned land, and the CID has the highest proportion of land owned by non-profit entities.

- The CID has only a few larger sites. The Union Station site is by far the largest public landholding in the neighborhood, and other larger sites include the fire station and a streetcar maintenance site. Nonprofit owners have a higher percentage of land held in the CID than other neighborhoods, at 17%. The largest site is owned by Goodwill.
- Pioneer Square’s high ratio of public land ownership (53%) is driven by the stadium site, waterfront piers, and King Street Station. Other large sites in the neighborhood are privately-owned, such as land held for railroad use and a large mixed-use development near the stadium.
- Downtown’s Commercial Core has 37% of its land owned by the public sector—the largest of these sites associated with the waterfront piers. This neighborhood of Downtown has the largest overall parcel sizes, many that stretch for an entire block.
- Belltown has fewer large sites and more land broken into smaller parcels for private ownership. The Olympic Sculpture Park contributes to the higher proportion of non-profit ownership.
- Denny Triangle’s largest publicly-owned site is the Washington State Convention Center. Other larger sites in this neighborhood are held by private owners—many are hotels such as the Westin and the Hyatt.

²² Data for ownership analysis taken from King County Assessor. Gaps in information exist, and there is room for error in assigned ownership. Best efforts were made to correctly categorize based on published ownership information available.

Exhibit 28: Land Ownership for Downtown Parcels, by Neighborhood.

	% Public	% Private	% Nonprofit	% Unclear
Downtown Total	29%	59%	9%	3%
CID	20%	57%	17%	6%
Pioneer Square	53%	45%	2%	0%
Commercial Core	37%	55%	2%	6%
Belltown	14%	70%	13%	3%
Denny Triangle	15%	68%	14%	3%

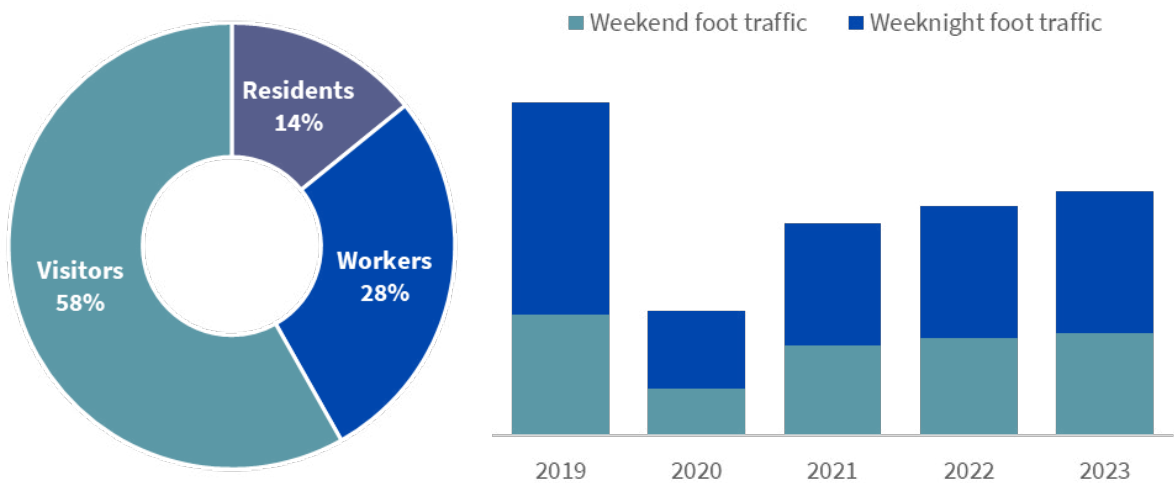
Note: These figures capture acreage and exclude the right-of-way.

Sources: King County Assessor parcel data, 2023; Seva Workshop, 2024.

Street Life and Cultural Space

Downtown Seattle is a beating heart and cultural hub for the region. Home to anchoring cultural institutions such as the Seattle Art Museum, Paramount Theatre, the Showbox, and the Moore, the city center’s role as a home for arts and culture is key to its identity. Larger institutions are complemented by many smaller galleries, music venues, theaters, and makerspaces. Events such as the First Thursday Art Walk at Pioneer Square and the Pier 62 Waterfront Concert Series have a wide draw and activate the Downtown food and nightlife scene.

The pandemic fundamentally altered how residents, visitors, workers, and businesses experience Seattle’s Downtown. In April 2024, foot traffic counts were down 38% Year over Year from 2019 despite a 22% increase in foot traffic from residents. This decline in foot traffic has a major impact on local businesses and cultural institutions. It also has a pile-on effect: an emptier Downtown is less attractive to visit, less interesting to commute to, and less able to support a diverse arts and culture scene.



There were 19.4 million daytime visitors Downtown in the first quarter of 2024. Over half of these (58%) were visitors, 28% were workers, and 14% were residents. Off-peak trips (weekends and weeknights) have yet to recover to pre-pandemic levels, particularly on weeknights. See graphics above. Still, Downtown is home to 405 identified cultural assets across its 5 neighborhoods. This section maps these for a neighborhood-level look at the activity nodes and distinctive character areas found across Downtown.

77 PUBLIC ART PIECES
206 CULTURAL SPACES
122 LANDMARKS

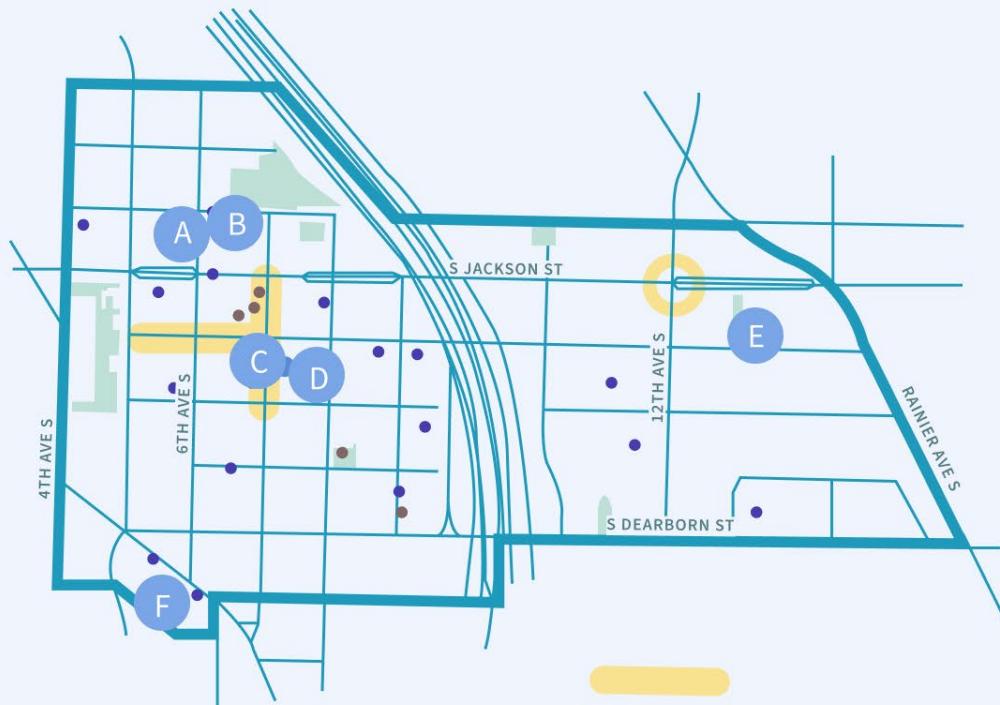
Clustered nodes of activity for complementary uses, such as entertainment venues, restaurants, galleries, and museums build momentum for active and safe corridors. These nodes have even greater chances of success when they are located with convenient transportation options and supportive public amenities. Artists Downtown struggle against increased pricing for residential and commercial space, a lack of space and equipment to support the creative process, and—most recently—declined activity and nightlife on the streets. Stakeholder engagement for this project confirmed these themes and voiced a need and desire for the City to demonstrate a cohesive commitment to policy, funding, and dedication of space for the arts Downtown.

The following pages identify cultural spaces and public art in each Downtown neighborhood. Profile cutsheets highlight key corridors and describe how each area uniquely contributes to street life and cultural identity Downtown. Challenges for each subarea are discussed in the pages that follow.



CHINATOWN- INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT

LIVING HERITAGE
ALLEYWAYS
IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEURSHIP
HIDDEN GEMS



The CID's primary activity corridor makes a "T" following King Street and Maynard, including Hing Hay Park, the Pinball Museum, and the iconic Chinatown gate. A second node of interest at 12th and Jackson anchors Little Saigon, near many popular restaurants and a streetcar station.

LANDMARKS

6 Official Landmarks

- A Old Main St School
- B Panama Hotel and Hashidate Yu Bathhouse
- C Eastern Hotel
- D Chinese Community Bulletin Board
- E Victorian Row Apartment Building
- F U.S. Immigrant Station and Assay Office

CULTURAL SPACES

8

Arts/Cultural
Education or
Training Spaces

PUBLIC ART

5

Public Art
Installations

PIONEER SQUARE

HISTORIC SMALL BUSINESS GALLERIES



Pioneer Square's cultural core encircles Occidental Square and is a prime corridor for monthly "First Thursday" gallery hop nights.

LANDMARKS

2

Official Landmarks

A

Flat Iron Building

B

Smith Tower

CULTURAL SPACES

51

Visual Art Spaces

41

Other
Cultural Spaces

PUBLIC ART

13

Public Art
Installations



0 250 500
Feet

COMMERCIAL CORE

INSTITUTIONAL
WATERFRONT
LIVE ENTERTAINMENT



LANDMARKS

68 Official Landmarks

- A Seattle Monorail
- B Seattle Tower
- C The Showbox
- D Freeway Park

CULTURAL SPACES

- 20 Art Galleries
- 7 Performance Venues
- 27 Other Cultural Spaces

PUBLIC ART

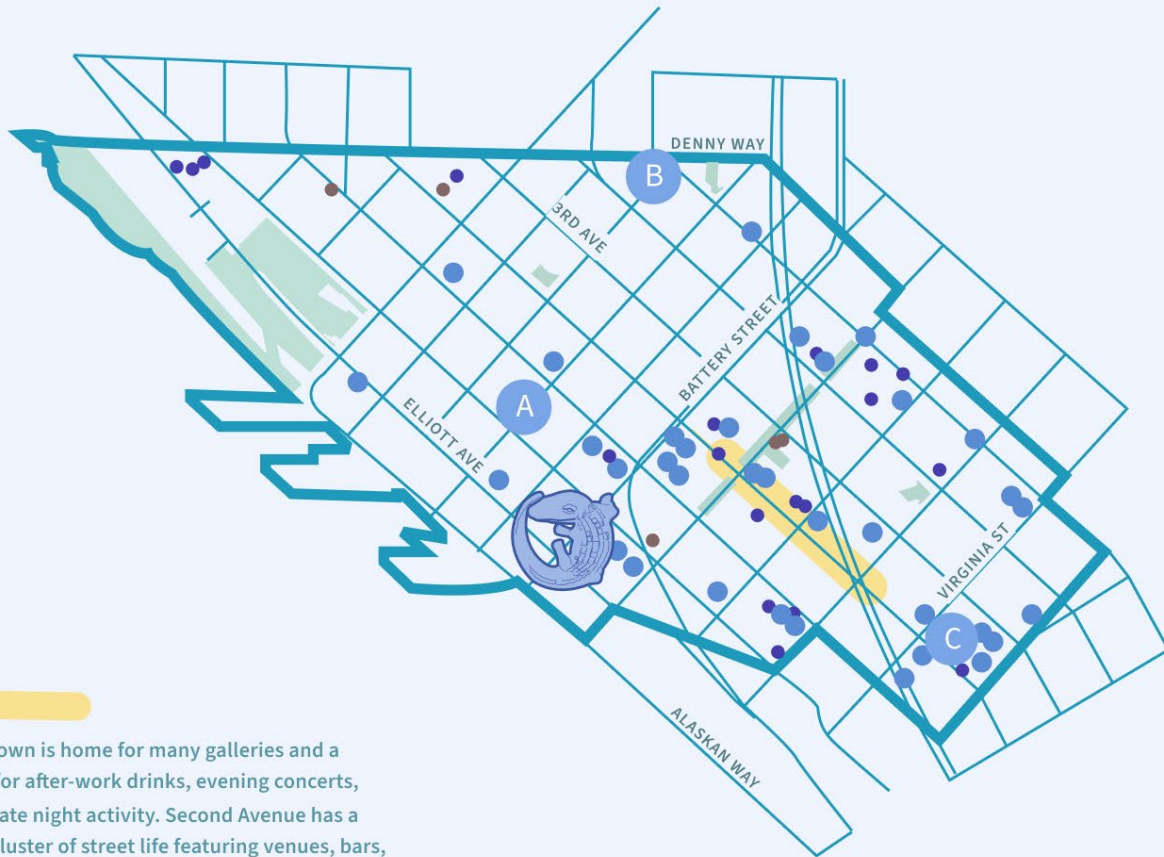
50 Public Art Installations



0 380 760 Feet

BELLTOWN

HAPPY HOUR
CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE
ARTS COLLECTIVES



Belltown is home for many galleries and a hub for after-work drinks, evening concerts, and late night activity. Second Avenue has a key cluster of street life featuring venues, bars, and restaurants such as Jewelbox Theatre and Bangrak Market.

LANDMARKS

38 Official Landmarks

- A Ace Hotel
- B Chief Seattle Statue
- C Moore Theater

CULTURAL SPACES

- 20 Art Galleries
- 7 Performance Venues
- 27 Other Cultural Spaces

PUBLIC ART

8 Public Art Installations

DENNY TRIANGLE

STUDENTS
UNDER CONSTRUCTION
LUNCH BREAK ARTS



Hubs of art and cultural activation in Denny Triangle include the Cornish College of the Arts campus and the nexus of Paramount Theatre and the convention center. Employment in Denny Triangle draws in a large volume of people who connect with activity within the neighborhood and in surrounding areas.

LANDMARKS

68

Official Landmarks

A

Paramount Theater and Building

B

Elephant Car Wash Sign

C

Camlin Hotel

CULTURAL SPACES

6

Education Buildings

5

Other Cultural Spaces

PUBLIC ART

1

Public Art Installations



0 260 520 Feet

The CID

The CID is a landmarked historic district and boasts many phenomenal restaurants, activated alleyways, and celebrations of the Asian diaspora in Seattle. Challenges for street life and cultural space in this neighborhood include:

- **Attractions are spread throughout the neighborhood, but a defined central corridor is lacking.** Surface parking lots disrupt activity nodes in key areas, such as at the intersection of 6th And King. The heart of Little Sàigòn surrounds the intersection of 12th and Jackson, but the public realm is still a work in progress.
- **Major transportation corridors disrupt pedestrian navigation through the district.** Fifth Avenue is a wide intersection separating the light rail station from the neighborhood and, most notably, I-5 breaks up the subarea in a way that is challenging to overcome. The streetcar helps bridge this divide along Jackson, but the separation detracts from street life for eastern CID.
- **Safety concerns are consistently raised by community members, business owners, and visitors.** The intersection of Jackson and 12th Avenue in Little Sàigòn is a focus area for complaints. In the fall of 2023, vandalism at Wing Luke Museum (King St & 8th Avenue) spotlighted anti-Asian crime and violence in the area.²³
- **A lack of greenspace in this neighborhood detracts from potential activation.** Community activism has led to a new park under development in Little Sàigòn, but more needs to be done to integrate greenspace and wellness amenities into the neighborhood.²⁴ These spaces and facilities complement street life and cultural corridors.

Pioneer Square

Pioneer Square is another landmarked historic district and is peppered with art galleries, restaurants, and small retail shops. Much of the arts and culture activity is clustered around Occidental Square, although supportive spaces and uses cover the neighborhood. Challenges for street life and cultural space in this neighborhood include:

- **Topography breaks up the neighborhood in challenging ways.** Pedestrian navigation can be tough in jumbled intersections, such as those along the 2nd Avenue Extension, and steep grade changes disrupt walkability.
- **Waterfront connection has historically been lacking.** New pedestrian connections are being made to connect Pioneer Square to the redesigned waterfront, however Pier 48 remains vacant and unplanned.
- **The neighborhood's relationship to the stadium is a tension point.** Some businesses feel synergy from spillover patrons (with examples such as March to the Match), while others

²³ [Seattle Times "Man charged with hate crime after vandalism at Wing Luke Museum"](#), Sept 2023; [KOMU news "Little Saigon businesses in Seattle's CID plea for more police amid rising safety concerns"](#), Sept 2023

²⁴ <https://www.seattle.gov/parks/about-us/projects/little-saigon-park-development>

complain about negative impacts from gameday traffic. During engagement, arts and culture stakeholders expressed frustration and a feeling of competition for attention and funds between sports and arts in the city.

- **Pioneer Square is also a hub of vital social services in the city and region; the juxtaposition of poverty and nightlife creates friction.** The use of public space has been a source of debate, as space such as Pioneer Square Park has been home to encampments for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Commercial Core

The Commercial Core is home to many of Seattle’s signature attractions, larger arts and culture institutions, and landmarked architecture. Pike Place Market is within this neighborhood, as is most of the waterfront. Challenges for street life and cultural space in this neighborhood include:

- **Topography is a barrier when traveling by foot or bike.** While this neighborhood is well served by transit, even short distances can feel long when navigating the steep slopes that rise from the waterfront. Access to many arts and culture landmarks without a car is a challenge, including the waterfront and Pike Place Market –key cultural corridors of the subarea.
- **The waterfront has been under construction since 2019.** This has created disruption, noise, and physical barriers to this important Downtown corridor. Work is scheduled for completion by the end of 2025, which will open new and activated public spaces and transform Seattle’s relationship to Elliott Bay.
- **In the Commercial Core, many large commercial and institutional buildings make for long blocks and sterile street life.** Especially as office workers have declined in attendance, many blocks feel cold, unwelcoming, and unsafe. Vacancies also detract from potential patrons of the venues and cultural offerings of the neighborhood. Activated corridors can feel disconnected with gaps of unfriendly streetscape.

Belltown

Belltown includes and is situated adjacent to major employment nodes, making it a prime after work destination for food and drink. Many music venues populate the core of the neighborhood’s cultural life and several arts collectives call the neighborhood home. Challenges for street life and cultural space in this neighborhood include:

- **Once you leave dense corridors, such as 2nd Avenue, activation quickly dies off.** Spaces adjacent to key corridors are left without the feeling of “eyes on the street”. For nightlife, this creates challenges for feelings of safety. Spaces such as 3rd Avenue and Bell Town Park have been designed for prioritization of pedestrian and bus uses, but the experience of these places is uneven.
- **Pandemic recovery has been uneven in Belltown.** Vacancies in key areas create challenges, with recent examples including illicit activity at vacant sites on 2nd Avenue and arson at a local

business on 1st.²⁵ The music industry, core to Belltown's identity, took a big hit in the pandemic.

- **Olympic Sculpture Park is a Seattle gem but is disconnected from other attractions.** The newly designed waterfront should help to connect this key cultural asset with other corridors of activity. Currently, it is not located near transit or other larger draw sites such as the Market.

²⁵ [King 5, "Investigation underway after fire set in Belltown's Taqueria Cantina Restaurant"](#), Nov 2023; [Komo, "Belltown community alarmed over drug den in abandoned eatery amid proposed law"](#), Apr 2024;

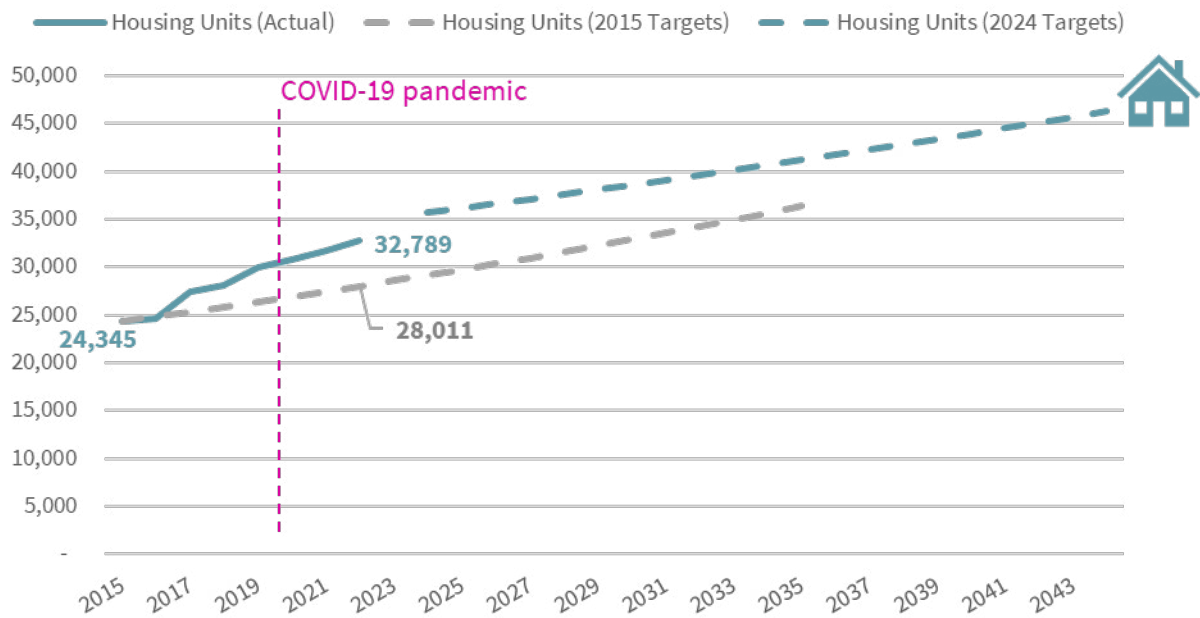
FUTURE GROWTH

Population and Employment, Growth and Targets

The 2023 activity unit density in Downtown is 252 au/acre. Growth targets for Downtown, as outlined in the draft 2024 Comprehensive Plan, would add 13,500 housing units and 60,000 jobs across the subarea. This growth supports VISION 2050 and the Regional Growth Strategy. If these targets for 2044 are achieved, the activity unit density of the center will increase to 344 au/acre.

Downtown has been exceeding its previously allocated growth targets. Current housing units are about 15% higher than expectations outlined in the 2015 Comprehensive Plan, as shown in Exhibit 29. The draft 2024 Comprehensive Plan update assigns a higher target for Downtown, although it does not anticipate production to continue at the rates experienced 2015-2022.

Exhibit 29: Downtown Housing, Actual 2015-2022 and Targets from 2015 & 2024 Comprehensive Plans.

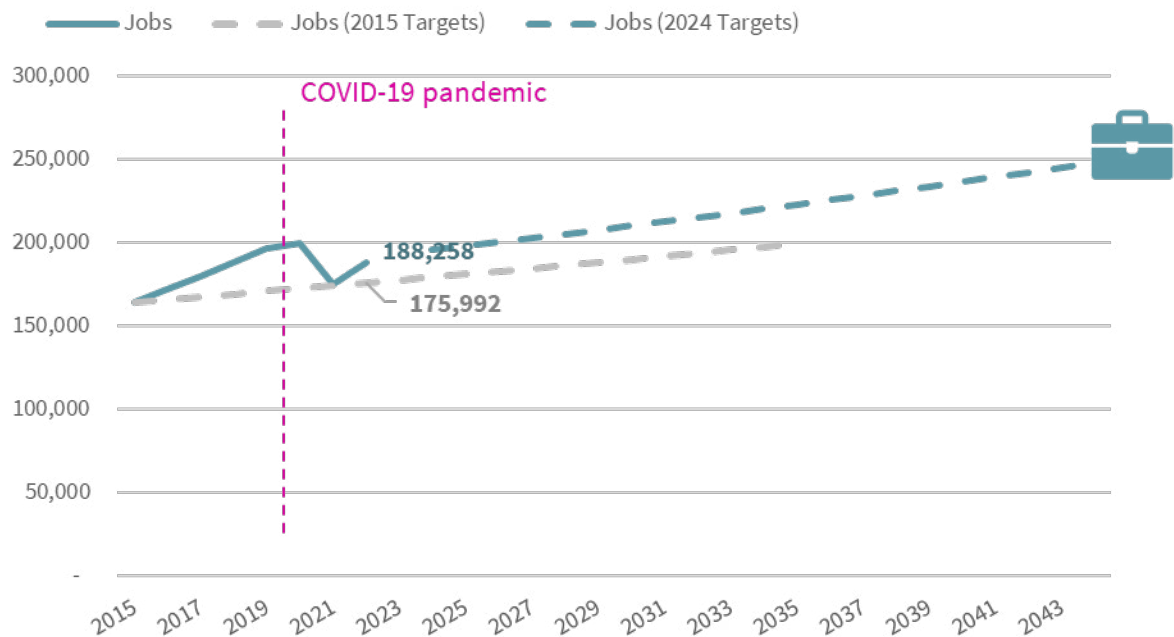


Sources: City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan Updates, 2015 & 2024; City of Seattle permit data in “UCUV Growth Report,” 2023; Seva Workshop, 2024.

Employment has increased in Downtown since 2015, although impacts from COVID-19 derailed progress from 2019 and 2020. Declined attendance of Downtown’s office employees means that some offices are not renewing their leases. This office space vacancy hurts the supportive retail and service businesses that rely on employees as customers, further impacting Downtown job counts. Despite this setback, Downtown Seattle continues to surpass the job

estimates set in the 2015 Comprehensive Plan, and the draft 2024 Plan sets even higher targets for the future. Seattle hopes to fully rebound from COVID-19 setbacks and re-establish the Downtown’s place as the regional center for identity and commerce.

Exhibit 30: Downtown Jobs, Actual 2015-2022 and Targets from 2015 & 2024 Comprehensive Plans.



Sources: City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan Updates, 2015 & 2024; City of Seattle “UCUV Growth Report,” 2023; Seva Workshop, 2024.

Land Use Capacity

In preparation for its Comprehensive Plan update and alignment with King County Buildable Lands study, the City of Seattle updated its land capacity model in 2022. A key focus of this subarea plan update is to ensure that the identified Urban Centers have the available capacity for housing and jobs necessary to accommodate their growth targets. The table in Exhibit 31 summarizes the existing capacity Downtown, along with the 2044 targets for housing and employment. This capacity is mapped in Exhibit 32.

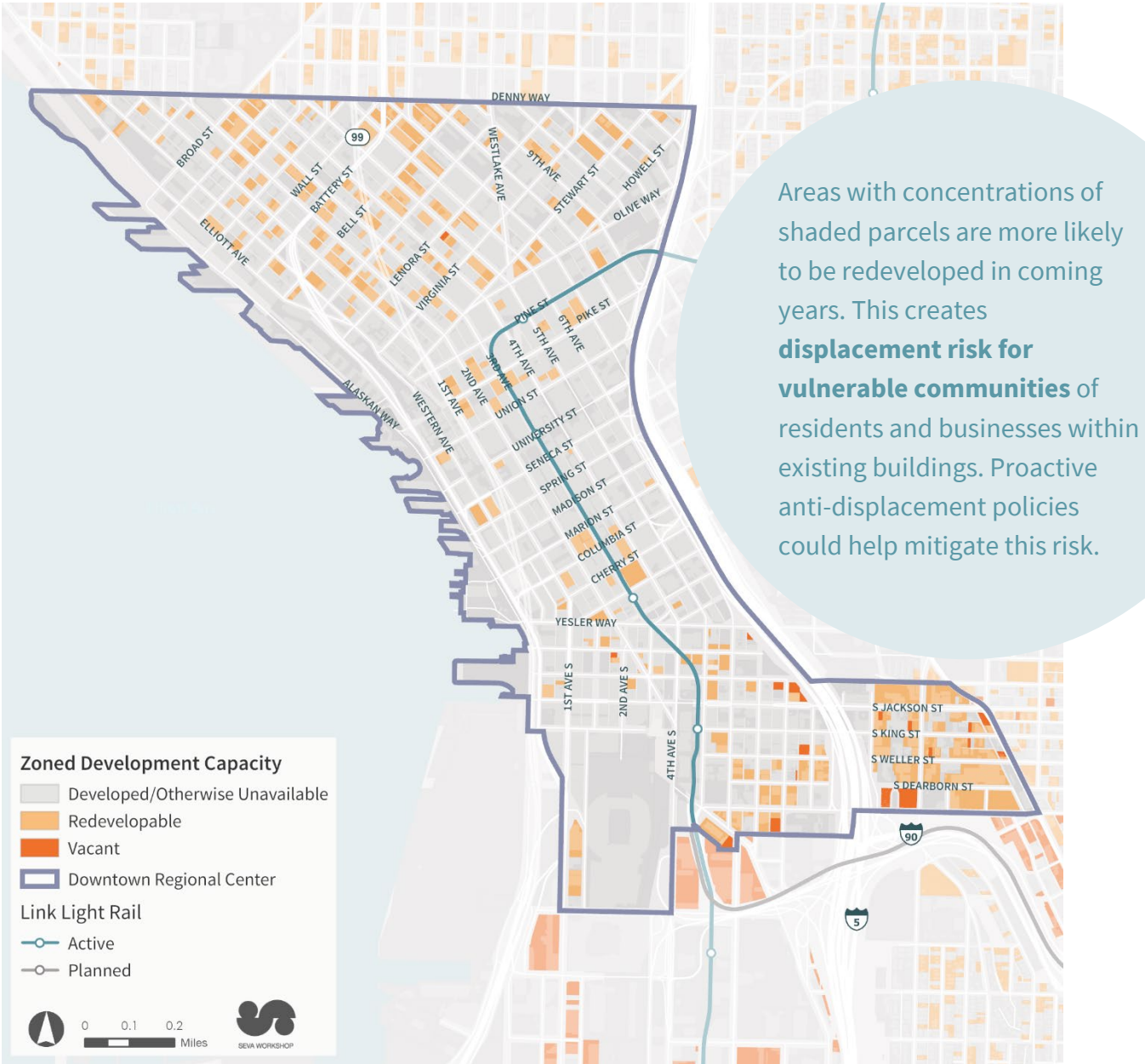
There is ample capacity to meet housing and job targets in the Downtown Urban Center under the existing zoning framework. There are pockets of concentration for this capacity, such as the portions of the CID west of I-5, the northeast corner of Denny Triangle between I-99 and Lenora, and in Belltown on 1st Ave, 2nd Ave, and 3rd Ave corridors. See Exhibit 32. Redevelopment in upcoming years will likely concentrate in areas with ample development capacity. Since several of these areas are also areas with relatively high displacement risk, there may be a need for thoughtful anti-displacement policies.

Exhibit 31: Downtown Housing and Job Capacity and Targets.

	2022	2024-2044 Growth Target
Additional Housing Unit Capacity	87,087	13,500
Additional Job Capacity	401,875	60,000

Note: Capacity shown for vacant or redevelopable parcels.
Sources: City of Seattle, 2022; One Seattle Comprehensive Plan for Growth Targets; Seva Workshop, 2024.

Exhibit 32: Development Capacity in Downtown, 2022.



Sources: City of Seattle Open Data Portal, 2022; Seva Workshop, 2024.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Opportunities and Constraints

Key Opportunities

- **Downtown is comprised of several distinct neighborhoods with unique offerings.** These neighborhoods make Seattle’s Downtown unique and offer opportunities to enhance Downtown both during and after office hours. The existing neighborhood designations and boundaries may need to be updated as the City plans for the future of this large and dynamic Regional Center.
- **Downtown reflects Seattle’s history.** Its growth and change over time reflect the evolution of Seattle from its indigenous roots to the present day. Amplifying this history, making space for Native storytelling, and connecting to the city’s development and change is an opportunity.
- **Cultural anchors connect Downtown to other neighborhoods and the region.** Pike Place Market, Pioneer Square, and other cultural spaces offer unique experiences that cannot be found elsewhere in the Puget Sound region. These sites establish an identity for the city and its neighbors, attracting visitors and locals alike.
- **Downtown is well-connected.** The area’s original street grid and decades of public investments in transit, sidewalks, and bicycle infrastructure have created an easily navigable urban center and a transit hub. While it is well connected, further improvements are needed to increase accessibility and address steep slopes.
- **Change and future Downtown development offer the opportunity to adjust the land use mix.** Seattle’s Downtown in 20 years is likely to have a higher allocation of land to residential uses. Redevelopment also opens the opportunity for integration of more green space and the reduction of vacant sites.
- **Light rail expansion will enhance the connectivity and walkability of Downtown.** Downtown will be served by enhanced light rail connections to Eastside communities, northern suburbs, and eventually to Ballard and West Seattle. Two or three new stations are expected in the Downtown Urban Center, and the City will need to reevaluate land use designations in these station areas once those sites are determined, particularly for the new CID and Denny stations.
- **Much of Downtown’s land area is owned by public entities.** This means that entities such as the City, County, State, and Port can have more influence over the urban environment and use of space in Downtown neighborhoods. Through SDOT, the public right-of-way can be reimaged to improve walkability and add public spaces. The City can

partner with King County as it rethinks the use of its campus in ways that support character-building and a strong presence of arts and culture Downtown.²⁶

- **Downtown has the capacity needed to meet its growth targets.** Current zoning regulations are not a barrier to achieving Downtown’s targeted increase in housing and job counts. Capacity analysis suggests that much of this capacity is held in the CID, Belltown, and Denny Triangle. Anti-displacement measures will be important to stabilize residents and businesses currently in these areas.
- **There are many recent planning efforts outlining visions for Downtown neighborhoods and corridors.** These efforts have involved extensive engagement and analysis. Examples include the Little Sàigòn Action Plan, Pike Place Market Master Plan, Chinatown-International District Strategic Plan, and Seattle Transportation Plan. Policy recommendations from these efforts will help this subarea plan align with community efforts and priorities.
- **The Downtown Waterfront construction is scheduled for completion in 2025.** This work reflects a huge investment in new infrastructure that will reshape Seattle’s relationship to its waterfront, increasing pedestrian access to this amenity and connecting to neighboring institutions such as Pike Place Market. Opportunity remains with visioning for Pier 48 on the south end.

Key Constraints

- **Patterns of employment for office workers have fundamentally shifted, creating an atmosphere of uncertainty and caution in the development community.** The future of commercial real estate remains uncertain, and, in the meantime, street life and foot traffic have diminished in the Commercial Core. This hurts retail and service-oriented businesses and has created budget shortfalls for the City entities that rely on tax revenue from these tenants.
- **The I-5 corridor creates an unfriendly eastern edge to Downtown and cuts through the Chinatown-International District.** Neighboring areas, such as First Hill, feel less connected. The CID neighborhood is fragmented. Especially as an additional light rail station location is being considered in this subarea of Downtown, improving neighborhood connectivity and land uses supportive of high-capacity transit success are important considerations for the future.
- **The topography Downtown impedes the practicality of walking and biking between certain destinations.** Steep slopes rising east from the waterfront are a barrier for many

²⁶ One example for a creative partnership agreement is the VAPA Center in Charlotte, NC. The building, formerly used for County administrative offices, was turned over to a non-profit organization that leases space to artists and local non-profits. Public exhibitions bring in the community to contribute to a “Creative Mile” in downtown. Read more here: <https://www.vapacenter.com/>

who might otherwise choose these modes for circulation. Even with its density of uses and navigable grid, Downtown is difficult to navigate for many who have mobility limitations.

- **The current land use mix, heavily weighted to office space, is struggling to maintain vibrancy in a changing economy.** It will take time and growing pains to redevelop sites and realize a vision for a thriving future downtown that is fully functioning as a mixed-use center. This involves carving greenspace into an established grid, converting vacant office buildings into mixed-use sites, and creatively adapting publicly owned spaces to better serve the next seven generations.
- **There is a high percentage of vacant land or space used as parking lots.** These uses detract from street life and interrupt corridors of activity. At the same time, Downtown has a low percentage of land dedicated to green space. These two factors, combined with vacancies within existing office buildings, leave many blocks of Downtown feeling cold, uninviting, and unsafe.
- **Parcels that span full blocks impose a large scale and monolithic feel when not adequately activated.** Long blocks detract from walkability and these landowners play an outsized role in impacting the experience of Downtown, particularly in the Commercial Core. The reactivation of currently vacant sites, such as the County Administration Building and 3rd & Cherry, will take time, investment, and coordination among public and private developers.
- **Certain areas in Pioneer Square and the CID have concentrations of buildings that are not seismically reinforced.** These older buildings need significant investments to upgrade toward modern safety standards. Due to building age and condition, they tend to be more affordable for both residents and businesses. This increases displacement risk during retrofits and upgrades.

Connections to Project Outcomes

At the onset of this planning effort, and as part of the Racial Equity Toolkit (RET) development, the project team identified five key outcomes for the Downtown Urban Center. The list below summarizes some of the ways that existing land use Downtown either supports the RET outcomes or acts as a barrier.

Key Supports:

- Housing production in Downtown has increased. From 2015-2022, 8,444 units were added within this Urban Center. This construction boom has opened the door to Downtown as a home for many more Seattleites.
- Downtown Seattle is home to many anchor institutions and drivers of employment. It is well connected to many parts of the city and region via transit networks. This sets a solid

foundation for financial opportunity and the potential for success to businesses of all sizes.

- Downtown includes a series of neighborhoods, sites, and historic districts that reflect the identity and culture of many previous and current generations. Continued work to draw these connections can further a sense of belonging for all Downtowners.
- Decades of investment in public transit and walkability have resulted in a Downtown where one can live without the cost burden of a personal vehicle. For many residents, this reduces cost of living and improves personal health. For businesses, this allows for a wider pool of potential employees.

Key Barriers:

- From its onset, racial segregation was part of development patterns Downtown. Legacies of exclusion in public process have fragmented generations of immigrant and non-White communities with long-lasting impact.
- Downtown was initially developed as a commercial center, with limited land dedicated to residential use. Housing production has ramped up in recent decades, but not all areas are well-designed as complete neighborhoods. There are no public schools and many blocks are dominated by large institutional or commercial uses. Green space is lacking.
- Recent shifts in employment patterns have resulted in many vacancies Downtown, depressed street activity, and a decline in perceptions of safety and “eyes on the street.”
- Many artists have been pushed out of Downtown and struggle to find space to live, work, create, and perform. With high costs, low foot traffic, and disparate nodes of activity, many local artists look elsewhere in the city and region for space to build a life and practice. The City has some efforts in place to support this important component to cultural life, but initiatives can feel disconnected and like too little too late.

