Existing Conditions: Transportation (2024)

NORTHGATE REGIONAL CENTER PLAN

Contents

CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

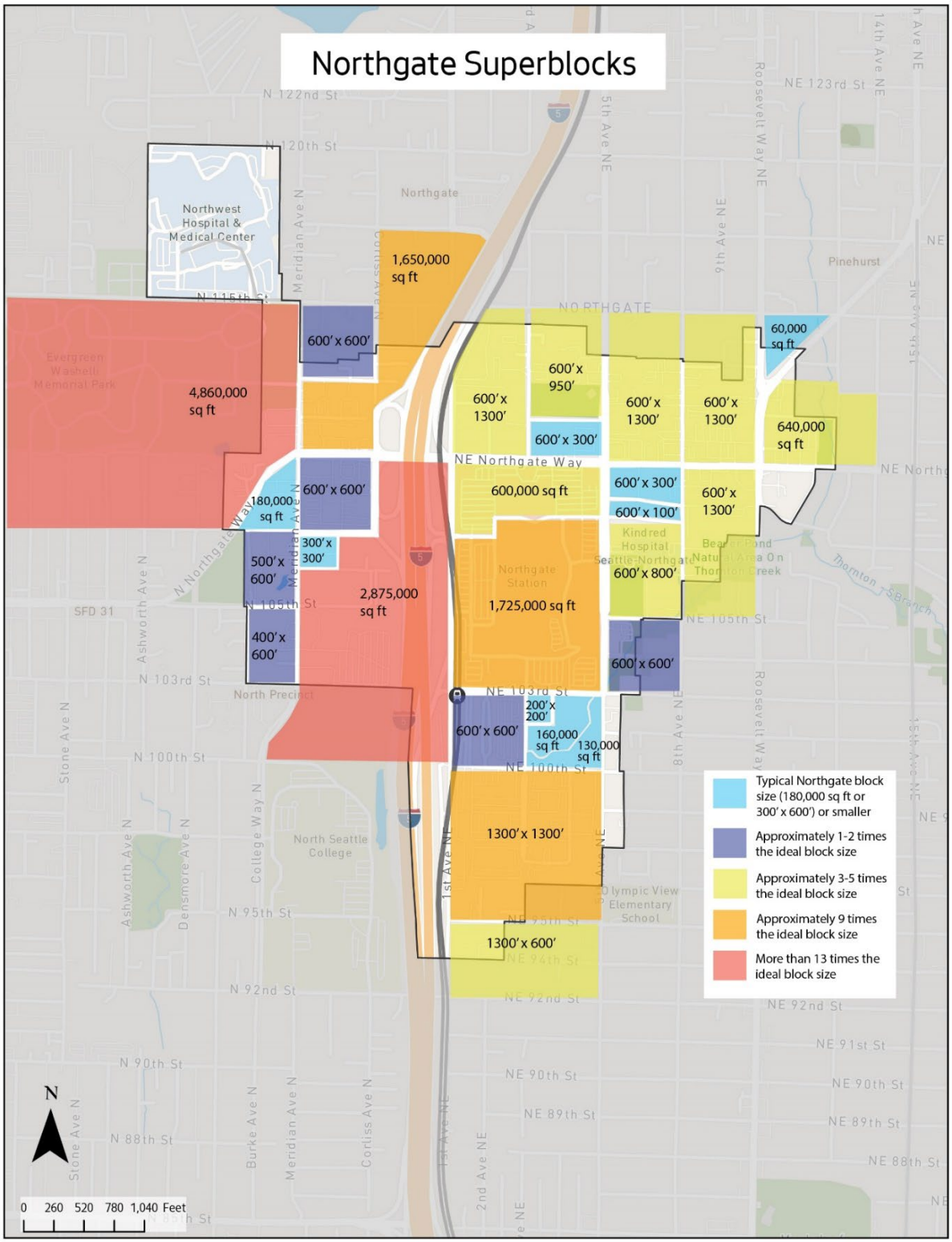
Our assessment of existing conditions in the study area highlights key opportunities and constraints that inform potential multimodal transportation improvement projects.

Constraints

Superblocks are Barriers to a Resilient, Multimodal Street Network

- The subarea has numerous “superblocks”, which are areas of urban land much larger than a traditional city block with minimal street connections for motor vehicles and/or people walking and biking. A walkable block is generally considered 200 feet by 200 feet. The typical block in the Northgate area is 300 feet by 600 feet, but most of the blocks in the study area are 3 to 9 times that size, with some being over 13 times that size. See **Exhibit 1**. Many of these superblocks house key destinations, such as commercial stores, offices, medical facilities, and gyms at their centers. Two examples include the Northgate Mall site and the area bounded by NE 100th St, 5th Ave NE, NE 95th St, and 1st Ave NE just south of the light rail station.
- The lack of street connections make for long, inconvenient, and indirect routes if you try to access these destinations walking or biking. Superblocks also exacerbate vehicle congestion by forcing all trips onto fewer streets. This makes walking or biking on the subarea’s streets less desirable and comfortable, making driving the most attractive option. Concentration of trips onto fewer congested streets can also impact transit travel time and reliability and ultimately reduces the resiliency of the network.

Exhibit 1: Northgate Superblocks



Data Source: Seattle Department of Transportation

Undesirable Walking and Biking Conditions

- The network for people biking in the subarea has numerous gaps, and some of the existing facilities are not comfortable for people of all ages and abilities, such as 5th Avenue NE. In particular, few east-west connections exist in the subarea, making biking in the subarea stressful.
- The network of sidewalks in the subarea is largely complete, but many sidewalks do not meet City standards and need upgrades. That said, it is still uncomfortable and stressful to walk in many locations given high motor vehicle speeds, lack of landscaping buffer next to sidewalks, and insufficient/missing crossings. It is particularly challenging to navigate the stretch of NE Northgate Way in between the I-5 on and off ramps. Additionally, most streets in the neighborhoods adjacent to the subarea either lack sidewalks or existing sidewalks do not meet standards, so it is undesirable to walk to destinations within the subarea.

Auto-Centric Land Use Has Resulted in Safety Challenges

- As a result of land use patterns in the subarea, such as superblocks, and the undesirable walking and biking conditions mentioned above, the subarea is auto centric. Wide arterial streets have multiple lanes for motor vehicles, leading many people to speed. There is a history of collisions that have resulted in serious injuries for people walking, biking, and riding in motor vehicles, especially along NE Northgate Way and 5th Avenue NE.

Current Parking Patterns Favor Driving and are an Obstacle to Future Growth

- Free surface-level parking lots occupy a large percentage of the surface area of many properties in Northgate. These parking lots are uncomfortable and potentially dangerous to navigate as a pedestrian or cyclist. The ready availability of parking coupled with adverse walking and biking conditions reinforces driving as the preferred mode choice when accessing many of the services in Northgate.
- On-street parking, where it exists on the limited street grid, is largely unregulated outside of the immediate Northgate Transit Station area. As Northgate grows and more off-street parking is redeveloped into other uses, demand for limited curbside parking will increase. Additional on-street regulation and better non-driving connections will be needed to create sufficient turnover at the curb and prevent unwanted traffic from drivers circling looking for parking.

Opportunities

Redevelopment creates opportunity to build new connections

- The redevelopment of the Northgate Mall site is a major first step at breaking up one of the largest superblocks within the Northgate subarea. Its redevelopment will provide additional pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular connections through a property previously dominated by surface level parking lots. While this improves multimodal circulation throughout the mall site, accessing the site from the surrounding area is still challenging without a vehicle. As other superblocks redevelop throughout the subarea, a more complete network of multimodal connections can be implemented to link the redeveloped mall site, transit station, and other amenities in the subarea.

Leverage long-term community support for a more walkable neighborhood to implement more robust code

- Since the original 1993 Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan, planners and community members have consistently called for a more walkable, less-auto oriented community. These planning efforts helped bring a high-capacity transit stop to the subarea in the form of Northgate Station and a major east-west bike and pedestrian connection across I-5 in the form of John Lewis Memorial Bridge. To support future large capital changes, individual streetscapes and lot configurations need to be retrofitted to make the pedestrian experience in Northgate safe and comfortable. The existing code within the Northgate Overlay District is a good start but is due for an update.

Improve connectivity for people walking and biking to surrounding neighborhoods

- For Northgate to be a successful multimodal center that serves its surrounding neighborhoods, additional connections must be made for people walking and biking to and from those places. Many neighborhoods immediately adjacent to the subarea lack sidewalks, and east-west bike connections are limited. Building out these sidewalks and/or installing and delivering the new bike connections demonstrated in the Seattle Transportation Plan will allow neighbors to access the subarea more safely and comfortably without a car.

Improve Access to Natural Spaces and Reconnect Native Places

- Northgate is home to numerous natural spaces, such as Thorton Creek, Beaver Pond, and Barton Woods, as well as newer green spaces like Hubbard Homestead Park and the Thornton Creek boardwalk through Thorton Place. Connections for people walking and biking to some of these green spaces are limited because of adjacent private property, leaving people to access these natural areas via busier and less comfortable arterials. There is an opportunity to create new connections on private property and enhance connections from arterials to

elevate safe access to these and other community assets. These connections to public outdoor space will become more important as more residences are built in the subarea with less personal outdoor space.

- Barton Woods and the surrounding area was historically a summer camp for the Coast Salish peoples, with trails connecting it to a permanent village at Matthews Beach and other important locations such as Haller Lake, and Licton Springs. While the exact location of these paths is now lost, there is an opportunity to partner with Tribes and Urban Native Communities to reestablish these connections on the current street grid and through open space pathways.

PAST PLANS

The Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan is a foundational document for planning in the Northgate subarea. Much of the language present in the current Northgate Overlay District and in future planning documents draws from this original plan.

Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan (1993)

The Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan was released in 1993 with a vision to "transform a thriving, but underutilized, auto-oriented office/retail area into a vital, mixed-use center of concentrated development surrounded by healthy single-family neighborhoods." If the plan achieved its goals, Northgate's core would become "a place where people live, work, shop, play and go to school—all within walking distance" while residents of the surrounding single-family neighborhoods would have access to the core's goods and services "via a range of transportation alternatives including walking, bicycling, transit, and automobile".

The plan designated a Northgate Overlay District and set forth several transportation policies to achieve this vision within that district:

- Require Transportation Management Plans (TMPs) of new developments forecast to generate 25 or more employee or student trips OR 50 more resident trips for multi-family housing (Policy 6.1)
- Designate bicycle routes, require commuter bicycle parking, and accommodate bicycles on 1-5 crossings (Policy 6.3)
- Increase transit service to Northgate area and focus development around transit stops (Policy 7.1, 7.3)
- Build out pedestrian circulation on public and private properties, designate Major Pedestrian Streets with specific requirements of adjacent development to promote a better pedestrian environment, designate Green Streets, reduce pedestrian vehicular conflicts (including development of pedestrian connections through superblocks). (Policy 8)
- Create parking exemptions for certain land uses, control the amount of surface parking, establish a public parking fund to receive in lieu of construction fees from new development (Policy 9)
- Improve HOV access on I-5, modify existing I-5 ramps, direct traffic away from neighborhood streets onto arterials (Policy 10)
- Develop a high-capacity transit station, concentrate development around this station, and improve pedestrian access to this station (Policy 11)

Many of these policies are still directly reflected in the existing Northgate Overlay District Code.

Adopted 2035 Comprehensive Plan – Neighborhood Policies

Goals and policies for Northgate first appear in Neighborhood planning element of the Comprehensive Plan in the 2004 update. The Northgate Transportation Goals and policies in the adopted 2035 Comprehensive Plan reflect the policies described in the 1993 Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan including accommodating more person trips rather than vehicle trips, expanding access to transit, promoting pedestrian circulation, and managing parking supply, location, and demand.

Northgate Coordinated Transportation Investment Plan (CTIP) (2006)

The Northgate CTIP established a blueprint in cooperation with various stakeholders for public and private transportation investments through 2030 within the boundaries of the Northgate Overlay District. The CTIP draws on the multimodal vision described in the Northgate Comprehensive Plan, establishing benchmarks and performance measures to help assess progress toward this vision. The plan forecast future traffic conditions and identified projects and programs that would prevent traffic congestion and move people more safely and efficiently around Northgate. Finally, the plan prioritizes the recommended projects and programs based on how well they advance the plans performance measures, support the policies in the Transportation Element and Northgate transportation policies in the Seattle Comprehensive plan and Transportation Strategic Plan, and align with SDOT's Capital Improvement Program project prioritization process.

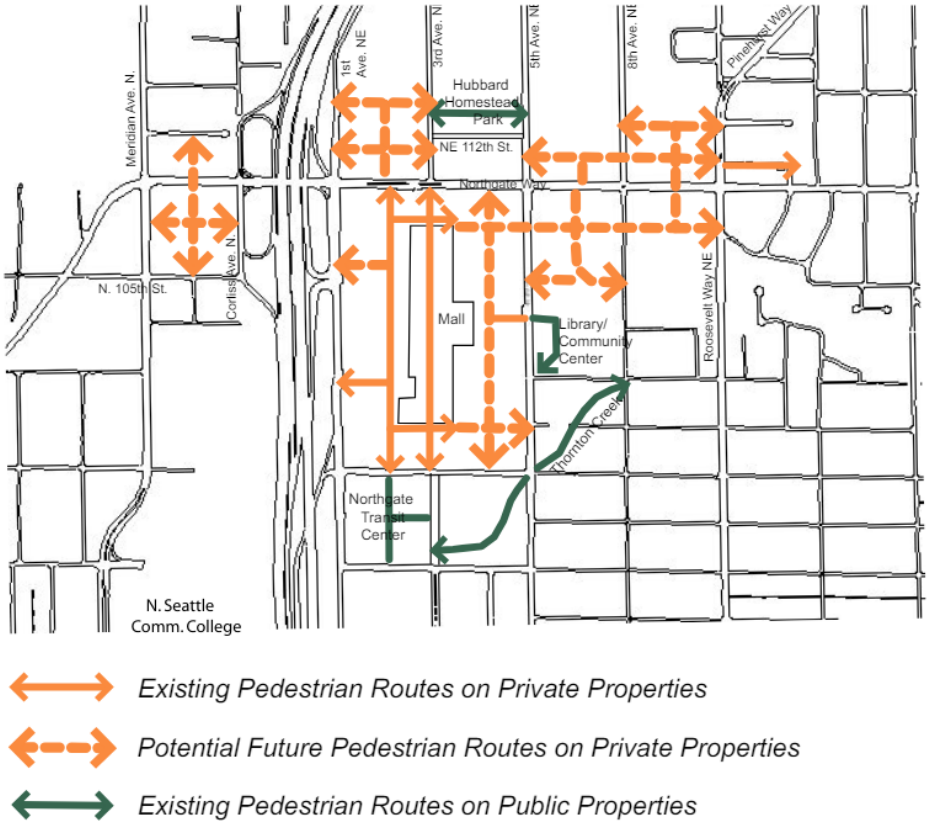
Northgate Design Guidelines (2013)

The Northgate Urban Center and Overlay District Design Guidelines were first created in 2003, updated in 2009, and adopted by City Council in 2010. They are used for projects that fall in the Northgate Urban Center and Northgate overlay district, in tandem with citywide guidelines, for projects that fall within the scope of the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) section 23.41.004. In 2013, Northgate's Design Guidelines were updated again to reflect changes to the City's new, updated citywide guidelines.

The Northgate Design Guidelines encourage:

- **Connectivity**. Increase publicly accessible open spaces and pedestrian connections between them. Larger development sites are encouraged to incorporate pedestrian walkways and open spaces to create breaks in the street wall and encourage movement through the site and to the surrounding area.

Exhibit 2: Existing and Proposed Connectivity



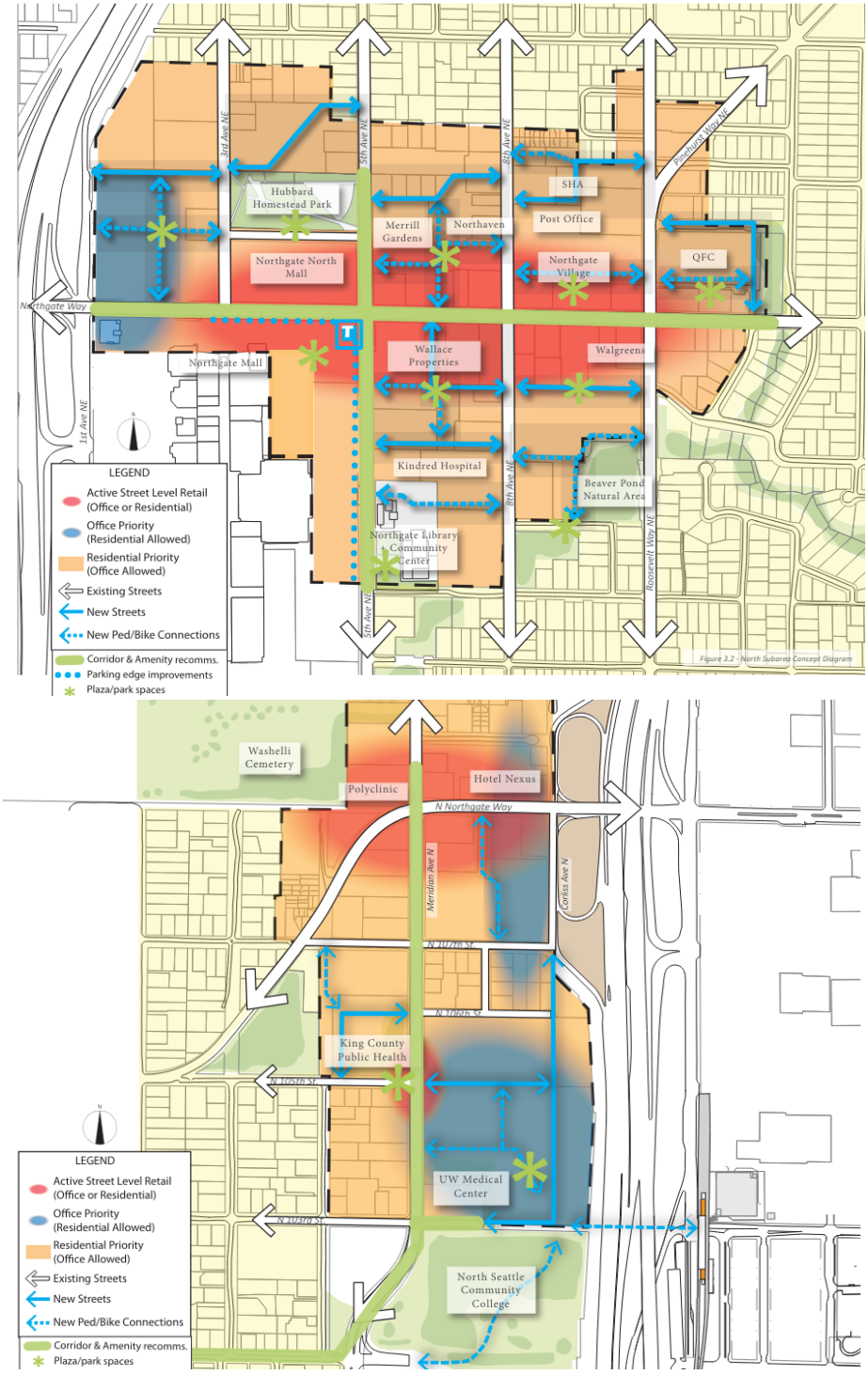
Data Source: Northgate Urban Design Guidelines

- **Walkability, Streetscape, and Superblocks**. Provide direct and convenient pathways, comfort, visual interest, and activity for people walking. The Design Guidelines offer guidance for superblocks specifically.

Northgate Urban Design Framework (2013)

The 2013 Urban Design Framework provides a "road map of strategies and recommendations for continued progress toward the Urban Center's transformation". The Urban Design Framework divides Northgate into 4 subareas (North, South, West, and Mall) and identifies development and transportation improvements in the North, South, and West areas. Some of these recommendations overlap and reinforce recommendations in the CTIP and Urban Design Guidelines. The Urban Design Framework goes further, calling for infill development of existing surface level parking lots alongside the creation of streets and bike/pedestrian only connections. The UDFs proposals for additional connections in each subarea are shown in **Exhibit 3**.

Exhibit 3: Proposed Connections (North, West, and South)



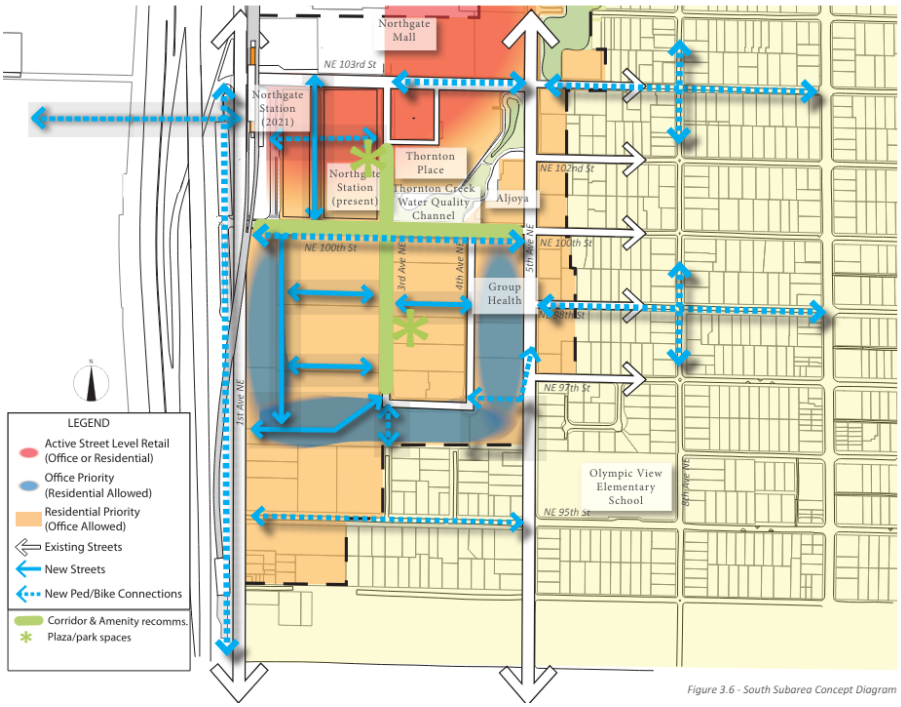


Figure 3.6 - South Subarea Concept Diagram

Data Source: Northgate Urban Framework

2024 UW Medical Center - Northwest Master Plan

The 2024 UWMC – Northwest Master plan describes existing and planned access and circulation, design guidance for campus access and circulation going forward, development standards for bicycle parking, pedestrian circulation, public street improvements, parking, and vehicular circulation, and describes the center's Transportation Management Program. The plan's horizon for full build out is 2040.

The UWMC-Northwest currently forms a super block in the northwest corner of the Northgate subarea. No access to the campus exists or is planned for its east or west boundaries and these do not front public streets or property. Current vehicle access is limited to N 115th St with pedestrian access on N 115th St and N 120th St. Once inside the campus personal and emergency vehicles, transit, pedestrians, and bicyclists must navigate a circuitous set of surface parking lots. In the proposed condition, parking will be consolidated, and circulation will consist of a campus loop with improved sidewalks and better accommodation for transit and cyclists. Existing and proposed circulation are shown in **Exhibit 4**. The exact form of this loop is yet to be determined as development plans progress. An additional all modes access point is desired along N 115th St and diagrams show bike/pedestrian access on N 120th St being consolidated to one access point.

Exhibit 4: UWMC-Northwest Existing (top) and Proposed (bottom) Circulation

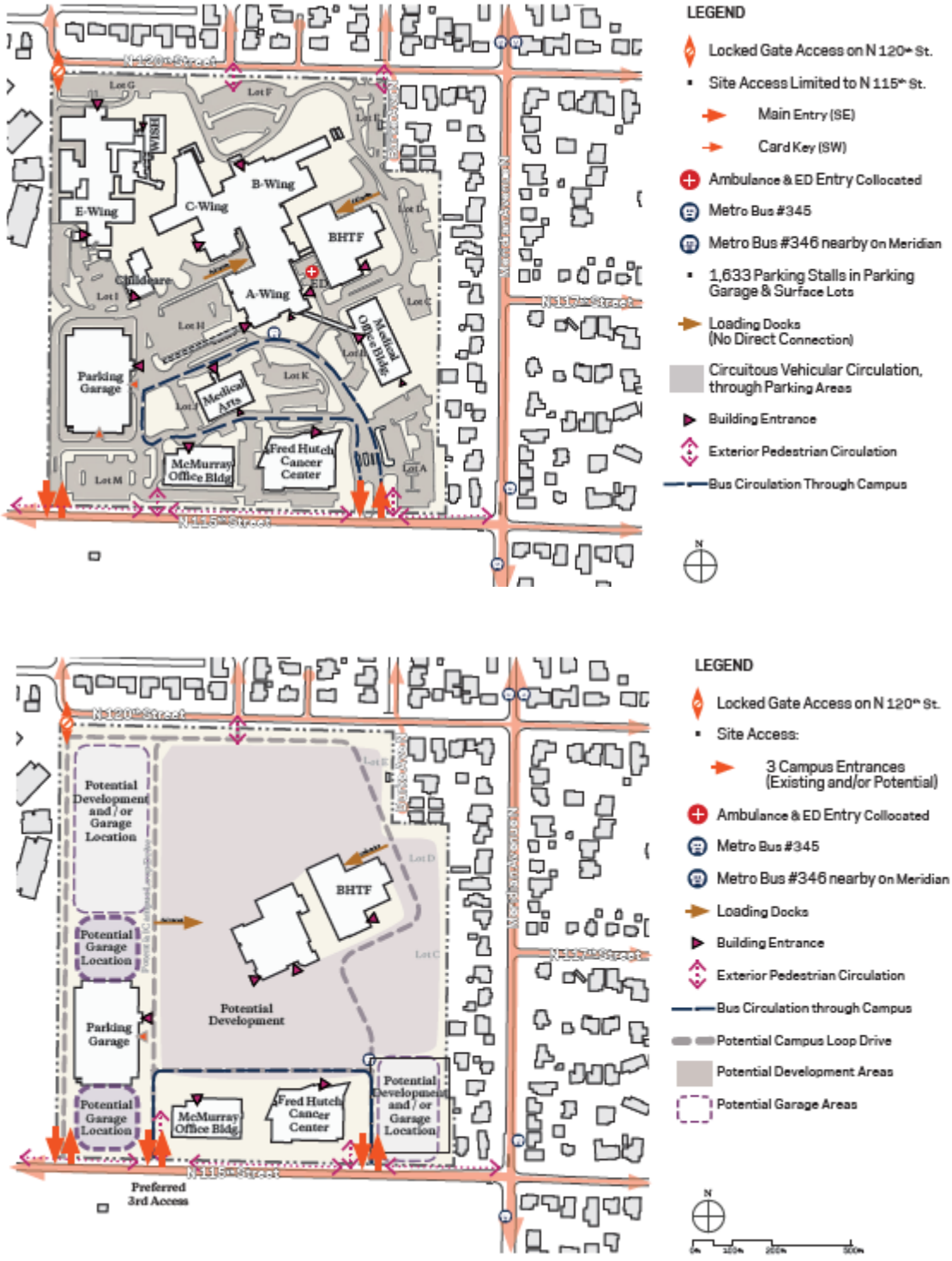


FIG 3.16 PROPOSED CIRCULATION DIAGRAM

Data Source: UWMC-Northwest 2024 Master Plan

To accommodate expanding services and demand, the campus anticipates adding one or more additional parking structures to its existing parking garage, representing a net increase of up to 1700 stalls for a total maximum of 3,300 parking spaces.

The plan sets a new mode share target of 50% SOV trips, a reduction of 25% from the current goal of 75%.

As part of recent development projects, UW has completed sidewalk improvements on N 120th St and N 115th St as well street improvements to Burke Ave N.

Northgate Mall Redevelopment

The Simon Properties Major Phased Development of the old Northgate Mall is currently underway. As part of development several new vehicular and bike/pedestrian only connections will be developed (shown in the diagrams below), breaking up this previous super block and providing direct access to the Northgate Light Rail Station. Outside the scope of development but connected is the northern portion of the old mall site. Most of this area fronting NE Northgate Way between 1st and 5th Aves NE will remain large surface parking lots, limiting access for people who walk or bike from the north to the redeveloped site.

Exhibit 5: Proposed Vehicle Circulation

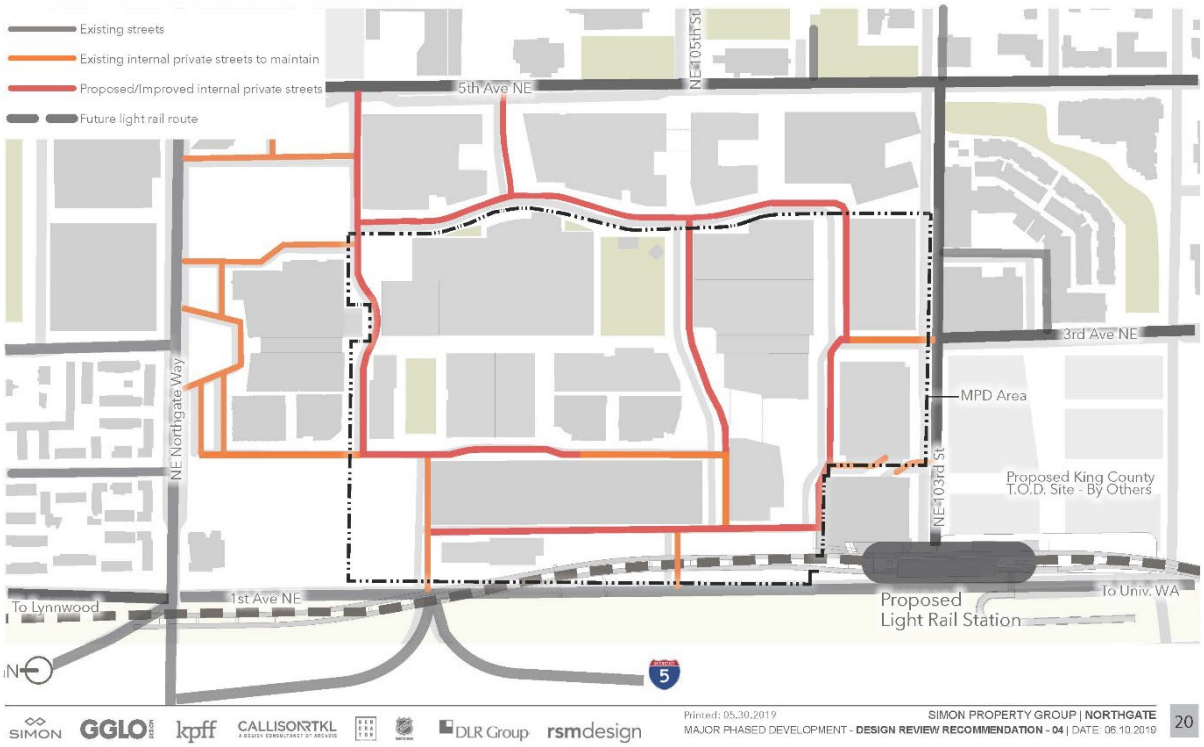


Exhibit 6: Proposed Pedestrian Circulation

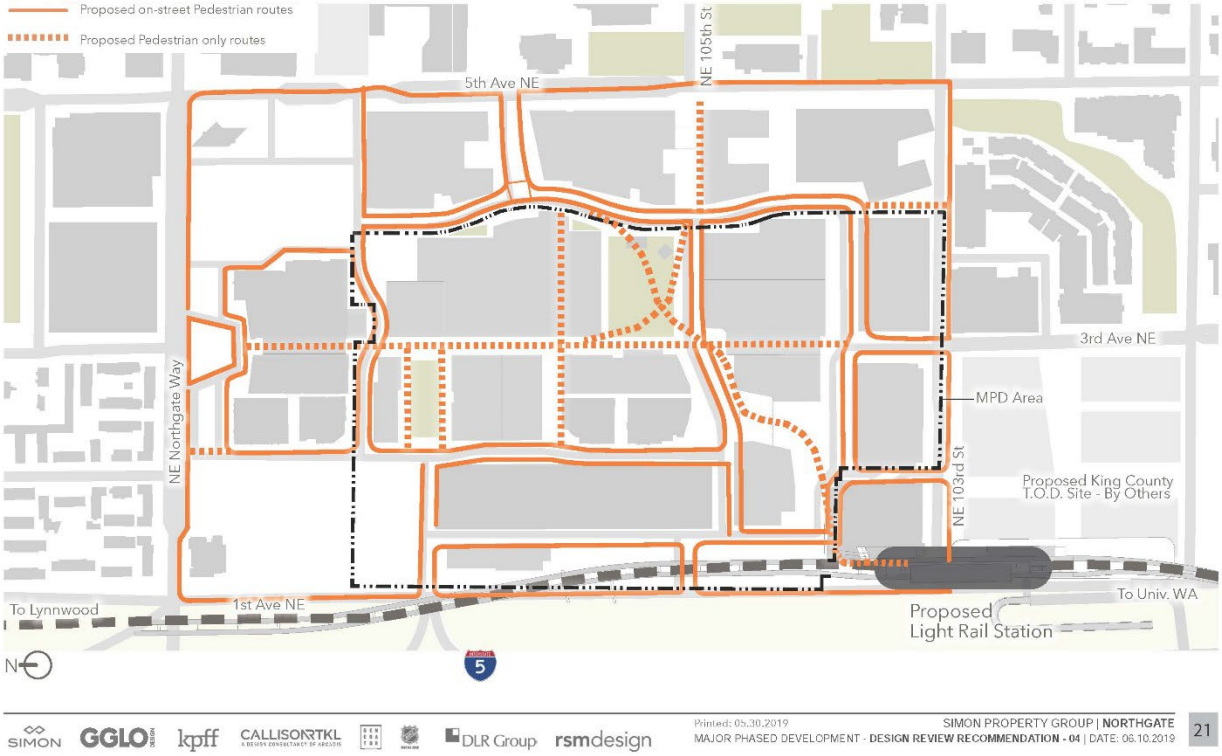
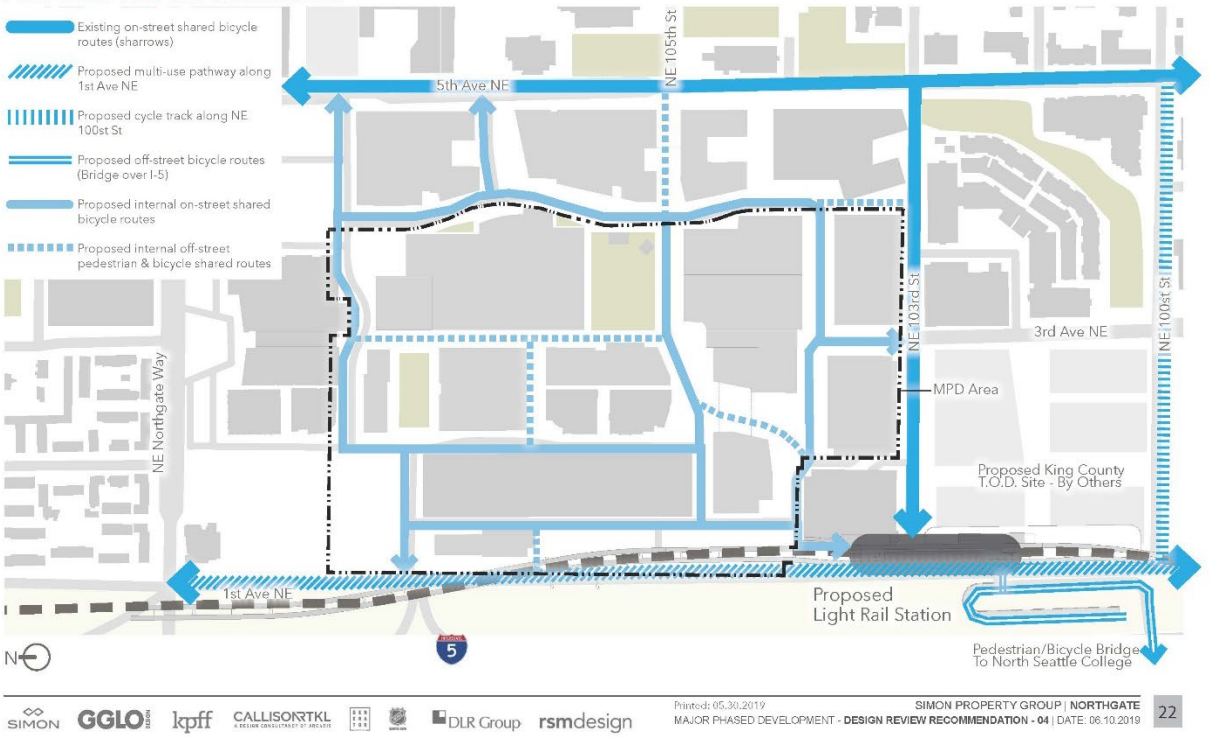


Exhibit 7: Proposed Bicycle Circulation



EXISTING CODE RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION

Northgate Overlay District (SMC 23.71)

The Northgate Overlay District was first established in 1993 to provide specific land use and development regulations in support of the following goals within the broader Northgate area:

- Create an environment in the Northgate Area that is more amenable to pedestrians and supportive of commercial development; and
- To protect the residential character of residential neighborhoods; and
- Support the use of Northgate as a regional high-capacity transportation center.

The Overlay District implements the following transportation related code to support these aims:

- Regulate development along two designated Major Pedestrian Streets: Northgate Way (from Third Avenue Northeast to 11th Avenue Northeast) and Fifth Avenue Northeast (from Northeast 113th Street to Northeast 105th Street)
- Designates appropriate street-level uses, building façade types, and parking location, screening, and access.
- Specifies sidewalk widths and overhead weather protection
- Require development along Green Streets and Special Landscaped Arterials to construct street and pedestrian improvements
- Require development of Open Space on private property. Landscaped interior block connections and urban trails are specified as acceptable forms of open space provision.
- Set off-street short and long term parking minimums, maximums, and waivers and regulate Parking Location and access. Additional parking waivers are permitted along Major Pedestrian Streets.
- Require protected bike parking
- Establish a payment in lieu of On-site Long-term Parking system, with funds to be used for construction of a public parking structure

Require Transportation Management Programs (TMPs) for all substantial development that generates >25 employee or student vehicle trips in any one PM hour, and for all substantial multifamily development that generates >50 vehicle trips in any one PM hour.

Northgate Seattle Mixed Zones (SMC 23.48)

Subchapter VII establishes regulations for SM-NG zones within the SM Category in the Northgate Urban Center. This section primarily impacts transportation through SMC 23.48.841, requiring a mid-block corridor be developed within the SM Zones as part of the amenity and open space requirements of SM zones.

PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

The sidewalk network in the subarea is relatively complete, though there are a few missing sidewalks inside the subarea, as shown in **Exhibit 8**. However, several locations in the subarea have "substandard sidewalks," which means they are significantly narrower than current standards identified in Seattle's *Streets Illustrated* and/or have minimal separation from traffic, and should eventually be upgraded, as shown in **Exhibit 9**. Given the auto-centric nature of the subarea, vehicles traveling on arterials often speed, making it uncomfortable for people walking. Locations that are particularly uncomfortable to walk along for the above reasons include:

- NE Northgate Way in several locations, but particularly under I-5 and at the I-5 on/off ramps
- 1st Ave NE
- 5th Ave NE
- Several local streets west of I-5
- Just outside the subarea, many streets in adjacent neighborhoods lack sidewalks, which makes it challenging and potentially uncomfortable to walk to the subarea.

It is also challenging to cross streets in several locations in the subarea. **Exhibit 10** identifies intersections that are not currently enhanced and 600 feet or more away from the closest enhanced crossing, which are locations the City is currently prioritizing for upgrades. There are additional challenging crossing locations in the study area not shown on that map, which should be evaluated for future upgrades or new crossings, especially as Northgate develops and new destinations are generated. In order for the City to consider adding a new crossing, a location must meet the City's current crossing guidelines, as shown in the call out box below.

Locations that are particularly challenging to cross include:

- NE Northgate Way at the I-5 on/off ramps on both sides of I-5
- N Northgate Way at N 107th St
- NE Northgate Way between 1st Ave NE and 5th Ave NE. Even though there are crosswalks at 1st Ave NE, 3rd Ave NE, and 5th Ave NE (which is approximately 600 feet between crossings), many people jaywalk midblock to reduce the distance they have to walk or the time they have to wait at the light.
- N Northgate Way at Ashworth Ave N (just west of the study area)
- 1st Ave NE at the entrance to the Northgate Mall site, north of NE 103th St
- 1st Ave NE at NE 95th St
- 1st Ave NE at NE 94th St
- 5th Ave NE between NE 103rd St and NE Northgate Way. The distance between existing marked crossings is greater than 600 feet despite multiple popular destinations along the roadway.

- Meridian Ave N between N 107th St and N 105th St. There is demand for a crossing here given a public health clinic and bus stop, but this location does not meet current requirements for a new crossing.

The street grid in the subarea and adjacent neighborhoods include a lot of superblocks without pathways or streets for people to walk on, so pedestrian connectivity through these areas is a major challenge.

City Crossing Guidelines (July 2024)

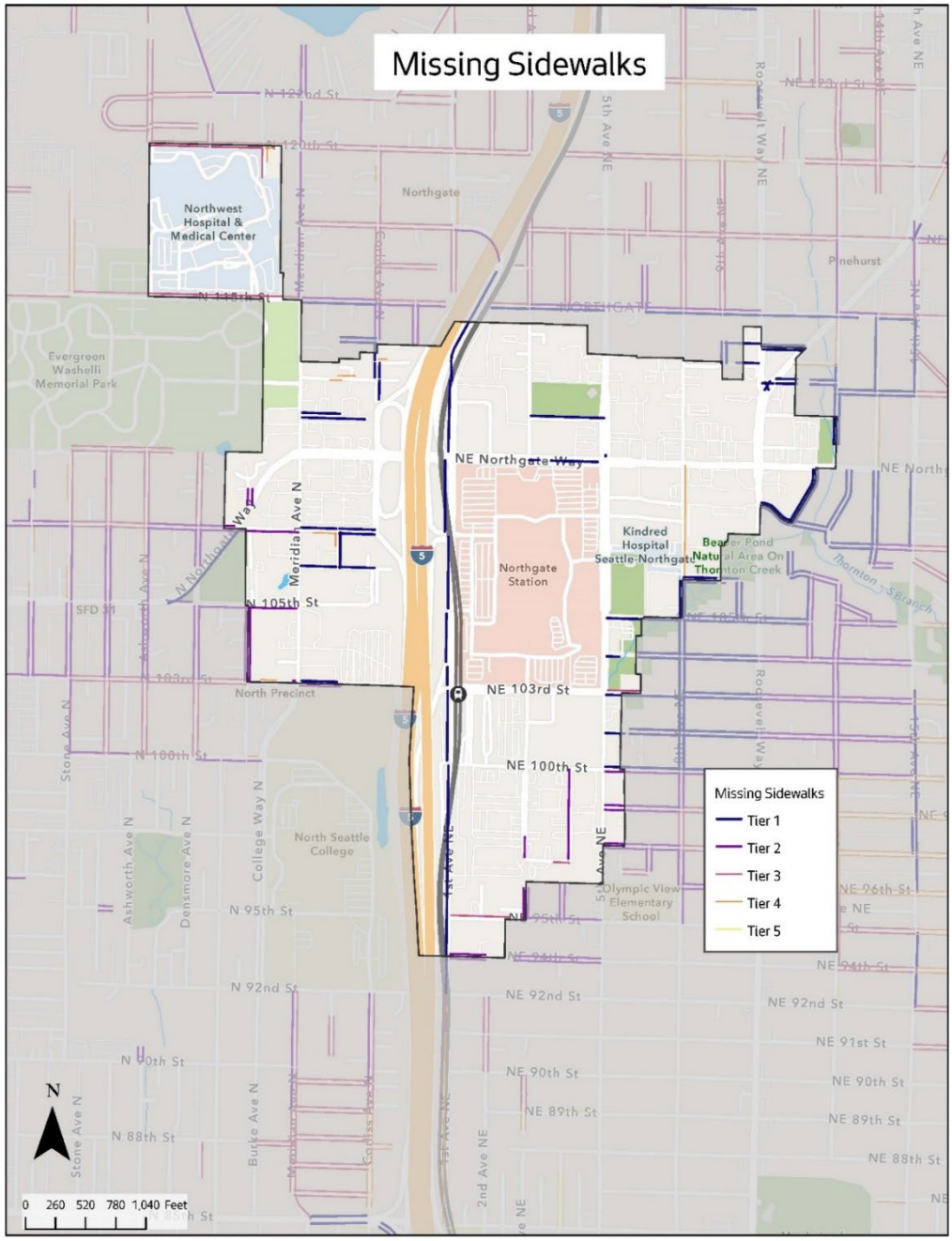
SDOT considers the following factors when deciding whether to mark a crosswalk:

- If it is a non-arterial or arterial street next to a school and leads to a campus entrance
- If it is on an arterial street with no more than two travel lanes (could have a center turn lane too), relatively low-to-medium driver speeds and vehicle usage, and has one or more of the following characteristics:
    - Connects to a multi-use trail
    - Part of a Neighborhood Greenway or Healthy Street
    - Near a frequent transit stop that is heavily used
    - Within a Displacement Risk Index which provides a longer-term view of displacement risk based on neighborhood characteristics
    - Part of a larger infrastructure project, such as corridor repaving
    - NOT on a curve or slope where sightlines are a concern
    - It is several blocks to the nearest marked crosswalk
    - Near destinations where we tend to see more pedestrians, such as parks, community spaces (like libraries, food banks, churches), and places serving seniors, kids, or people with disabilities.

SDOT routinely evaluates and revises these guidelines based on industry best practices.

Source: https://www.seattle.gov/transportation/projects-and-programs/programs/pedestrian-program/pedestrian-crossings

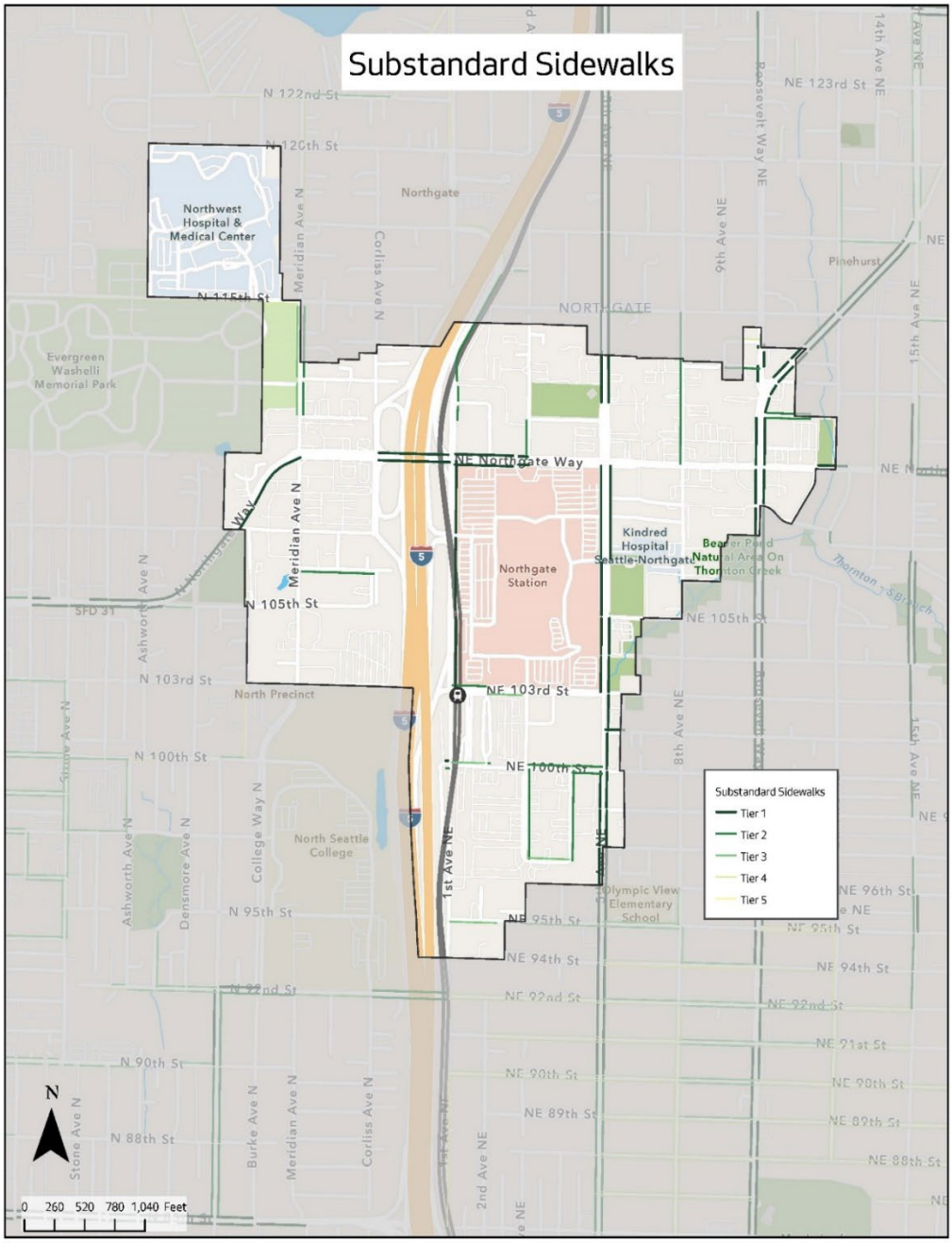
Exhibit 8: Missing Sidewalks*



*The Seattle Transportation Plan Pedestrian Element gave each street segment that currently lacks sidewalks a prioritization score based on three factors: 1) proximity to high pedestrian trip areas (30%), 2) safety (40%), and 3) equity (30%). A more detailed description of how these factors were weighted to arrive at final scores can be found in the STP Pedestrian Element "Missing and Substandard Sidewalk Map Methodology". The street segments were then divided into five tiers, with Tier 1 segments being the highest priority. This PIN helps identify locations where there may be opportunities to improve conditions for people moving along the street.

Data Source: Seattle Transportation Plan

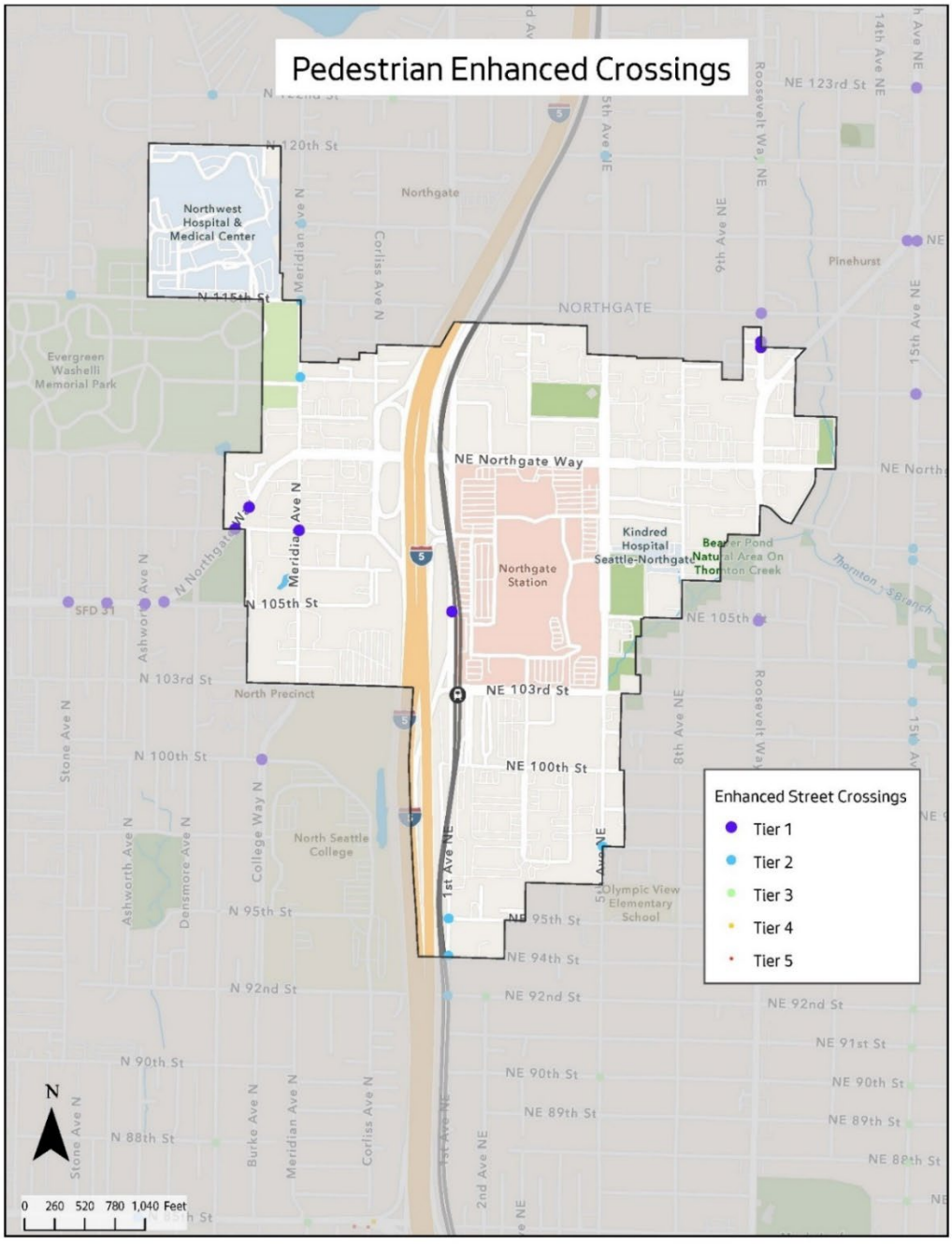
Exhibit 9: Substandard Sidewalks*



*This map identifies all streets with sidewalk zones that are significantly narrower than current standards, as identified in Seattle's Streets Illustrated. The Seattle Transportation Plan gave a prioritization score for each segment based on three factors: 1) proximity to high pedestrian trip areas (30%), 2) safety (40%), and 3) equity (30%). A more detailed description of how these factors were weighted to arrive at final scores can be found in the STP Pedestrian Element "Missing and Substandard Sidewalk Map Methodology". The street segments were then divided into five tiers, with Tier 1 segments being the highest priority.

Data Source: Seattle Transportation Plan

Exhibit 10: Top Locations for Enhanced Crossings*



*This map identifies intersections that are not currently enhanced and are 600 feet or more away from the closest enhanced crossing. The Seattle Transportation Plan gave a prioritization score for each intersection based on three factors: 1) proximity to high pedestrian trip areas (30%), 2) safety (40%), and 3) equity (30%). A more detailed description of how these factors were weighted to arrive at final scores can be found in the STP Pedestrian Element "Enhanced Street Crossings Map Methodology". The street segments were then divided into five tiers, with Tier 1 segments being the highest priority.

Data Source: Seattle Transportation Plan

PEOPLE STREETS AND PUBLIC SPACES NETWORK

The Seattle Transportation Plan's "People Streets and Public Spaces Element" presents a vision for city streets that goes beyond moving from point A to point B and conveying essential services. It presents a case and a framework for how we can use public streets better and more equitably to strengthen places and communities. Making up nearly 30% of Seattle's land area, streets also play a vital role as public spaces. Better people-oriented streets can help make walking, biking and transit the preferred option for more trips.

Today, the subarea lacks People Streets and Public Spaces. There is much room for improvement to create a welcoming environment with greenery and liveliness that makes people want to linger. There are a few privately owned spaces that create this kind of environment, and the Northgate Mall redevelopment will enhance the subarea once complete, but there are currently no public spaces like this in the subarea. As shown in **Exhibit 11** by the purple circle, SDOT plans to partner with communities near this subarea to develop a "PSPS Action Plan" that identifies which types of People Streets and Public Spaces people want to see in their neighborhood and where, though the timing for this plan has not yet been determined. Eventual implementation of these spaces will benefit from partnerships with local organizations and agencies to support their activation. See the Seattle Transportation Plan's "People Streets and Public Spaces Element" for more details.

People Streets

People Streets put people first. They offer safe, inclusive, and comfortable environments for people to walk and roll to transit, public spaces, and other destinations. They offer inviting spaces for people to linger, enjoy their surroundings, and connect with others. They support local business districts and business access. People Streets can have generous tree cover and green infrastructure, such as rain gardens and curbside vegetation to collect and filter runoff, to make the city more climate resilient, improve air quality and health outcomes, provide shade, and bring a touch of nature into urban environment.

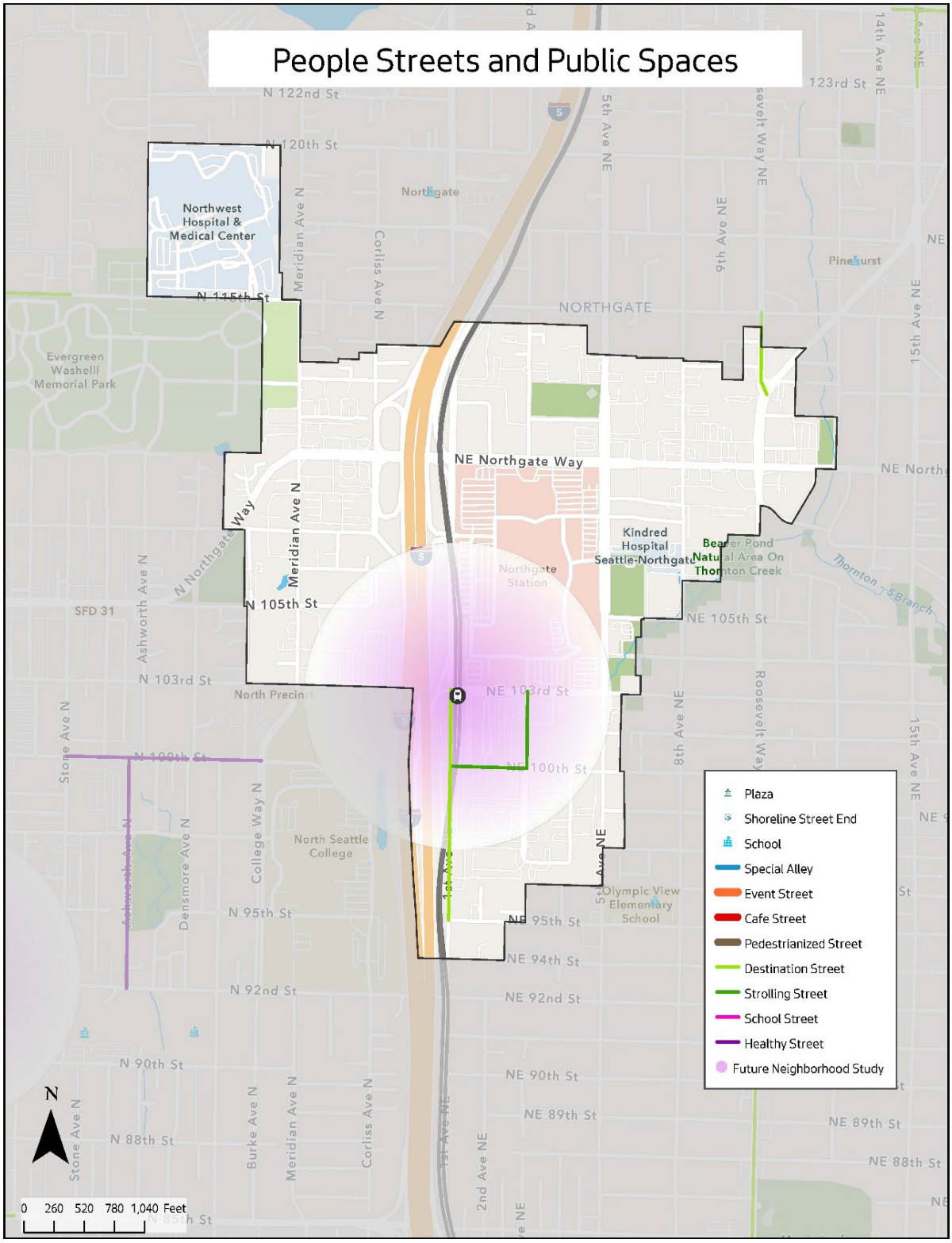
Ballard Ave, with its recent investments, is an example of a People Street

Public Spaces

Public Spaces come in many shapes and forms. They are inclusive, pedestrianized spaces that invite people to gather, play, and connect with one another. These spaces may be focal points in neighborhoods that support local businesses, venues for community gatherings, or more subtle spaces that are loved by locals and stumbled upon by visitors who delight in their discovery. They may incorporate public art, seating, games, trees and green infrastructure, and flexible space for vendors and gatherings.

Detective Cookie Chess Park is an example of a Public Space

Exhibit 11: People Streets and Public Spaces



Data Source: Seattle Transportation Plan

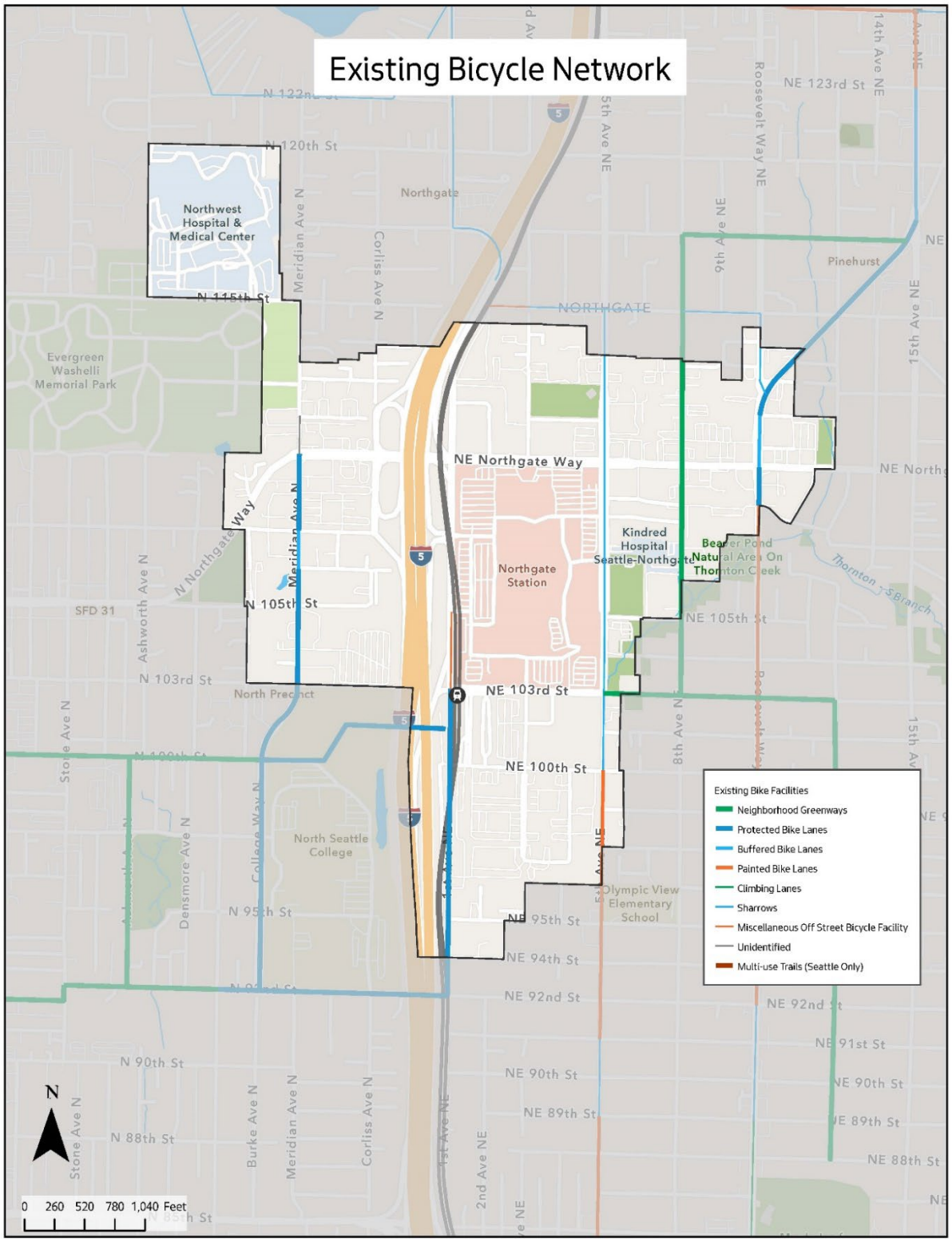
BICYCLE NETWORK

The subarea's limited street grid and connectivity, the large physical barrier of I-5, and gaps in the bicycle network as shown in **Exhibit 12**, are a barrier for people that want or need to bicycle in the subarea. East-west connections in the subarea are limited to the pedestrian/bicycle bridge that ties into the Northgate light rail station from neighborhoods west of I-5 and the neighborhood greenway on NE 103rd Street east of 5th Avenue NE. There is not a complete bike connection to the light rail station for people coming from neighborhoods east of the subarea. NE 100th Street and/or NE 103rd Street will be a crucial route, but neither currently has any bicycle facilities. There are more existing north-south connections through the subarea, but many do not connect all the way through yet, such as Meridian Avenue N and 1st Avenue NE.

Many of the existing facilities are not comfortable for people of all ages and abilities, such as 5th Avenue NE, which currently has a combination of painted bike lanes without any vertical protection, sharrows, and no facilities.

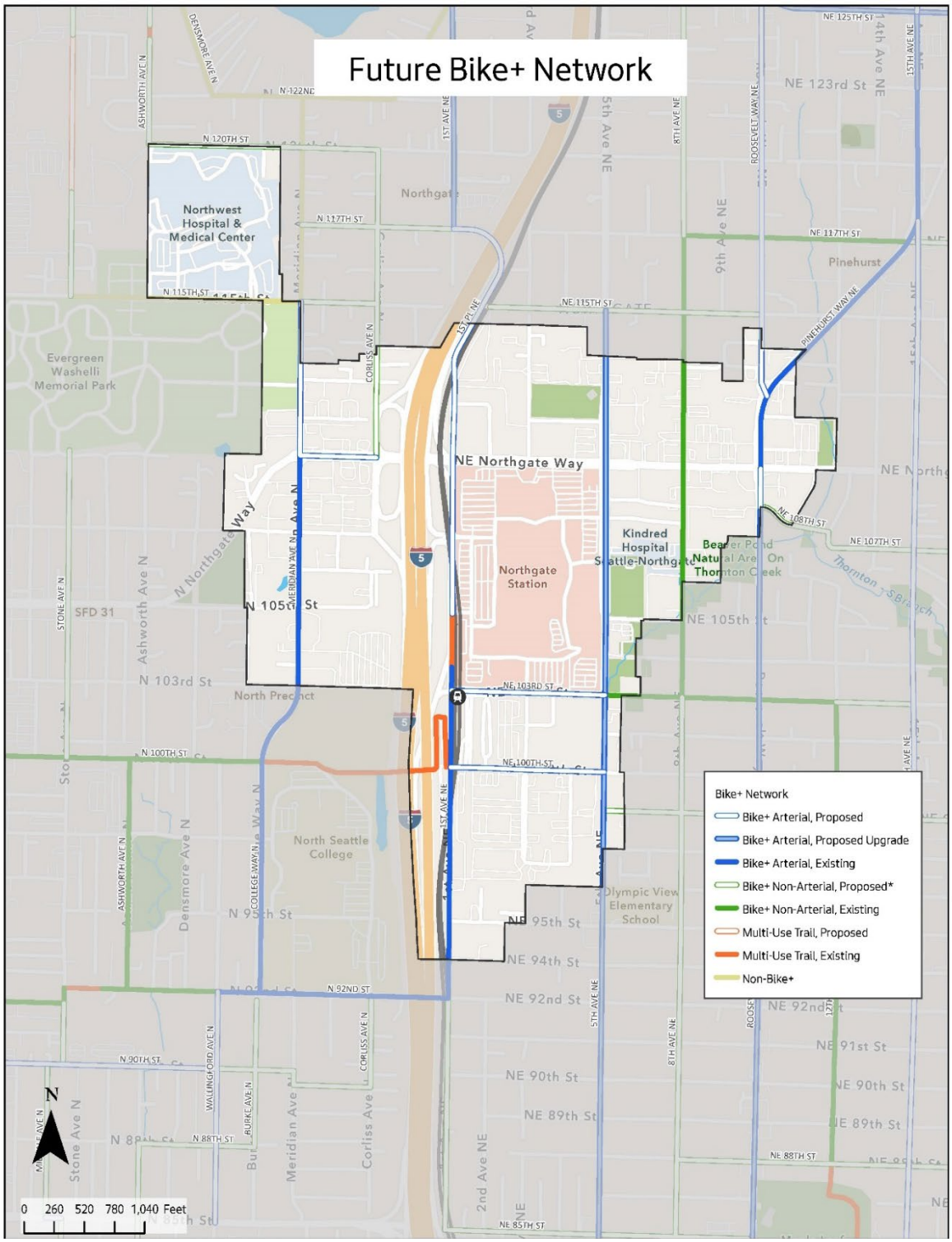
The subarea's superblocks are also a key challenge for people bicycling. They have destinations that people want to access, such as stores, offices, medical facilities, and gyms, but minimal street connections through the sites force people to take longer routes and/or bike without designated facilities. In many cases, cyclists are left to navigate large parking lots to reach these services, which are not designed to safely accommodate bicycle-vehicle interactions. The lack of street connections makes it challenging and inconvenient to access destinations within the superblock and makes driving the more attractive travel option over biking. The limited street grid poses a challenge to developing better bike facilities on existing streets, as all other modes must also be accommodated in the same limited right-of-way.

Exhibit 12: Existing Bicycle Network



Data Source: Seattle Transportation Plan

Exhibit 13: Future Bicycle Network



Data Source: Seattle Transportation Plan

TRANSIT NETWORK

Northgate has been a regional transit hub since its first transit center opened in 1992 and the opening of the northern terminus of the Link Light Rail line in 2021 emphasizes this role. Beginning in Fall 2024, its role will shift as Link extends north to Lynnwood. Regional Community Transit and Sound Transit Express bus lines will no longer serve Northgate station, instead ending in Lynnwood. King County Metro also will adapt its service, but continue to provide frequent service to Downtown, the University District, Ballard, numerous nearby north Seattle neighborhoods, as well as communities outside of Seattle like Shoreline, as seen in **Exhibit 15**.

The Northgate Regional Center saw approximately 4.9 million boardings[1] in 2023, with approximately half of those occurring on Sound Transit (ST) Link service. Average weekday boardings range between 1,000 to 9,500 depending on the service provider. These numbers will shift as Northgate's role in the regional transit network shifts.

Table 1: Weekday Ridership in the Northgate Regional Center (2023)

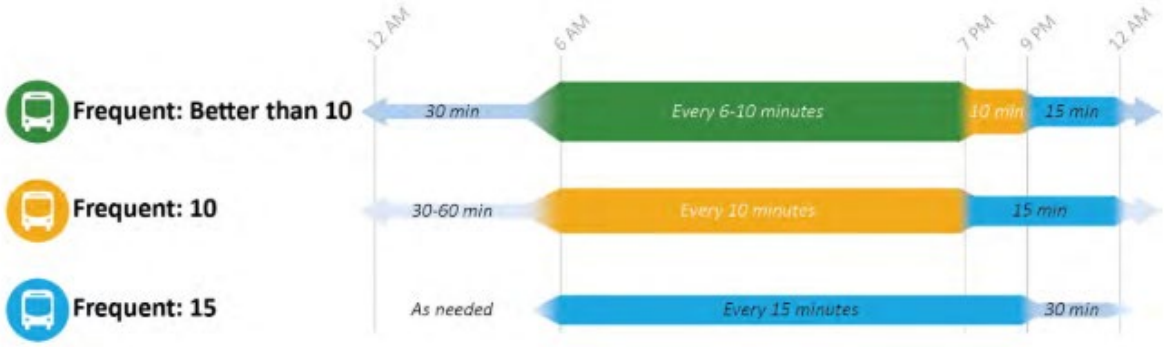
	Total Boardings (Annual)	Average weekday boardings
ST Link	2,470,240	9,500
ST Express	278,650	1,070
King County Metro	1,300,000	5,060
Community Transit	876,815	3,450
All agencies	**4,925,705**	**--**

Due to the limited east-west connections in the subarea, much of the bus activity crosses I-5 and accesses the Northgate Transit Center through a u-route of Meridian Ave N, NE 92nd St, 1st Ave NE, NE 100th St, and 5th Ave NE. Bus volumes along these arterials can exceed 500 per day on a typical weekday.

The Seattle Transportation Plan identifies an updated future Frequent Transit Network, developed in collaboration with King County Metro. It plans for bus service that will arrive more frequently than every 10 minutes, or "better than 10-minute" service, along the u-route described above. RapidRide bus service is planned along NE Northgate Way with buses arriving every 10-minutes, as identified in King County Metro's long-range planning document *Metro Connects*.

[1] A boarding is an "unlinked passenger trip," meaning a passenger each time they board a bus or light rail train, regardless of how many buses or light rail trains they use to travel from their origin to their destination.

Exhibit 14: Frequent Transit Service Definitions



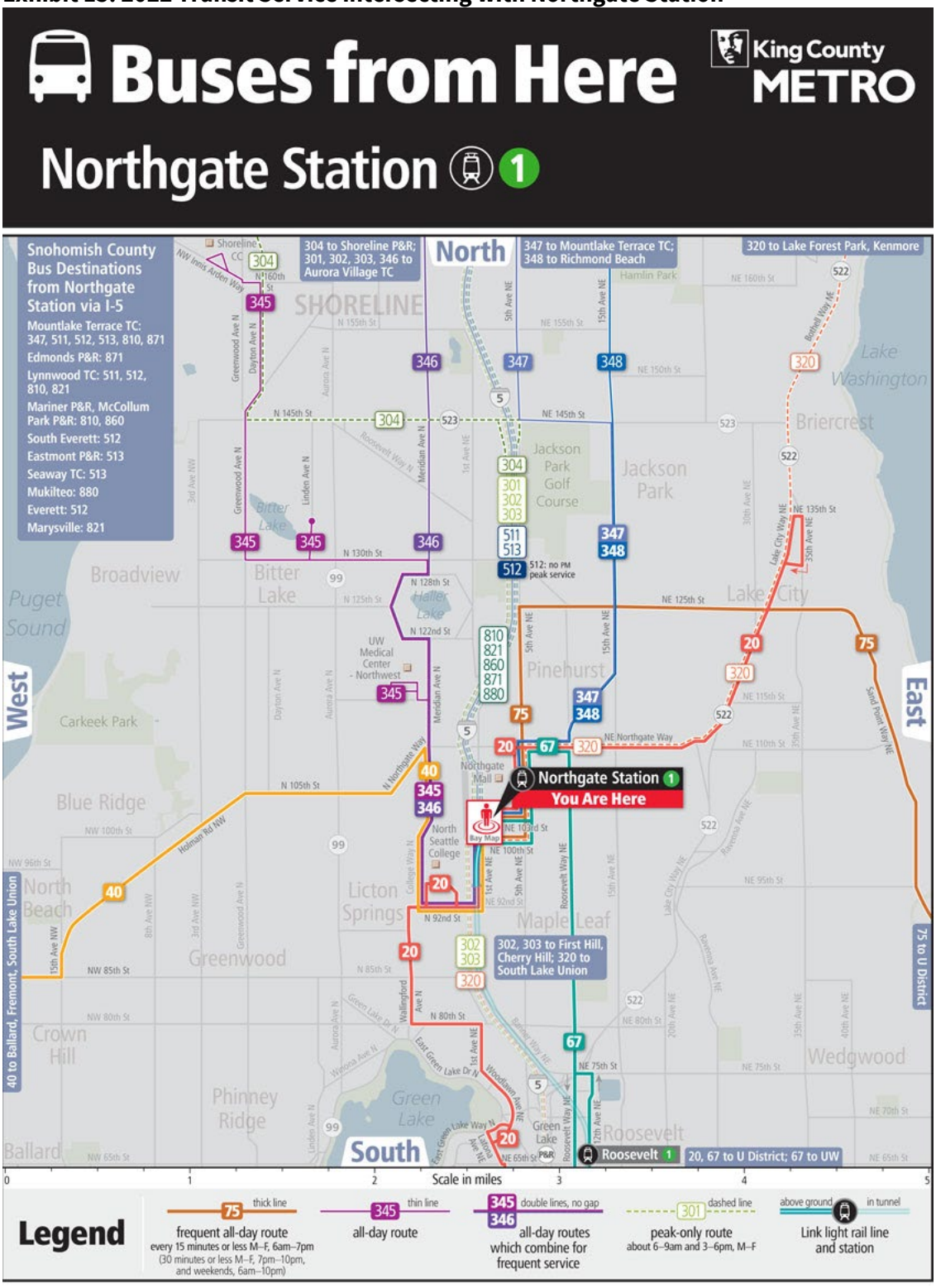
Note: Corridors that don't require the "Frequent: 15" category are termed "Other Transit" and are determined by Metro's Service Guidelines.

Data Source: Seattle Transportation Plan

Due to Lynnwood Link-related bus restructurings, additional right-of-way space along NE 100th St and 5th Ave NE currently used as bus layover space will become available for other curbside uses. The Seattle Department of Transportation will collaborate with transit agencies to transition this space as it becomes available to improve the multimodal network through the Center.

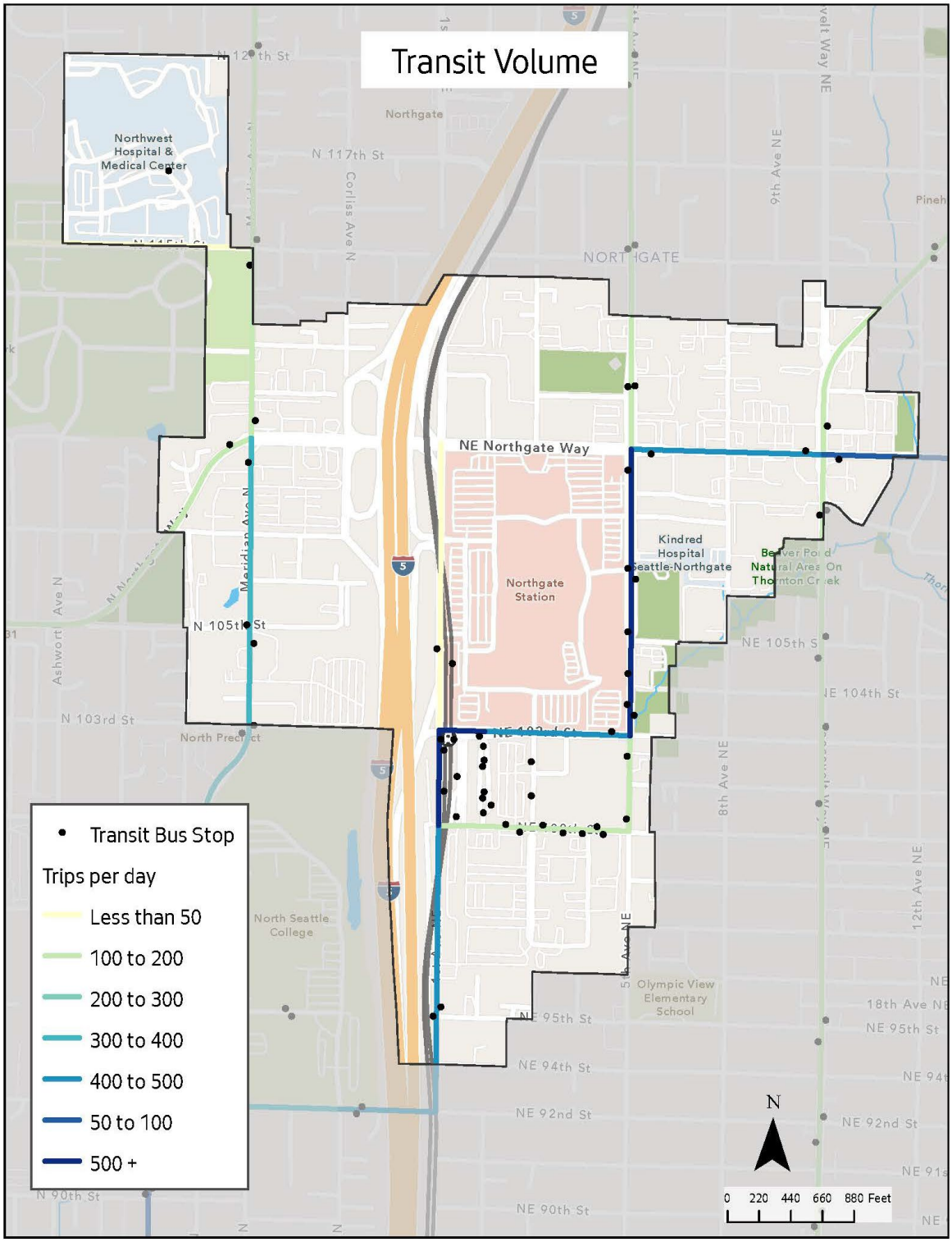
The Seattle Transportation Plan also identifies four Community & Mobility Hubs within the Center. These hubs are candidates for additional investment to combine transportation options, community spaces, and travel information in one place to improve connectivity, especially in underserved areas. One of these hubs is planned at the Northgate Station, while the other 3 are planned along NE Northgate Way.

Exhibit 15: 2022 Transit Service intersecting with Northgate Station



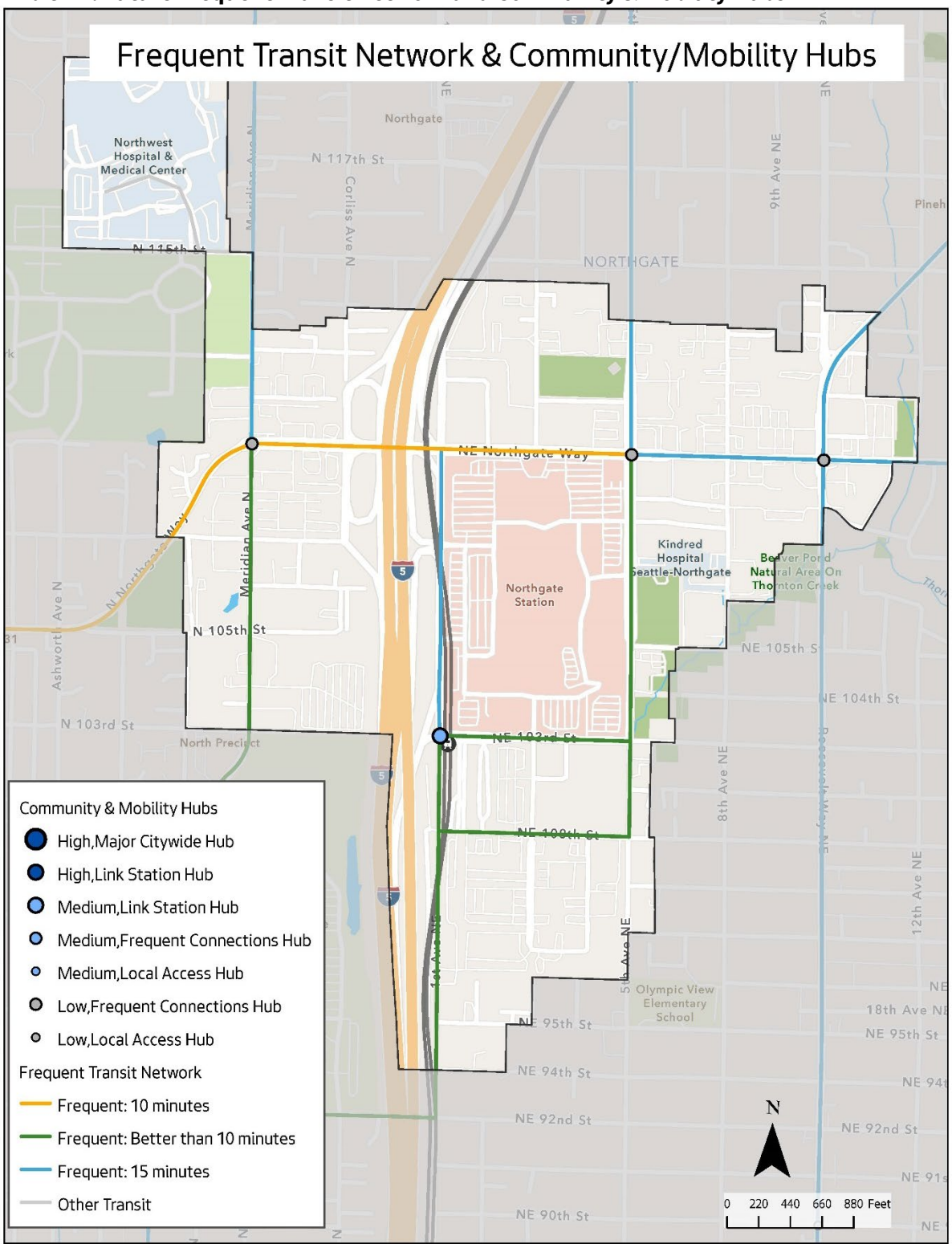
Data Source: King County Metro

Exhibit 16: Weekday Daily Bus Volumes



Data Source: King County Metro, Spring 2024

Exhibit 17 : Future Frequent Transit Network and Community & Mobility Hubs

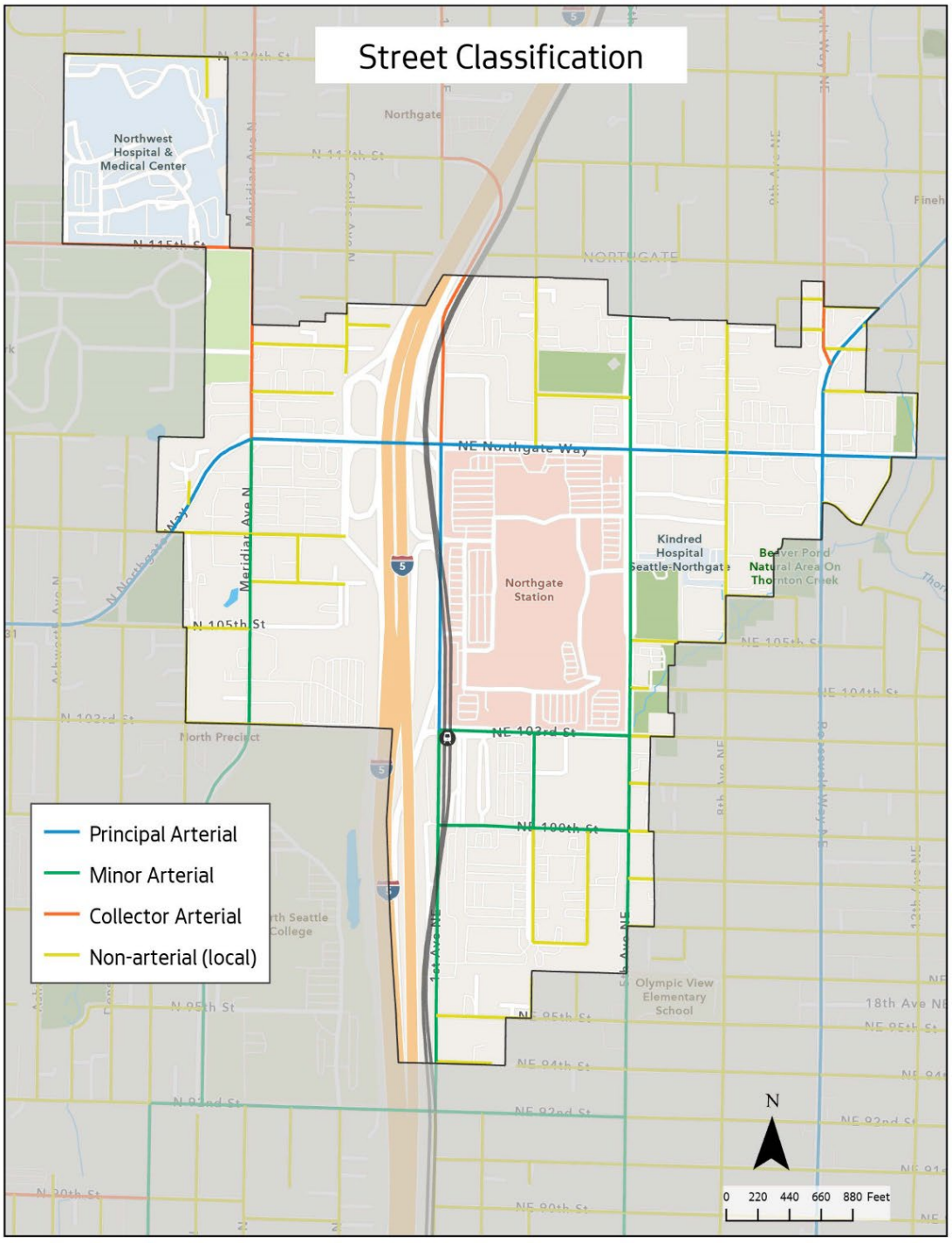


Data Source: Seattle Transportation Plan

VEHICULAR NETWORK

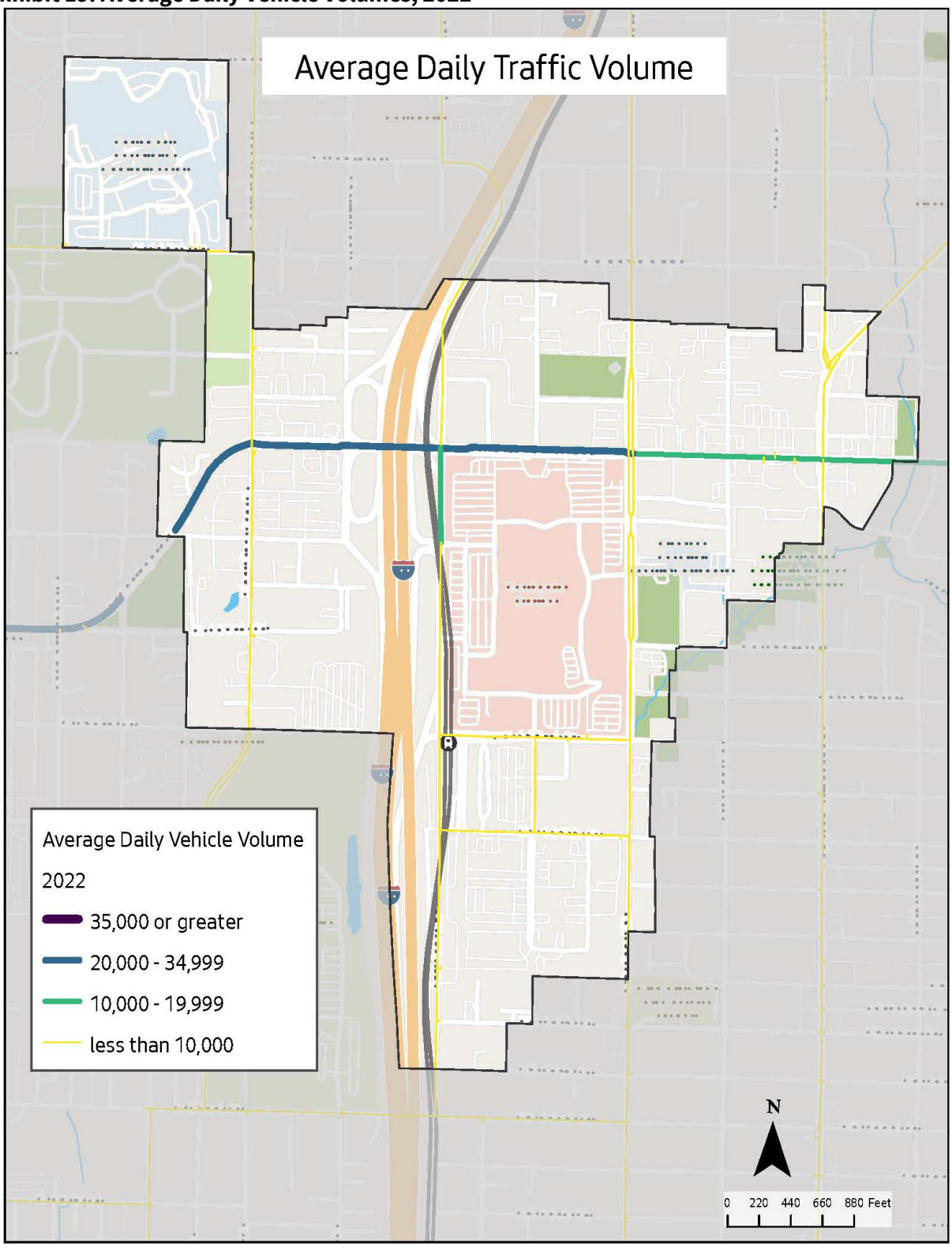
The Northgate subarea street network consists of a collection of large superblocks bounded mainly by arterials. Few local streets exist within the subarea. I-5 is a defining feature within the subarea, dividing the street grid in two with only one east-west vehicular crossing at NE Northgate Way. The street grid lacks east-west connections in general, with NE 100th and NE 103rd Streets providing the only other east-west connectivity between arterials within the subarea. Several on-ramps and off-ramps connect vehicles to I-5 via NE Northgate Way and 1st Ave NE, complicating bike and pedestrian circulation at this central nexus. NE Northgate Way sees the heaviest vehicle volumes, with the portion west of I-5 exceeding 20,000 vehicles per day on average. Other principal arterials including Roosevelt Way NE and minor arterials such as Meridian Ave N, NE 100th and NE 103rd St, and 5th Ave NE see less than 10,000 vehicles per day on average.

Exhibit 18: Street Classification



Data Source: SDOT

Exhibit 19: Average Daily Vehicle Volumes, 2022



Data Source: SDOT

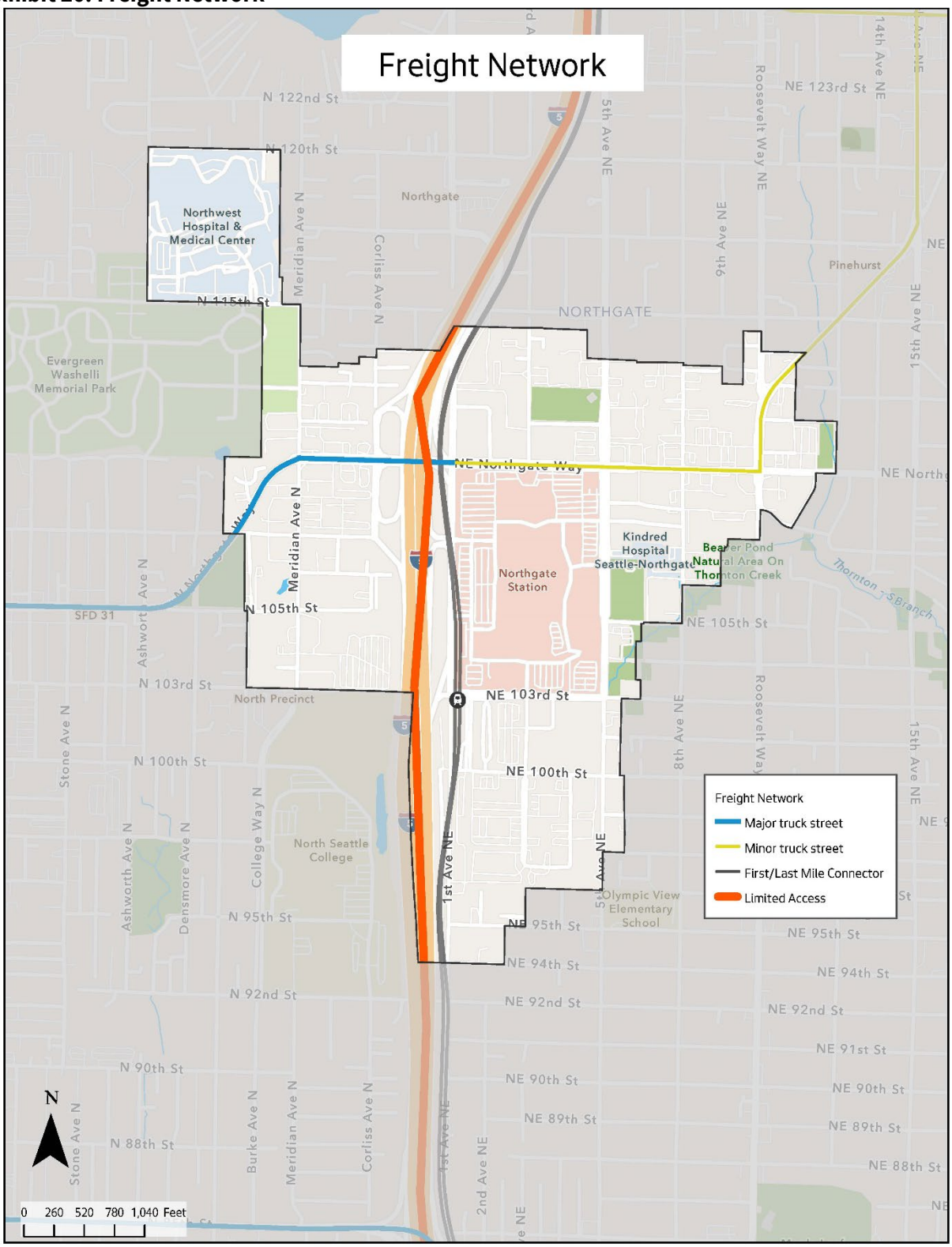
FREIGHT NETWORK

Only one street in Northgate other than I-5 is a designated freight route. NE Northgate Way west of I-5 is classified as a Major Truck Street, and east of I-5 it is a Minor Truck Street. This street serves as a regional connector, linking Lake City Way (SR 522) and Aurora Ave (SR 99) to I-5, similar to N 125th St/N 130th St and N 145th St to the North. These arterials play a critical role connecting goods in Northgate to the rest of Seattle and the broader region.

Freight vehicles also need to access local streets of Northgate as they make deliveries to the growing number of mixed use and multifamily properties in the Center. In cases where onsite loading/unloading is not possible, freight may currently have to take a curbside lane to serve local businesses, which may create safety conflicts with other vehicles or on-street bike facilities. In cases where on-site loading/unloading is possible, larger freight vehicles can create conflicts with people walking and rolling on sidewalks as they turn into and out of driveways, which can be a safety concern.

As Northgate redevelops, special attention will need to be paid to design for freight and provide adequate local freight access at the site level. Due to the limited street grid, on-site access should be encouraged where possible to limit loading/unloading impacts on the limited street grid. At the same time, the density and size of curb cuts should be limited so as not to pose unnecessary risk to people walking and rolling on sidewalks. Particular attention will need to be paid to NE Northgate Way, which in addition to being a regional freight connector is a vital east-west connection across I-5 for pedestrians. As Northgate increases in density, it will be important to support local, last-mile freight delivery within the Center through smaller vehicles that better accommodate this pedestrian-scale design.

Exhibit 20: Freight Network



Data Source: SDOT

SAFETY

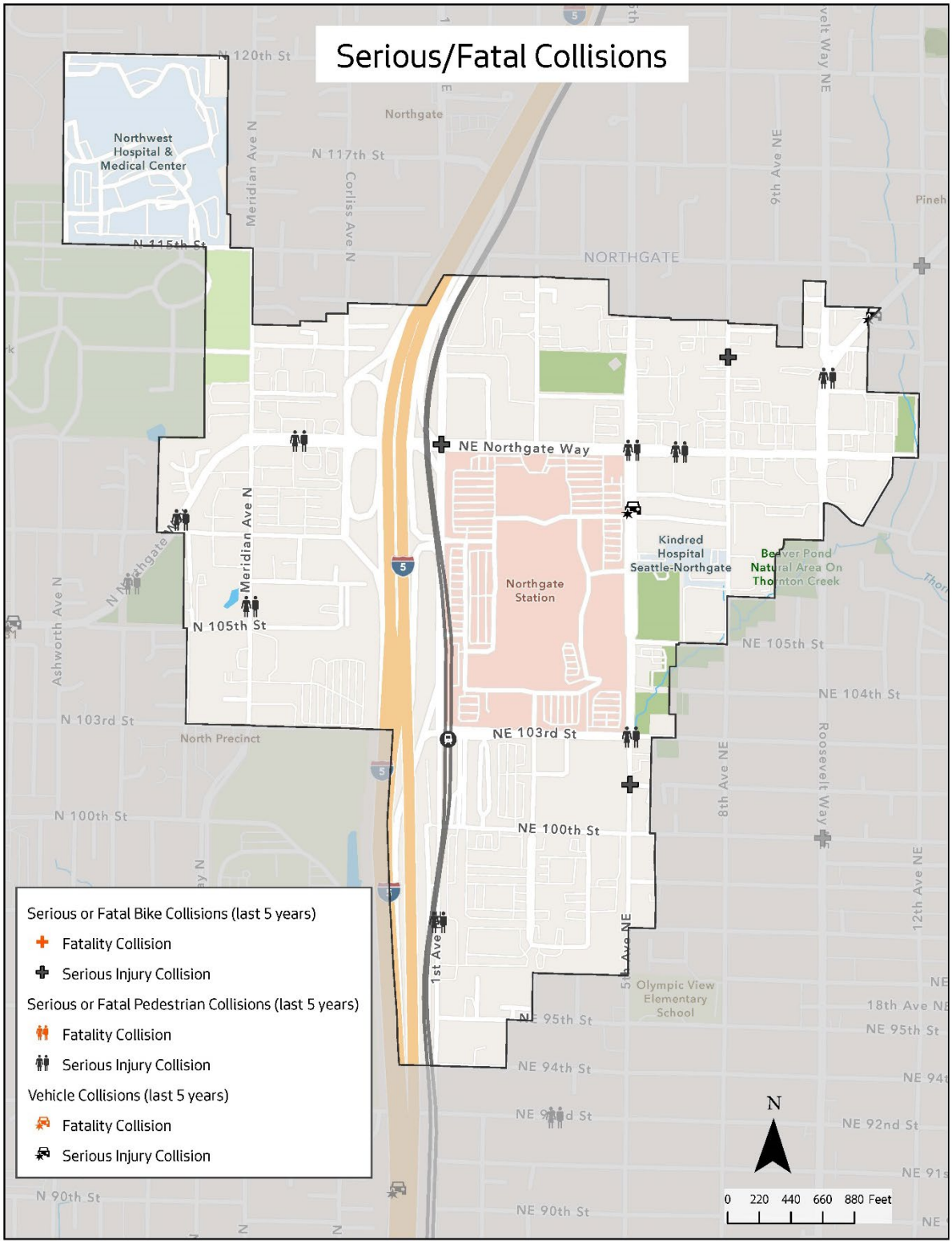
No collisions resulted in fatalities within the subarea in the last five years, but there are several corridors with a history of collisions resulting in serious injuries and safety challenges.

NE Northgate Way is a challenging corridor for safety. NE Northgate Way west of I-5 ranks "high" on the City of Seattle's High Injury Network, and east of I-5 it ranks as "medium", as shown in **Exhibit 22**. 5 serious injury collisions occurred on NE Northgate Way between 2019 and 2024, and two more occurred just west of the subarea boundary. The section of NE Northgate Way between Corliss Ave N and 1st Ave NE poses a particular safety challenge, as people walking and rolling interact with drivers accessing multiple on-ramps and off-ramps to I-5. Despite these challenges, the corridor is designated a Major Pedestrian Street between 3rd Ave NE and 11th Ave NE in the Northgate Overlay District. Other challenging corridors from a safety perspective include:

- NE 115th St south of the UW Medical Campus – Northwest ranks as "medium" on the High Injury Network.
- 5th Ave NE saw four serious injury collisions between 2019 and 2024. This corridor is a designated Major Pedestrian Street in the Northgate Overlay District.
- Certain sections of Northgate Way, 5th Ave NE, and 8th Ave NE have a high density of curb cuts used to access business, creating regular conflicts between turning vehicles and pedestrians walking along these corridors.

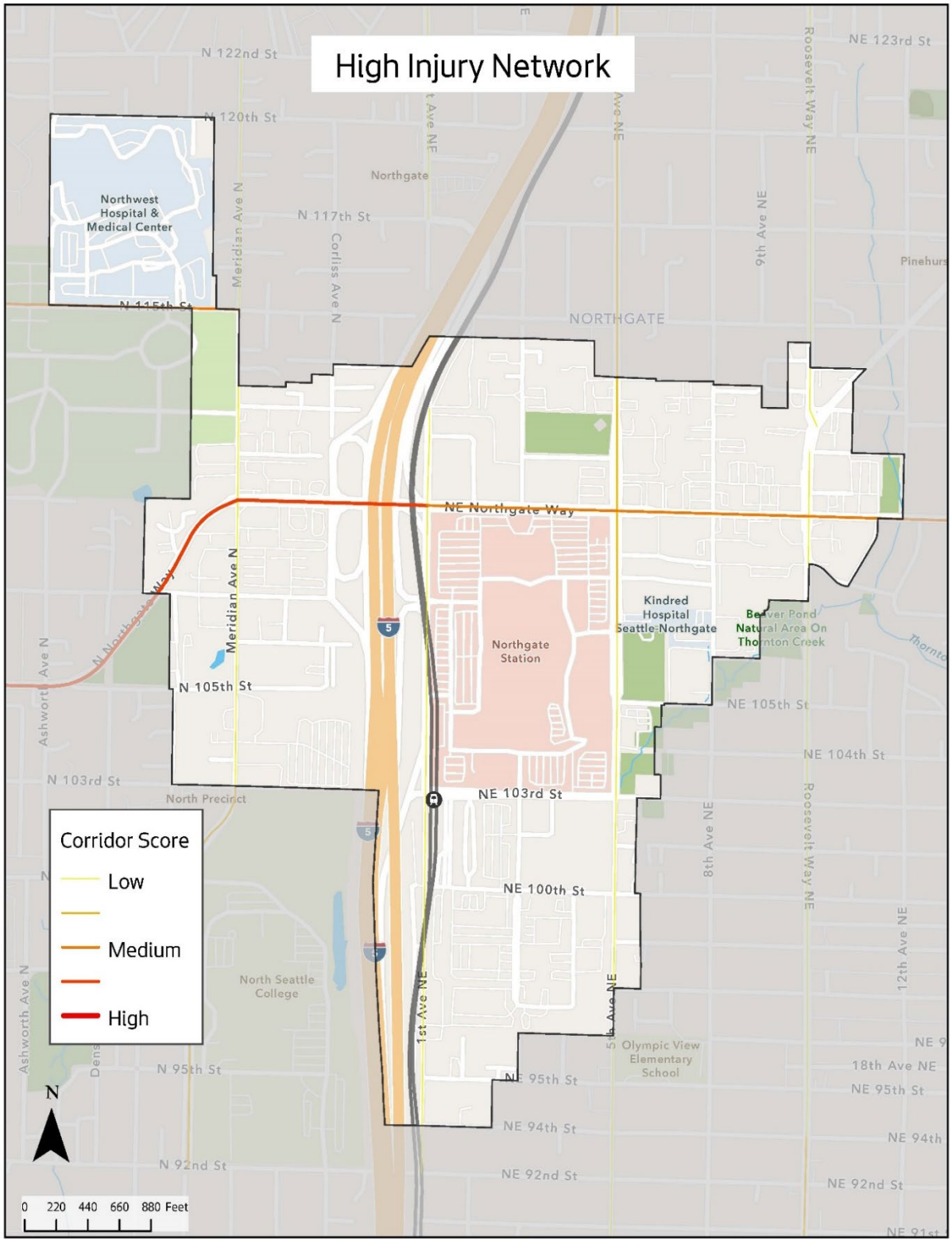
In 2023, approximately 40% of the arterial mileage within the subarea experienced speeding with 85th percentile speeds above 30 mph (Iteris 2023).

Exhibit 21: Collisions that Resulted in Serious Injuries or Fatalities in the Last 5 Years



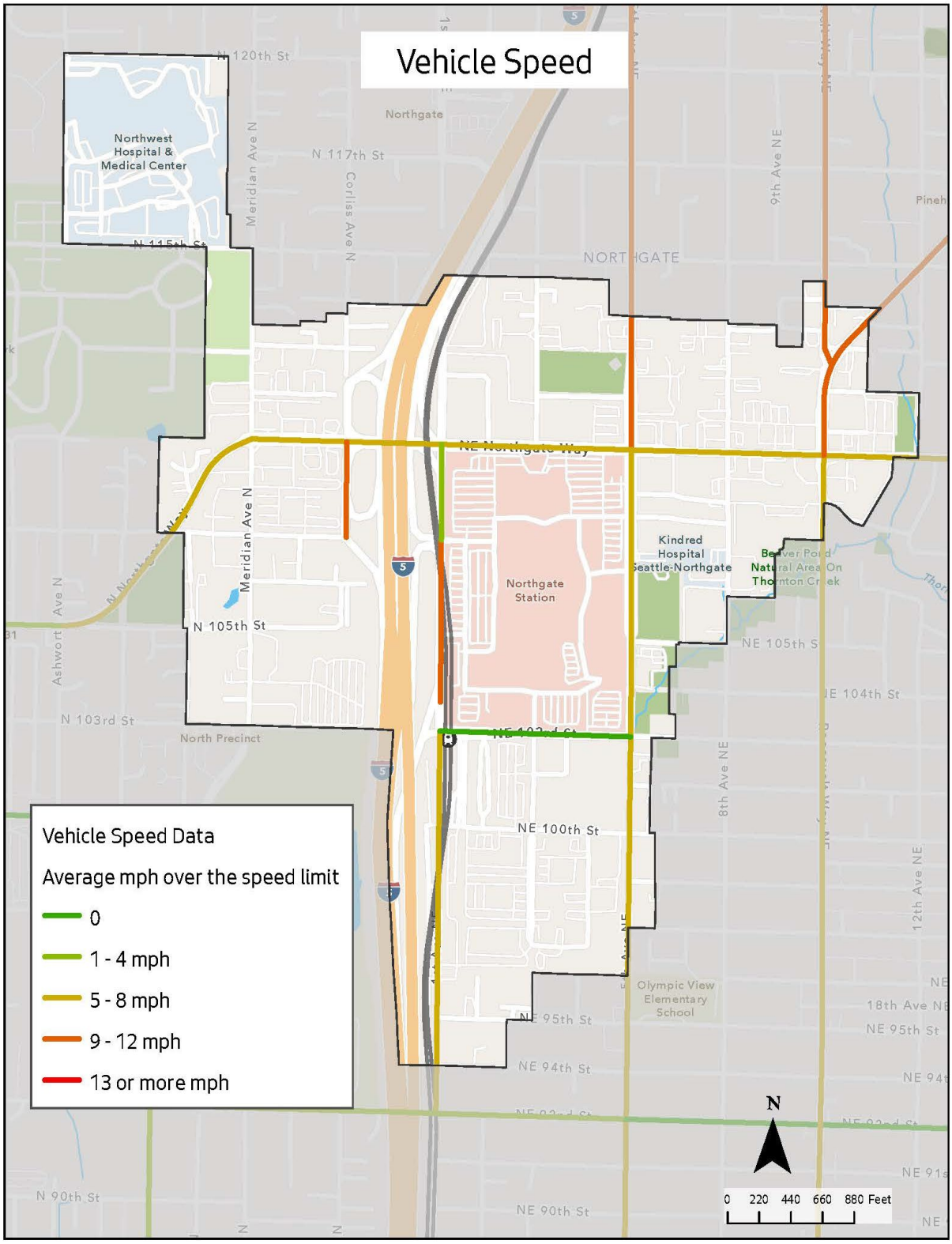
Data Source: SPD, May 2019-May 2024

Exhibit 22: High Injury Network



Data Source: SDOT

Exhibit 23: Speeds Over Speed Limit



Data Source: Iteris

PARKING/CURBSIDE

On-street parking within Northgate is limited to local streets and some portions of minor arterials, such as the northern and southern portions of 5th Ave NE. On-street parking and curb access generally is unavailable along major arterials such as NE Northgate Way and 1st Ave NE. Off-street parking is abundant, with numerous surface level parking lots within the numerous commercial and office developments within the subarea.

King County Metro and Sound Transit operate several Park & Ride facilities near the Northgate Link light rail station for transit customers (see **Exhibit 24**). The area immediately north of Northgate Park & Ride D until recently was also surface parking, but is currently being redeveloped into affordable housing by King County and Bridge Housing Corporation and Community Roots Housing.

Exhibit 24: Park & Ride Facilities near Northgate Station

Data Source: King County

A full study of off-street parking supply and utilization should be conducted throughout the study area to help determine current utilization rates and if there is an opportunity to utilize excess parking spaces for other uses.

Due to the limited street grid in Northgate, curbside access for deliveries and services like garbage collection is also constrained, competing for space with travel lanes. As Northgate develops, it will be important to integrate on-site service access into site plans to minimize impact on the local street grid.

PLANNED SDOT PROJECTS IN STUDY AREA

Within the Northgate subarea, SDOT has a few projects planned for near-term completion. SDOT's primary source of funding for capital projects is a transportation levy. As Seattle's current transportation levy – Levy to Move Seattle – is expiring at the end of 2024, and Seattle residents will be voting on a new levy package in Fall 2024. If the new levy passes, SDOT will identify specific improvements that its programs will make over the course of 8 years.

The following improvements are slated to be completed in the near term:

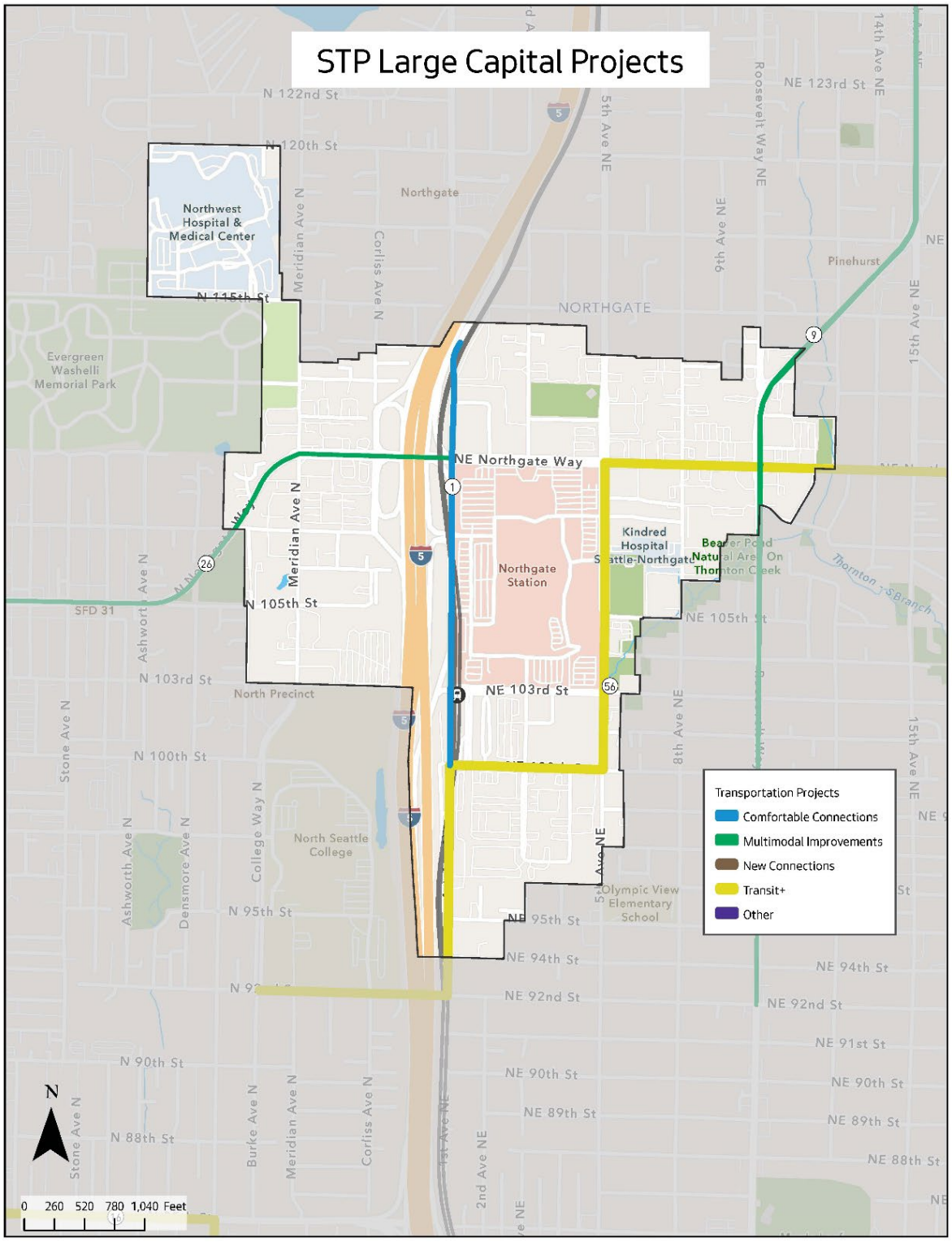
- Install marked crossings on NE 100th Street at 3rd Ave NE
- Install an all-way stop with marked crossings on NE 100th Street at 4th Ave NE

The following large capital projects concepts from the Seattle Transportation Plan are currently included in the draft levy package and could be implemented in the next 8 years, but this is subject to change since the levy package is still being refined by City Council and has not been approved by voters. These are also shown in .

- Project 1: 1st Ave N
    - This project will connect people biking to the Northgate Link light rail station, complementing the improvements made in 2021 to this area when the station opened. This could include:
    - Repaving some portions of the road
    - Adding bicycle routes for people of all ages and abilities on 1st Ave NE to connect to NE 117th St
- Project 9: 15th Ave NE
    - This project will connect people walking, rolling, biking between Shoreline and NE 125th St and improve access to the new Link light rail stations on NE 130th St and NE 148th St. This could include:
    - Repaving the street
    - Repairing sidewalks and adding bicycle facilities for people of all ages and abilities
    - Redesigning the street to better support transit and freight vehicles, including potential bus- and freight-only lanes Improving access to local businesses
- Project 26: Ballard to Northgate
    - This project will reimagine the route for people walking, rolling, biking, and taking transit from Ballard to Northgate and improve access to the new Ballard Link light rail station. This could include:

    - Repairing sidewalks and adding bicycle facilities for people of all ages and abilities
    - Redesigning the street to better support transit and freight vehicles
    - Improving bus stops and crossings and making the Link light rail station more welcoming for transit riders
    - Enhancing access to destinations like shops, restaurants, and cultural centers in the area
- Project 56: Lake City Way to Northgate
    - In collaboration with WSDOT, this project will improve the connection between two busy neighborhoods for people walking, rolling, biking, and taking transit. This could include:
    - Redesigning the street to better support transit, including potential bus-only lanes
    - Improving transit stops
    - Repairing sidewalks and improving street crossings
    - Adding bicycle routes for people of all ages and abilities
    - Implementing Intelligent Transportation System improvements to make traveling along this busy street more efficient, safe, and predictable
    - Enhancing access to destinations like shops, restaurants, and cultural centers in the area
    - Making it more enjoyable to walking and roll around the Link light rail station

Exhibit 25: STP Large Capital Projects



Data Source: Seattle Transportation Plan

MODE SHARE

The Northgate CTIP and the adopted 2035 Comprehensive Plan both provide benchmarks and targets for mode share within Northgate. Historically, these have been set as single occupancy vehicle (SOV) targets, for commute trips and for all trips made by residents within the Urban Center. Setting commute SOV targets stems from the Washington State Commute Trip Reduction Law (CTR), which requires jurisdictions to work with major employers to reduce the impacts of employee commuting. This focus on commute trips has led to extensive data gathering on the travel behavior of employees of CTR affected work sites. A University of Washington analysis of 2022 Commute Seattle data, for example, found that 90% of surveyed employees of CTR employers in Northgate utilized teleworking as their primary form of commute. Northgate residents traveling to job sites elsewhere in the city traveled by more diverse modes: depending on the day, up to 40% telecommuted, 37% took transit, and 20% drove alone.

We know that commute trips only account for approximately 20% of all trips occurring within Seattle (Replica, Spring 2023). Trips conducted by CTR employees represent an even smaller fraction of those trips. As of 2022, the City of Seattle is working to achieve a net zero transportation system by 2050, per Executive Order 2022-07. To meet this goal, we need to consider the travel mode for all personal trips, not just commute trips, when setting citywide and subarea mode share goals. In the Seattle Transportation Plan (2024), SDOT set a citywide goal that 63% of all personal trips are made by walking, biking, or transit by 2044 to align with EO 2022-07.

In 2019, approximately 34% of all trips in Seattle were made by walking, biking, or transit. To understand how the Northgate subarea fits into this larger benchmark and goal, we looked at the mode share of citywide trips ending within the Northgate subarea, shown in **Table 2**. To provide consistent accounting citywide, the same approach is followed across all subarea plans.

As of Spring 2023, approximately 80% of all personal trips ending in the Northgate subarea are driving trips, and 20% of trips are walking, biking, transit.

Table 2: Mode Share of All Trips Ending in Northgate Subarea

	Mode Share (%)
Private Auto	55%
Auto Passenger	24%
On Demand Auto	1%
Bike	4%
Transit	7%
Walking	9%
Total	**100%**

Note: At the time of this analysis, the Replica model potentially counted pedestrian circulation within the Northgate Mall area as individual pedestrian trips. There was not an accurate way to exclude these specific trips at the time of analysis. To avoid overcounting pedestrian trips, any trip starting AND ending in the subarea was excluded from analysis.

Data Source: Replica, Spring 2023

RECOMMENDATIONS

Northgate Overlay District

Opportunities related to code that should be evaluated during subarea planning include:

- Designation of additional Major Pedestrian Streets
- Whether accompanying development requirements go far enough to achieve community goals
- Parking minimums, maximums, location, and access
- Expanded requirements to break up superblocks
- Continue to improve arterials for transit, walking, and biking

Projects

Due to the limited street grid, most people will continue to access Northgate from a few major arterials such NE Northgate Way, 5th Ave NE, and 1st Ave NE. If arterials receive improvements to better accommodate people taking transit, walking, and biking, more people will be inclined to travel by these modes instead of driving. The Seattle Transportation Plan identifies multimodal projects along all these corridors. Connection points that are particularly uncomfortable as a non-driver, such as the NE Northgate Way I-5 underpass, need to be resolved to comfortably connect the distinct quadrants of the Northgate subarea.