



Seattle
Office of Planning &
Community Development

Public Services & Facilities EXISTING CONDITIONS

Northgate Regional Center Subarea Plan
AUGUST 2024



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Key Takeaways

All core utility services are in place and prepared for anticipated growth in Northgate. The water, sewer, and power providers that serve this Regional Center are preparing for anticipated growth and making system investments to accommodate Seattle's growth targets. There is not an anticipated strain on future water and power supplies to meet Northgate's growth targets.

There are some core elements of public infrastructure missing in the Northgate area, due to its history as an unincorporated area. Northgate was annexed into Seattle in 1954. Many residential areas in and around the Regional Center are missing sidewalks. This negatively impacts the neighborhood's walkability, Safe Routes to Schools program, and perceptions of safety for those outside a vehicle. The wastewater and drainage systems rely on informal ditch and culvert networks, which can be prone to flash flooding in a few identified areas. Retrofitting these types of public facilities onto a developed urban landscape is challenging and expensive.

Small businesses and pedestrians express safety concerns. Property crime persists in Northgate. Small businesses report hiring private services for cleaning and security around their site locations. Individuals express concerns for personal safety when outside a vehicle, given the auto-oriented urban design elements that characterize the neighborhood. Elements of the public realm that can enhance perceptions of safety could be improved: more lighting, benches, and greenspace; breaking up long blocks; and increased activation of public parks and spaces.

Northgate benefits from some more recent City investments in public facilities. The local library branch and community center were built just 20 years ago, some of the City's newest additions for these types of facilities. A new elementary school building recently finished construction just north of the Regional Center boundary (James Baldwin) and a new fire station is under construction near the University of Washington Northwest Medical Center.

While a network of cultural sites, small businesses, and larger venues promote community connections in Northgate, the loss of the Northgate Mall leaves a notable gap in Northgate's network of gathering spaces. While a map of places that provide gathering opportunities exist, it is fractured by the loss of the Mall and a lack of activated open space. There are no parks with picnic tables and pavilions to have a cookout, for example. The community center and library are important anchor facilities in the community, but there is more demand for cultural sites, places to host events, and space to simply "hang out".

Northgate does not meet Citywide level of service (LOS) targets for parks and open space access. Areas of the Regional Center are highlighted by Seattle Parks and Rec as priorities for improvement and investment. However, the current budget and CIP do not identify any acquisition or revitalization plans in the next five years. A new playground may be added at Hubbard Homestead Park, but it comes after the playground at Victory Creek Park was decommissioned. Coordinated efforts to expand, improve, and activate public spaces are needed.

UTILITIES

This report studies the conditions for utility service in the Northgate Regional Center, including water, sewer, electricity, and natural gas. Three agencies oversee utility service in Northgate: Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) provides water and sewer service, Seattle City Light (SCL) provides electricity, and Puget Sound Energy (PSE) provides natural gas.

Existing Infrastructure¹

Water

SPU provides drinking water for Seattle and many surrounding communities in King County. Most of the city’s water comes from surface water reservoirs on the Cedar River (60-70%) and the remainder comes from South Fork Tolt River. Water consumption per capita has declined over time, with 2019 rates decreasing by 44% since 1990. SPU does not have any plans to expand its water supply over the next 20 years. Even with anticipated population growth, SPU anticipates total demand to remain relatively flat due to conservation efforts and changes to wholesale clients. Current investment plans include maintenance of existing infrastructure, watermain rehabilitation, seismic improvements, and climate change resilience.

Drainage & Wastewater

SPU also manages wastewater and drainage systems in Seattle. The Northgate Regional Center is in a separated sewer area where wastewater is sent to a treatment plant while stormwater drainage is routed to waterbodies. This means that pollutants collected from rooftops and streets can impact water quality for receiving waterbodies. In areas of north Seattle, such as Northgate, ‘informal’ drainage systems such as ditch and culvert systems are in place, rather than pipes. This is largely due to the timing of annexation for northern neighborhoods. According to Seattle’s Stormwater Code, ditch and culvert systems are considered capacity constrained. Several areas within the Regional Center are highlighted as “high” and “critical” capacity risk areas, as identified in the map in Exhibit 1. The two critical areas are (1) along Meridian Avenue between Northgate Way to 115th Street and (2) directly east of the Northgate Library, along 8th Avenue. There is a large high-risk area surrounding the I-5 corridor and two smaller areas at Northgate Way and Roosevelt, and at 100th St and 5th Avenue. The two other high-risk areas are identified 1) where Thornton Creek crosses 105th St – a spot where SPU confirmed regular flooding concerns, and 2) at the intersection of Northgate Way and Roosevelt Way NE. Notably, while these areas are considered capacity constrained, the *One Seattle* Comprehensive Plan EIS finds that future development would be subject to stringent stormwater management requirements to avoid adversely affecting capacity and did not find any probable significant impacts from development.

¹ Source: “One Seattle EIS: Infrastructure”, Section 1.6.12; 2024

Electricity

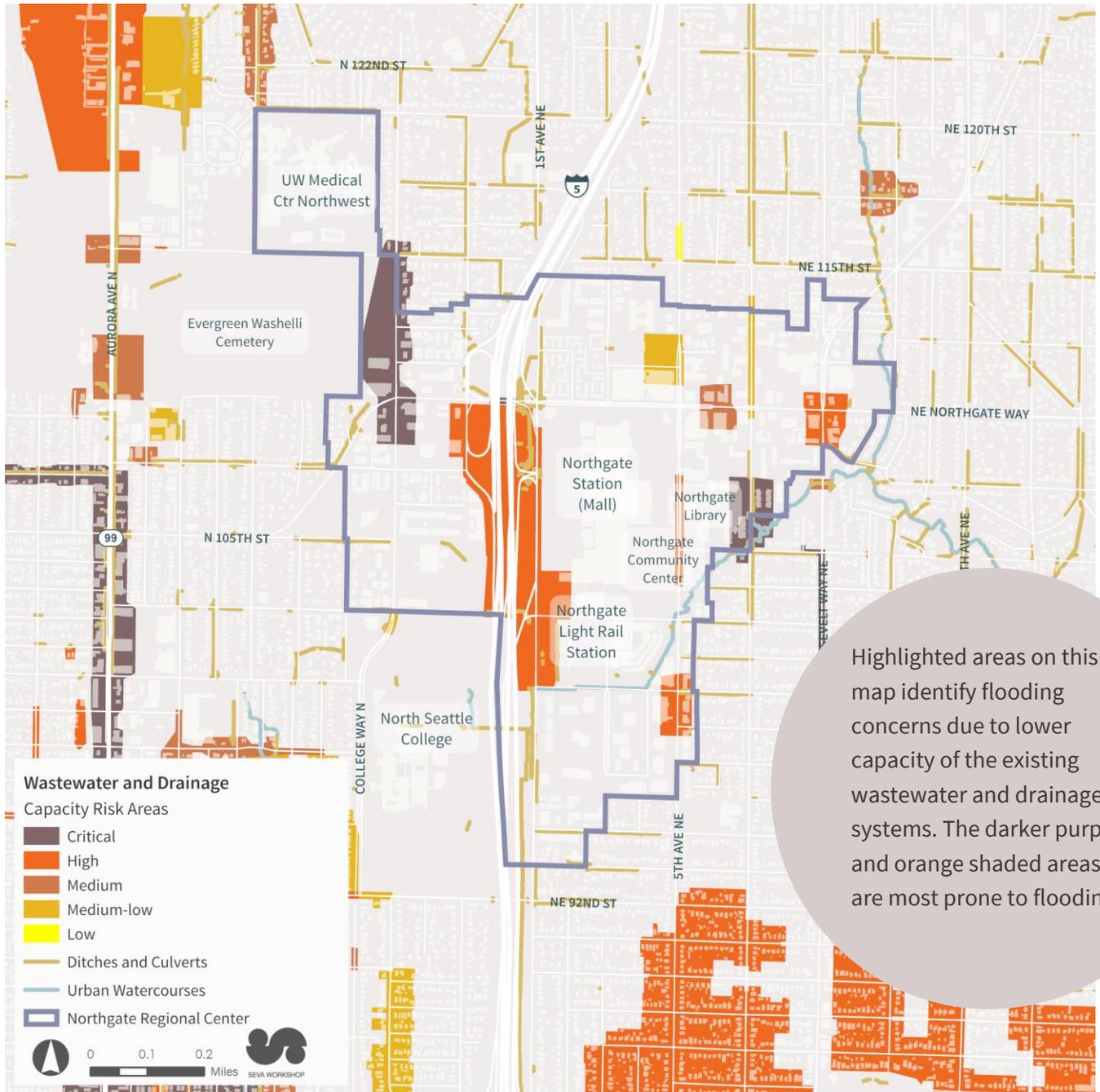
SCL provides electrical power in Seattle and surrounding areas. A significant portion of this power is generated from hydroelectric facilities and the remaining need is filled by purchasing power from other sources – the largest being Bonneville Power Administration. SCL operates 12 substations to lower the voltage of power before it is transmitted on overhead and underground distribution lines. This grid is supplemented by decentralized energy production such as private solar grids. Anticipated growth in Northgate is not expected to have adverse impacts on the electrical system. However, new development will need to connect to the City’s power grid, which could involve minor infrastructure improvements or upgrades.

Natural Gas

PSE is a private company that provides natural gas to customers across King, Kittitas, Lewis, Pierce, Snohomish, and Thurston Counties. Gas is acquired from produces across the western United States and Canada. Natural gas is used in residential, commercial, and industrial buildings for various purposes. Anticipated growth in Northgate is not expected to strain the natural gas supply.²

² Source: Draft “One Seattle EIS: Infrastructure”, Section 3.4; 2024

Exhibit 1: Capacity Constrained Wastewater and Drainage Systems in Northgate.³



Highlighted areas on this map identify flooding concerns due to lower capacity of the existing wastewater and drainage systems. The darker purple and orange shaded areas are most prone to flooding.

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

³ The *One Seattle* Comprehensive Plan EIS finds no significant adverse impacts to utilities as a result of future development or designation of this area as a Regional Center. In areas considered capacity constrained, development would be subject to more stringent stormwater management requirements.

Capital Planning

Water

SPU's current capital improvement program (CIP) for water covers 2024-2029. Given the interconnected nature of water supply systems, many CIP investments that will directly benefit Northgate are focused on the supply sources and system-level investments. Examples include pump station improvements, utility relocations to avoid conflicts with street improvements, and seismic upgrades to the distribution system. There are no projects on the list specifically located in the Northgate Regional Center boundary. Funding for SPU's capital projects come from ratepayers (75%), wholesale customers (20%), and fees (5%).⁴

Drainage & Wastewater

SPU's current CIP for drainage and wastewater also spans 2024-2029. Given the interconnected nature of these networks, many CIP investments that will directly benefit Northgate come from system-level investments. Examples include the beneficial uses program, creek culvert replacement program, and the drainage capacity program. There are no projects on the list specifically located in the Northgate Regional Center Boundary. Funding for the drainage and wastewater capital projects comes from revenue bonds serviced by ratepayers (75%) and cash contributions from SPU (25%).⁵ During engagement for this plan, SPU staff identified issues with runoff and localized flooding along 105th Street near Beaver Pond.

King County is currently exploring a project to improve the capacity of the Thornton Creek sewer pipe, which extends just east of the Regional Center boundary to the Beaver Pond Natural Area. To address capacity issues, the County will either (1) reduce the amount of stormwater and groundwater entering the system or (2) increase the size of the sewer pipe, which carries wastewater to the Matthews Park Pump Station. When completed, this work will reduce the risk of overflows and water quality impacts to the Thornton Creek basin.⁶

Electricity

SCL's current CIP (also 2024-2029) outlines \$2.75 billion in spending for power supply, transmission, distribution, external projects, and central utility needs. Approximately 60% of the CIP is funded through the sale of revenue bonds and 40% is funded by revenue from retail electrical rates, wholesale sales, and customer billings/fees. Federal and state grant funding are also anticipated in the 6-year cycle. SCL is adapting to changing market conditions with reduced energy consumption, a rise in private energy technologies, and a retiring workforce. There is an increased demand for transportation electrification, however, and increased revenues from 5G network distribution via light poles.⁷

⁴ [SPU Water CIP 2024-2029](#), pages 484; 481-485; 486-524 for project lists

⁵ [SPU DWF CIP 2024-2029](#), pages 466-467; 468-474 for project lists

⁶ [King County Thornton Creek Basin Project](#)

⁷ [SCL CIP 2024-2029](#), pages 274; 279-281; 282-429 for project list

Given the interconnected nature of the electrical grid, many SCL capital projects will benefit Northgate as part of its greater system. Examples include new facilities for a modernized distribution management system, expansion of electrical vehicle charging infrastructure, ongoing work to promote energy efficiency, and remediation for environmental clean-up sites. Capital projects with particular impacts to the Northgate area include:

- \$12 million for management and construction of utility relocations needed to serve Sound Transit while building the North Link light rail line between Northgate and Lynnwood

PUBLIC SERVICES

This report studies the range and conditions of public services and facilities that are located within the Northgate Regional Center, as well as those located outside the boundary that serve Northgate residents. It also includes some privately-run facilities that serve essential functions that complement public services (such as private schools and religious institutions) or that operate in place of public services (such as hospitals). Topics covered include police, fire, schools, hospitals, libraries, parks, and gathering spaces. The map in Exhibit 2 identifies the location of key facilities and sites in the Northgate Regional Center.

What we heard...

“

Community engagement in Northgate highlighted important themes for focus in this subarea plan. This included:

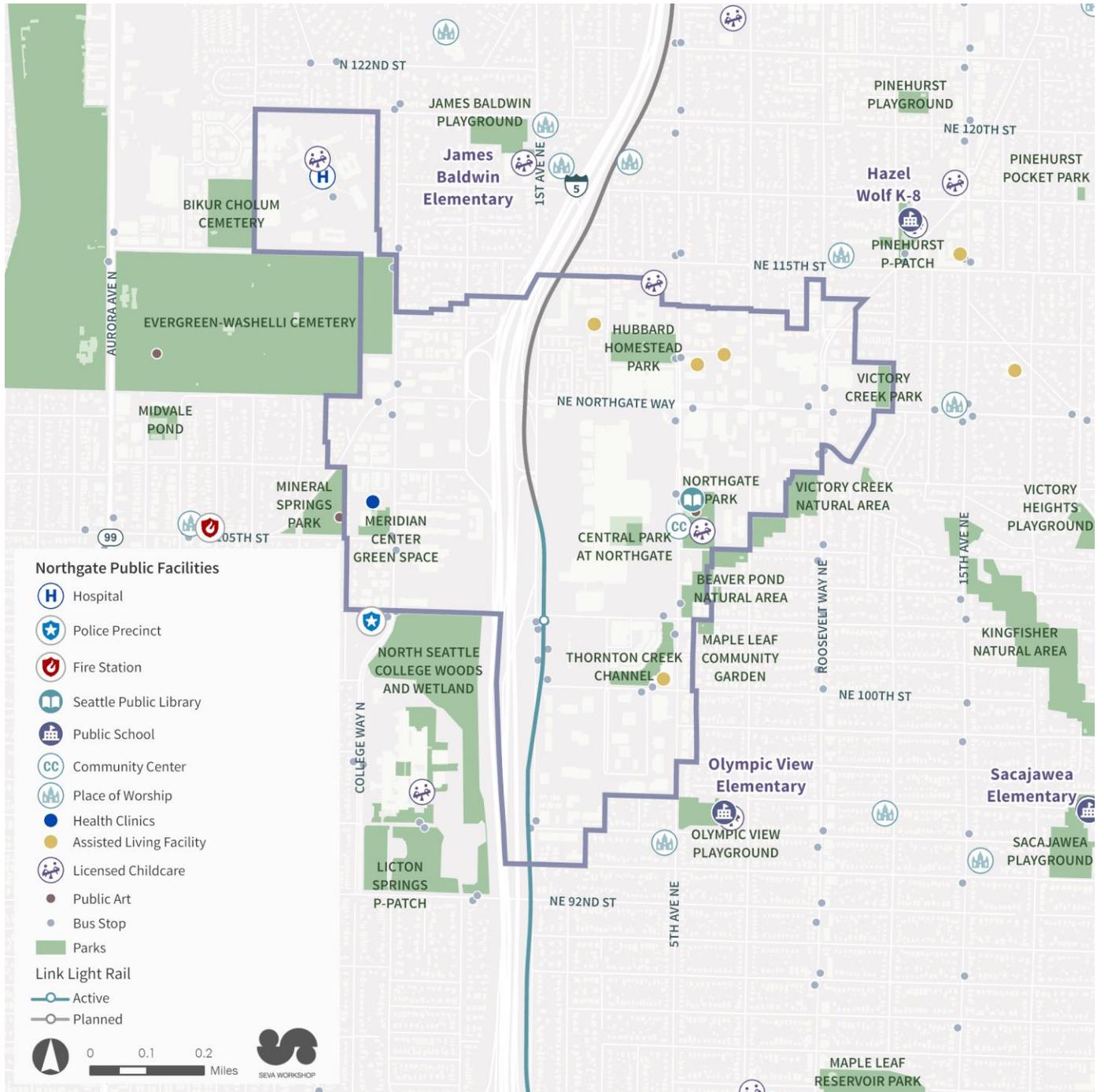
Safety. Common safety concerns related to pedestrian and bike safety, as well as property crime for business owners.

A desire for more gathering space.

Engagement efforts revealed pockets of tight-knit communities in Northgate. Community members highlighted a variety of existing neighborhood assets, including public facilities such as the library and community center. However, the loss of the mall has taken a toll on the neighborhood, with people describing Northgate as “disjointed” and “without a central gathering space.”

Parks. Engagement highlighted a lack of green space, accessible parks, and poor maintenance and activation of existing park spaces.

Exhibit 2: Public Facilities in Northgate.



Sources: City of Seattle, 2024; Sound Transit, 2024; King County, 2024

Public Safety

The City considers issues of safety from multiple angles, including: addressing criminal activity, enhancing personal feelings of security, and responding to life-threatening emergencies. This report includes existing conditions for the Seattle Police Department (SPD), Fire and Emergency Medical Services, and Safe Routes to School programs in the Northgate area. Each of these City departments and programs play a role in the personal and property safety of those who live and visit in Northgate. The report also discusses elements of the urban environment that can enhance perceptions of personal safety in Northgate and feedback received during engagement that relates to safety concerns.

Crime and Policing

SPD has 1,077 officers divided into 5 precincts, each with a police station. These officers are tasked with providing services such as foot/car/bike patrols, responding to 911 calls, investigating criminal activity, traffic and parking enforcement, homeland security, and specialty units such as bomb/arson, gang, and Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT). North Seattle is served by the North Precinct, with a police station located within the Northgate Regional Center boundary, west of I-5. Additionally, SPD partners with the Regional Transit Police, who is hired by Sound Transit. The Regional Transit Police have their own officers responsible for transit stations, such as the light rail station in Northgate.⁸

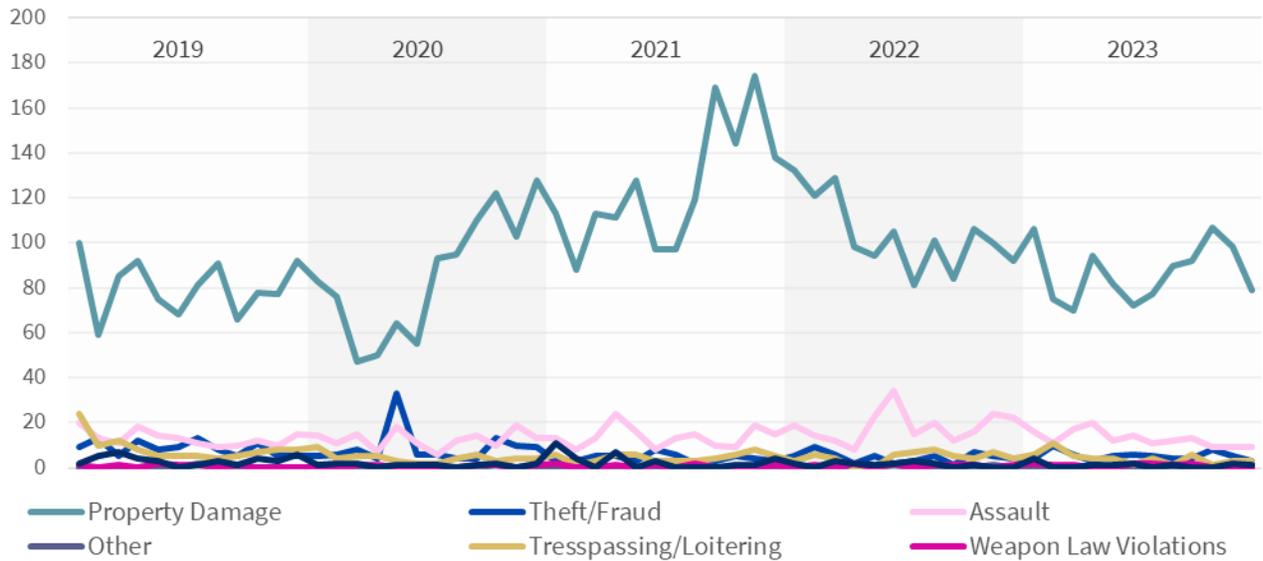
Overall reported crime rates in Seattle have increased in recent years, with most increase observed in property crime.⁹ Despite citywide increases, rates of reported crime have remained relatively stable in Northgate over the 5-year period of 2019-2023, with a notable spike in 2021 (31% more incidents than in 2019). The most common form of crime in Northgate is property damage, accounting for 78% of all reported incidents in 2023. Property damage includes offenses such as arson, burglary, vandalism, theft from stores/cars/buildings, shoplifting, and pickpocketing. Violent crime (assault) has remained relatively low compared to property crime, with a slight increase in 2022 that went back down in 2023. See Exhibit 3.

The police station facility in Northgate was built in 1994. The department leases 5,000 square feet of office space nearby to house administrative staff members for SPD. A station upgrade proposed for this precinct was put on hold in 2016.

⁸ Draft “One Seattle plan DEIS: Public Services” Section 3.11.1, 2024.

⁹ City of Seattle Open Data Portal, 2023

Exhibit 3: Reported Crime Incidents in Northgate by Type, 2019-2023.



Sources: City of Seattle Open Data Portal summarized monthly, 2023; Seva Workshop, 2024.

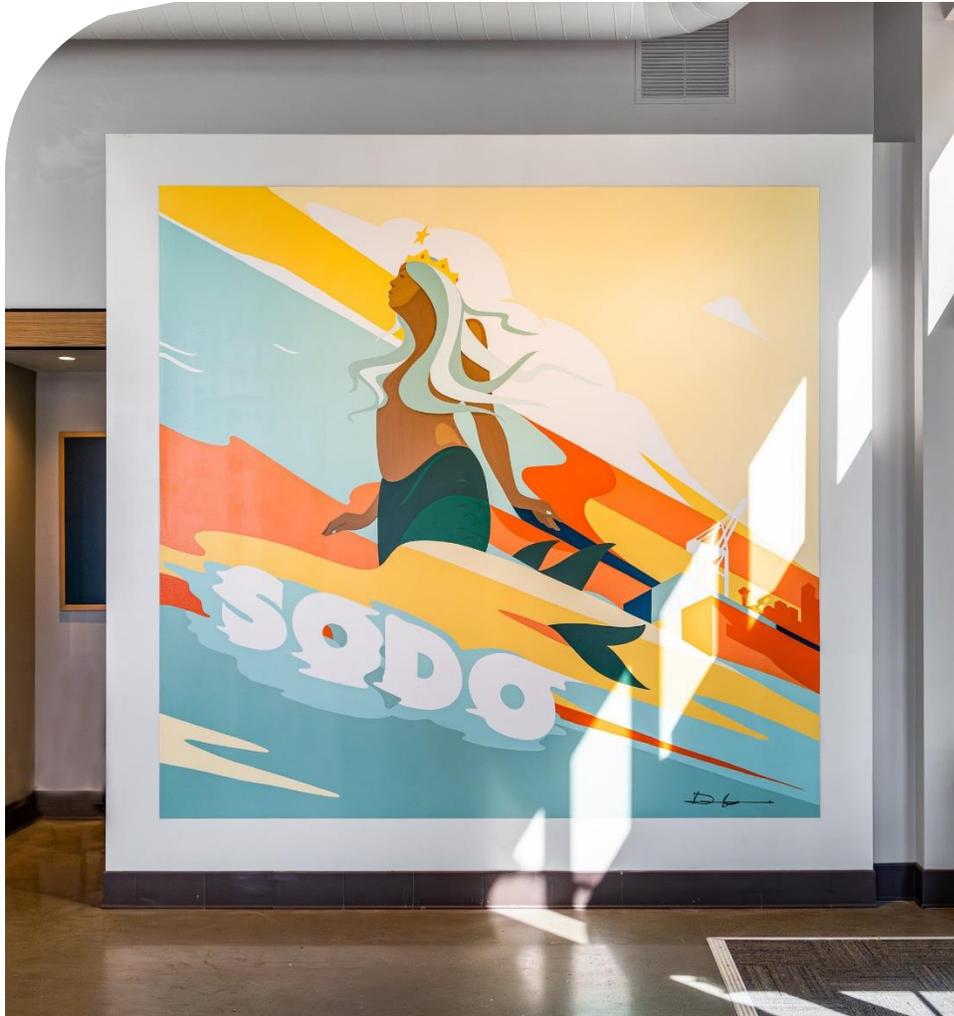
Fire and EMS

The Seattle Fire Department (SFD) provides emergency medical service (EMS), fire and rescue response, and fire prevention services. Citywide, there are 33 fire stations grouped into 5 battalions. Stations are staffed 24 hours a day and there are 1,005 uniformed firefighter/paramedic/chiefs and 83 civilian personnel. All firefighters are certified emergency medical technicians able to provide basic life support response. Call volume for SFD services has increased by 12.3% between 2021 and 2022. Northgate is located in the city’s Battalion 6 district, and Battalion 6’s stations are identified as being under capacity for staffing.¹⁰

Fire Station 31 will be located within the Regional Center boundary when construction of the new station is complete in late 2025. An interim station has been operational since October 2021, located just outside the Regional Center boundary. It is equipped with an engine, ladder truck, medic unit, and aid unit. The new facility will be 22,000 square feet, located at Meridian Ave and 113th St, close to the NW Hospital. This station will house a Health One unit, designed for immediate health response services. Plans for the station site include public realm improvements and a public art collaboration with a local artist.¹¹

¹⁰ Draft “One Seattle plan DEIS: Public Services” Section 3.11.1, 2024.

¹¹ <https://www.seattle.gov/fire/about-us/about-the-department/operations/fire-station-31>



Local Artist Damon Brown has been commissioned to integrate public art into the new Fire Station 31 designs. To the left is an example of his mural work for Starbucks' SODO location. This kind of public investment can enhance neighborhood identity and character. For Northgate, it addresses the lack of color and art in the existing urban landscape.

Image Source: Creative Lou website.

Safe Routes to School

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a national movement to encourage easy and safe paths for students to walk or bike to their local schools. Seattle's SRTS program aims to get more students walking or biking, which can improve physical and mental health. Elementary and K-8 schools are the priority for this program. SDOT's 2023 Travel Report includes 52 schools and ranks James Baldwin Elementary (formerly Northgate Elementary) as having the second lowest rate in city for student walk/bike/scooter commuting, with only 14% of students reporting active modes. Hazel Wolf K-8 is ranked 36th and Olympic View is 13th. Olympic View is called out as one of the "most improved" elementary schools in the survey.¹²

SDOT has given priority rankings to each school for walkway and crosswalk improvements as part of its 5-year Action Plan. Two elementary schools that serve Northgate students are prioritized for

¹² [SDOT 2023 School Travel Tally Report](#)

walkway and crosswalk improvements: James Baldwin Elementary ranks 2 of 114 on the City’s priority list for walkway improvements and 20 of 114 for crosswalk improvements. Olympic View ranks 24 of 114 for walkway improvements and 61 of 114 for crosswalk improvements.¹³ The map in Exhibit 4 shows gaps in the sidewalk network (dotted lines) and identifies the designated school crossing intersections.



Students from Dunlap Elementary and South Shore PK-8 in Rainier Beach walk and ride to school together in groups each Wednesday. Under the SRTS program, more students in Northgate could follow their lead.

Image Source: SDOT 2023 School Travel Tally Report

Perceptions of Safety

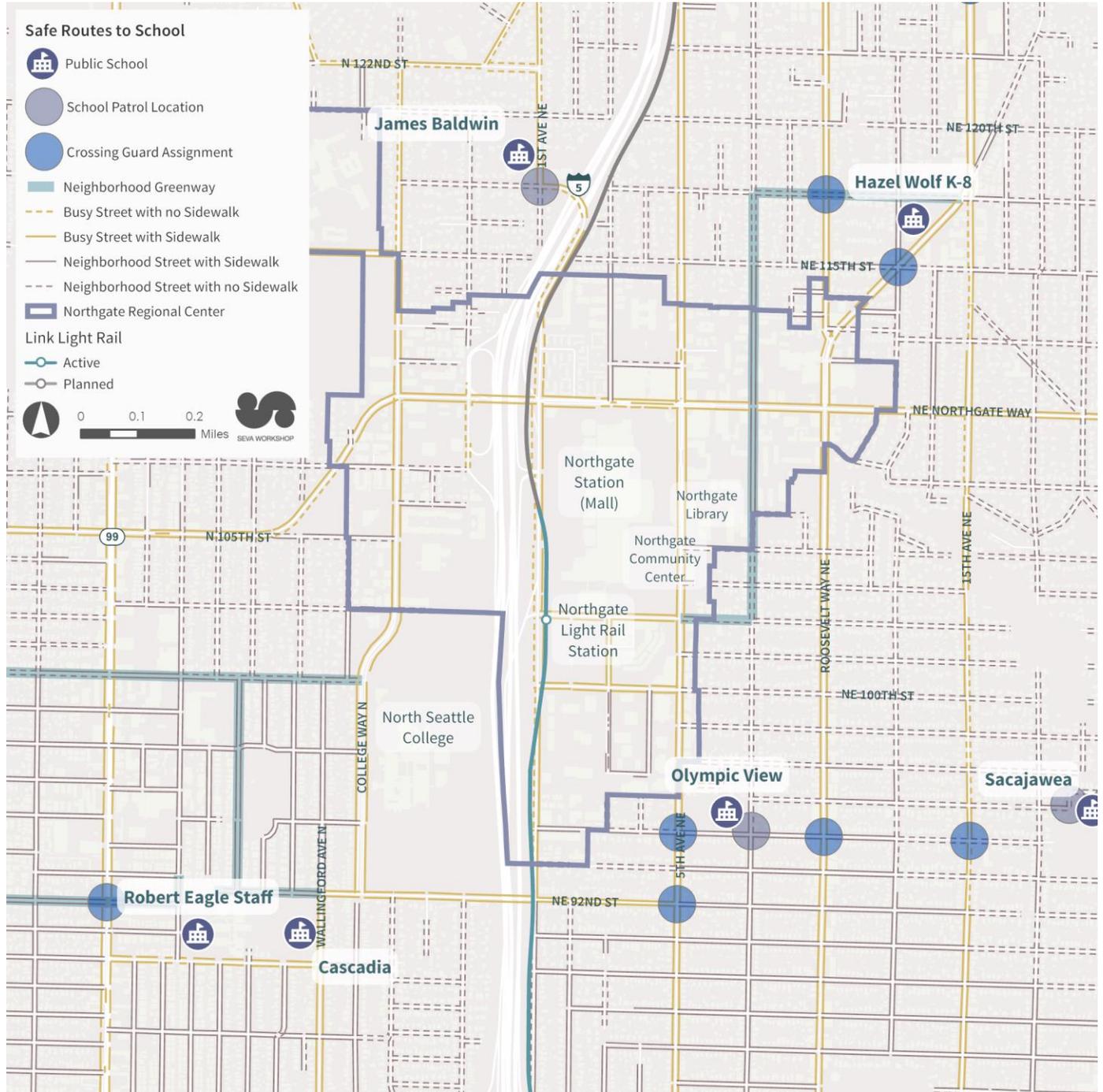
Many elements of the urban environment can increase feelings of personal safety. Feeling safe is key for encouraging the activation of spaces in the Regional Center. With citywide increases in crime rates, this sense of personal security has become increasingly important for Seattleites. Some key focus areas for enhancing perceptions of safety in Northgate include:

- **Eyes on the street.** With more people out and about, individuals can feel more comfortable in public spaces. The auto-oriented nature of Northgate (large parking lots, long blocks, larger scale developments, wide traffic crossings, busy traffic corridors) and existing vacancies can make a pedestrian feel isolated, unseen, and vulnerable. Activation of key corridors and public spaces can build momentum for increased social activity.

¹³ [SDOT School Rankings for Walkway and Crossing Improvements](#)

- **Pedestrian-scale amenities.** Lighting, greenery, benches, street buffers, and the public realm in general all contribute to individual feelings of being welcomed into a space. Areas of Northgate lacking in these elements can feel cold, uninviting, and unsafe.

Exhibit 4: Safe Routes to School Infrastructure in Northgate.



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

Education

Seattle Preschool Program

The Seattle Preschool Program (SPP) is a levy-funded program conducted in partnership with preschool providers across the city. The program launched in 2015 and serves students ages 3-5 in preparation for kindergarten. In 2022, there were 1,959 students enrolled citywide. SPP sets tuition rates on an income-based sliding scale, and many families qualify for free tuition. In Northgate, participating preschools include Pinehurst at the Northgate Community Center, and Pinehurst at Hazel Wolf K-8 and a Head Start program at James Baldwin Elementary, both located just north of the subarea boundary.¹⁴

K-12 Education

Seattle Public Schools (SPS) serves the city with 63 elementary schools, 10 K-8 schools, 12 middle schools, and 18 high schools. There are no public schools directly within the Regional Center boundary, but children in the Regional Center are served by the institutions identified in Exhibit 5. This table also shows the student enrollment as a percent of the school’s total capacity. Hazel Wolf K-8 school is one of four SPS facilities operating beyond its capacity by more than 10%. All other schools serving households in the Regional Center have space for increased student enrollment.¹⁵

Exhibit 5: Seattle Public Schools that serve the Northgate Regional Center.

School	Student Enrollment, 2022-23, (% of Capacity)
Olympic View Elementary School	361 (79%)
James Baldwin Elementary School (formerly Northgate Elementary)	191 (76%)
Cascadia Elementary School	473 (77%)
Hazel Wolf K-8 E-STEM Middle School	725 (110%)
Jane Addams Middle School	885 (75%)
Robert Eagle Staff Middle School	677 (67%)
Nathan Hale High School	1,081 (88%)
Ingraham High School	1,418 (79%)

Sources: SPS, 2024; Draft “One Seattle DEIS”, 2024; Seva Workshop, 2024.

James Baldwin is the only school from this list with an identified project from the 2022-2025 capital planning cycle. A new building with approximately 95,000 square feet replaced the former Northgate Elementary School and expanded the school’s capacity up to 650 students. A ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new facility was held in August 2023 and the school is now open to

¹⁴ Draft “One Seattle plan DEIS: Public Services” Section 3.11.1, 2024, and [Seattle Department of Education and Early Learning website](#)

¹⁵ Draft “One Seattle plan DEIS: Public Services” Section 3.11.1 and Exhibit 3.11-32, 2024.

students, as construction is finalized on outdoor spaces. The \$90 million project was funded through the approved 2019 tax levy. The School District is currently working to develop its 2026-2030 capital plan, and the next capital levy is anticipated for a February 2025 ballot. The PDEIS¹⁶ for the levy was released in April 2024 and includes consideration for four potential projects impacting schools that serve Northgate students: turf replacement on baseball and soccer fields at Robert Eagle Staff Middle School, new lights and turf replacement at Jane Addams Middle School, updated tennis court lights at Ingraham High School, and improvements adjacent to Thornton Creek at Nathan Hale High School.

Private Schools

Private schools in Northgate supplement public education with additional options for alternative learning, religious-based environments, and academic support. These include Brightmont Academy (K-12) and Spring Academy (high school) near the light rail station, Polytech (providing late high school/early college support), Perkins School (elementary – just outside the boundary to the south), and St. Catherine of Siena School (religious K-8 – just outside the boundary to the south). There are also a number of daycare and preschool programs that do not yet participate in the SPP.

Statewide, Washington has seen a dramatic rise in the number of students attending private schools or being homeschooled. A 2023 analysis estimates that private school enrollment increased 26% statewide from the 2019-2020 school year to the 2022-2023 school year and there was a 43% increase in homeschool enrollment.¹⁷ While these numbers are not available at the city or subarea level, SPS does report that total enrollment fell 6% from the 2019-2020 school year to the 2021-2022 (a net loss of 3,440 students) suggesting a citywide trend toward private and homeschool enrollment.¹⁸

Hospitals

The Northgate Regional Center is served by the UW Northwest Medical Center. The hospital first opened in 1960 on a 33-acre campus and was purchased by UW in 2020. Today, it features 10 buildings with 738,000 square feet of building space. The hospital offers emergency care and a variety of inpatient and outpatient health services. Regional healthcare demand is growing, and the campus has undergone a Major Institution Master Plan (MIMP) process, to be finalized in 2024. Over the next 20 years, the hospital expects inpatient care to double and outpatient care to grow by 45%. Several of the existing campus facilities are dated and the MMIP outlines plans to replace these buildings with new, taller structures. If fully implemented, these changes will double the site's capacity. The MIMP process was overseen in partnership with a Development Advisory Committee (DAC) and the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods (DON). The DAC is comprised of

¹⁶ Preliminary Draft Environmental Impact Statement (PDEIS)

¹⁷ [KUOW](#), December 2023

¹⁸ [SPS Annual Enrollment Report](#), 2022

community members who can speak to the project’s potential impacts on the surrounding neighborhood.¹⁹

Community Space

Gathering spaces are where community cohesion, sense of place, and feelings of home are cultivated in a neighborhood. In engagement conversations, many reported a need for more community gathering spaces in Northgate. Due to Seattle-area weather, the mall had previously offered a safe place to spend time indoors, and residents do not have a similar space anymore. However, a network of public, private, and nonprofit spaces offer a range of experiences for community building and placemaking in Northgate. Profiled in this report are the library, the community center, the Kraken Community Iceplex, and a list of religious sites. Many other spaces provide space for community building, such as businesses (coffee shops, bookstores, restaurants) and parks (detailed in the next section).

Library

The Northgate Branch of the Seattle Public Library opened in 2003 and is one of 26 branches citywide. It is located centrally in the Regional Center, a ½ mile walk to the light rail station and directly adjacent to Northgate Park and the Community Center. The facility includes a free meeting room (up to 91 people), three study rooms, quiet room, and public access to computers and other technology equipment. Special collections held at this branch include a children’s Chinese collection, a Russian collection, and a Spanish collection. There are dedicated areas for children and teens. The library hosts free community events, such as story time for children and families, homework help for K-12 students, and adult English conversation circles.²⁰

Seattle Public Library’s 2024-2029 CIP is funded by the 2019 Library Levy as well as real estate excise tax (REET) revenue. Its focus is the preservation of the system’s facilities. The Northgate branch will receive funding for mechanical systems replacement. Other investments serve the system as a whole, such as updated IT infrastructure, capital equipment purchases, and comprehensive ADA improvements.²¹

Community Center

Northgate’s Community Center was built in 2006 and is located next to the library. The building features a full-size gym, a larger multipurpose room with a commercial kitchen, and smaller rooms such as an arts and craft room, a weight room, a teen room, a game room, and classrooms. Existing programs hosted at the Northgate Community Center include an after-school care program, karate classes, zumba, watercolor lessons, pickleball skill building, and piano lessons. It is one of the city’s newest community centers and has a LEED Gold rating for environmental

¹⁹ [UWMC Northwest Final MIMP, 2024](#)

²⁰ <https://www.spl.org/hours-and-locations/northgate-branch>

²¹ [City of Seattle SPL CIP 2024-2029](#), pages 146-148; 149-153 for project list

sustainability. There is also an on-site preschool that participates in Seattle’s Preschool Program. The adjoining playground is used by the preschool. A wide variety of activities are hosted at the site, such as dance, cooking classes, arts and crafts, teen programs, toddler playtime, and senior programming.²² The City’s CIP does not highlight any projects for the Northgate location for 2022-2027.²³

Private and Non-Profit Gathering Spaces

Supplemental to public gathering sites are a range of places run by private and non-profit entities. In the Northgate area, cultural and religious centers offer gathering space for their community and reflect the diversity of the neighborhood. For many, these spaces are important sites that contribute to spiritual health, social connection, and a sense of belonging. Many of these sites are located outside, but closely bordering, the Regional Center. These include:

- Eritrean Kidisti Selassie
- Idris Mosque
- Latvian Community Center
- Olympic View Community Church
- St. Andrew Kim Korean Catholic Church
- St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Church
- St. Nectarios American Orthodox Cathedral
- Seattle Lamp First Korean Church

The North Seattle Family Center is located northeast of the Regional Center and coordinates many different social service providers for north Seattle neighborhoods. The North Helpline in Lake City is the closest food bank to the Regional Center and their meal delivery service provides food to families in Northgate.

²² <https://www.seattle.gov/parks/all-community-centers/northgate-community-center>

²³ [City of Seattle Parks and Rec CIP 2024-2029](#)



The Idris Mosque, founded in 1981, is located just east of the Regional Center boundary in Northgate. The mosque’s community includes many backgrounds and identities: Somalis, Eritreans, Gambians, Middle Easterners, Indians, Pakistanis, and Americans. Every year the Idris Mosque hosts a community barbeque, inviting the neighbors for community-building.

Parks

The public parks in the Northgate Regional Center are Hubbard Homestead, Northgate Park, and Victory Creek Park. There is also public access to a greenway that follows Thornton Creek, portions of the privately owned Evergreen Washelli Cemetery, and the privately owned “Central Park” within the Northgate Station Mall site, adjacent to the Kraken Community Iceplex. Just outside the Regional Center boundary are green spaces such as Beaver Pond Natural Area, Mineral Springs Park, and the North Seattle College Woods and Wetlands.

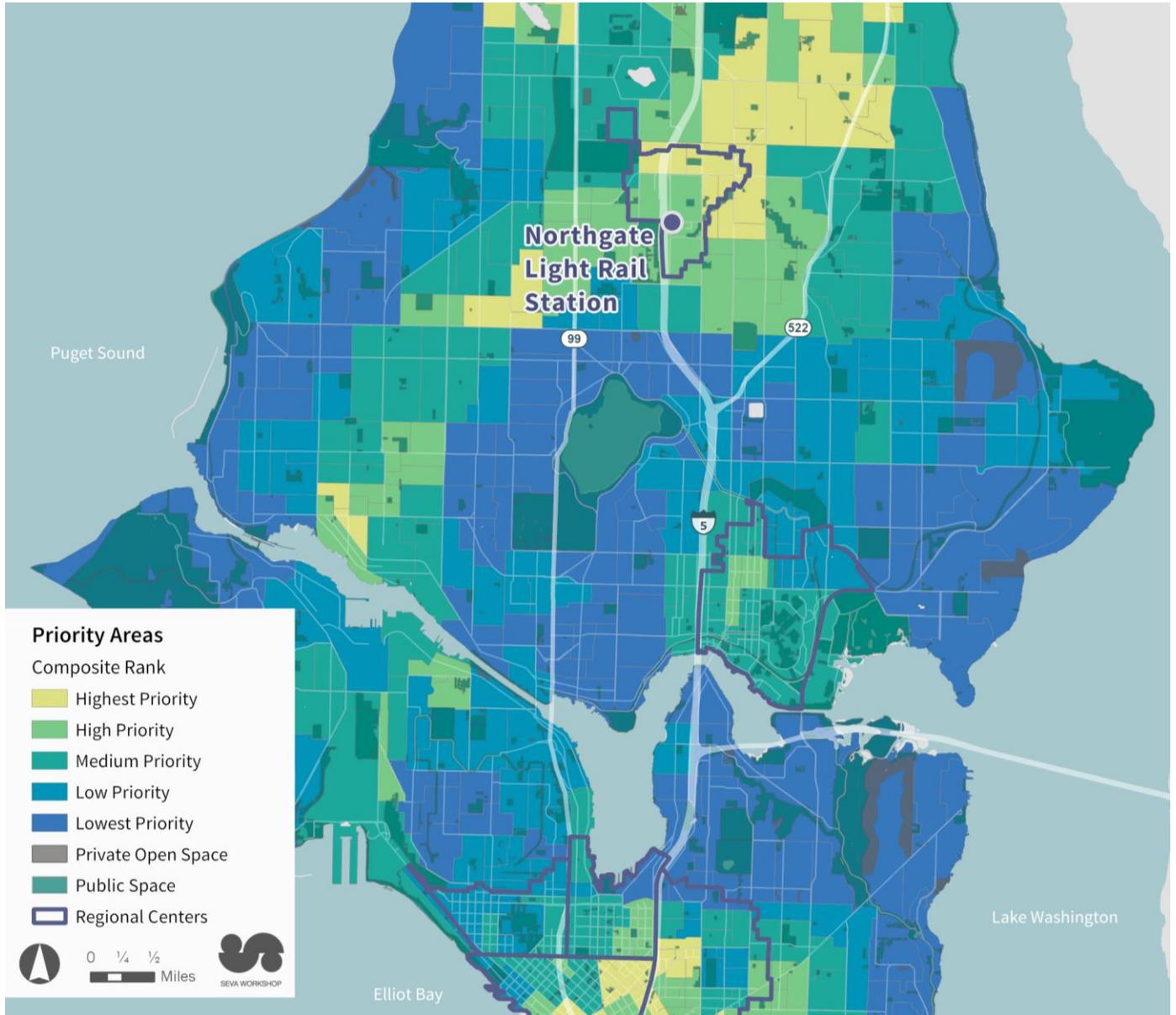
Northgate is identified as a “priority area” for public space improvements based on the City’s Outside Citywide Access mapping tool. This analysis considers race and social equity, density and growth, and health outcomes. See Exhibit 6. In addition, the 2024 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan identifies Northgate as being underserved in parkland compared to other areas of the city. This designation prioritizes the acquisition of parkland in the Regional Center. Despite this recognition as a priority area for investment, however, the 2024-2030 CIP does not allocate funding to projects in the Northgate area.²⁴

- \$14 million is allocated to park land acquisition but no plans are actively underway to acquire sites within the Northgate Regional Center.

²⁴ <https://www.seattle.gov/parks/about-us/projects/2024-parks-and-open-space-plan>, CIP in Appendix D

- \$20 million is allocated to community center rehabilitation and development, however the Northgate Community Center is not currently earmarked for significant investment.

Exhibit 6: Outside Citywide Access Map: Public Space Priority Areas.



Sources: City of Seattle Parks and Recreation, 2023.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Opportunities and Constraints

Key Opportunities

- **The library, community center, Northgate Park, and Kraken Iceplex form a strong central heart of activity in Northgate.** Continued investment in this corridor along 5th Avenue will strengthen neighborhood identity in a location that is walkable from the light rail station. Moving to the future, these institutions can advance their roles as community resilience hubs, with support from Seattle’s Office of Sustainability.
- **James Baldwin Elementary currently shows low rates of active commuting for students.** Identified investments in walkways and crossings offer great opportunity for increasing the 14% active community mode share reported in 2023. Olympic View Elementary sets a strong example, identified as one of Seattle’s “most improved” schools in the SRTS program.
- **The UW Northwest Hospital Master Plan identifies opportunities to double the capacity of existing facilities.** An expanded and modernized campus could expand the medical center’s role as a major employer in Northgate. It would also improve resident access to essential healthcare services. The campus expansion plans include investments for improvements to the surrounding pedestrian realm.
- **Utility services in Northgate anticipates accommodating future growth targets under current capital plans.** Northgate infrastructure can support increased demand for water and power. Current capital planning aligns with growth targets and has funding allocations.
- **A new fire station will be opening in Northgate in 2025.** This facility will improve service response times, expand the range of fire and EMS services locally available, and connect closely with the hospital. Investments in public art will improve the station’s contribution to neighborhood identity and placemaking for the northwest corner of the subarea. The new facility will also include a Health One unit, designed to respond to individuals in moments of crisis – particularly those with needs for mental healthcare and social services.

Key Constraints

- **The Northgate area wasn’t annexed into Seattle until 1954, and this legacy as an unincorporated area has led to some gaps in core infrastructure.** The sidewalk network is incomplete in and around the Regional Center, and the drainage network is informal. Pedestrian infrastructure is challenging to retrofit onto today’s residential neighborhoods.
- **Persistent incidents of property crime impact local businesses in Northgate.** While overall crime rates have decreased from pandemic highs, property crime remains a persistent issue in the subarea. Small businesses discuss this as a concern and additional cost of doing business in the neighborhood.

- **The auto-oriented nature of Northgate’s infrastructure detracts from feelings of personal safety for those outside of a car.** Large parking lots, vacant building sites, long blocks, and a lack of public realm investments all contribute to an individual feeling out of place and vulnerable in many parts of Northgate.
- **The Safe Routes to School network is fragmented.** There are not clearly identified pathways with good sidewalks and crossing conditions for all K-12 students in Northgate. Upcoming consolidations have been announced for Seattle Public Schools, but details have not yet been published. Impacts to Northgate students are uncertain but could further strain these networks.²⁵
- **Northgate does not meet level of service (LOS) targets for parks and open space access.** Areas of the Regional Center are highlighted by Seattle Parks and Recreation as a priority area for improvement and investment. The current budget and CIP, however, do not identify any acquisition or revitalization plans in the next five years. A new playground may be added at Hubbard Homestead Park, but it will come as the existing playground at Victory Creek Park is decommissioned.
- **Insufficient social and community gathering spaces.** The Northgate Mall offered an opportunity for indoor hangouts, entry-level job experience, and community events. The Regional Center has other gathering sites, but the mall’s absence is still strongly felt. Northgate needs a more robust set of spaces and programs to address community needs.
- **Citywide budget cuts and shortfalls limit the level of investment that can be allocated to expand public services and enhance public facilities.** Hiring freezes, deferred maintenance projects, and school consolidations all relate to revenue shortfalls for the City. Addressing identified needs without dollars for investment is a challenge.
- **Several areas in Northgate are identified as capacity constrained for wastewater and drainage systems.** Northgate, like most north Seattle neighborhoods, has a ditch and culvert system that is often strained by large rainfalls. This can lead to flash flooding, identified as an important issue in areas such as the I-5 underpass and the Meridian corridor connecting to the hospital.
- **Northgate is missing some social services, such as a food bank.** Northgate and its surrounding neighborhoods coordinate to provide a range of social services for community members in need. Local service providers note that a lack of a food bank in the Regional Growth Center is a challenge.

Connections to the Racial Equity Toolkit

At the onset of this planning effort, and as part of the Racial Equity Toolkit (RET) development, the project team identified eight key outcomes for the Northgate Regional Center. These were then updated after our visioning engagement efforts, which focused on conversations with the RET-

²⁵ <https://www.kuow.org/stories/20-seattle-elementary-schools-could-be-closed>

identified priority communities. The list below summarizes key takeaways for how Northgate’s public facilities and services either support or act as a barrier to achieving those outcomes.

Supports:

- SPU now owns areas around Thornton Creek in the subarea, enhancing environmental conditions for the important waterbody.
- A network of public facilities, services, and other social supports enhance Northgate as a desirable residential area and provide the needed underpinning for continued growth.
- Improvements have been made to the pedestrian experience connecting to Olympic View Elementary, now named one of the City’s “most improved” school sites for rates of active commuting.
- A new fire station, currently under construction, has included a local artist in its design plans to ensure that public art connects the site to the neighborhood.
- Many cultural hubs, such as religious institutions and community centers, provide culturally - relevant space for Northgate communities.
- Public spaces, facilities, and services support the business community. Smaller businesses, in particular, benefit from public investment in greenspace, and the wider draw from sites like the hospital that draw people into the neighborhood.

Barriers:

- Several sites in Northgate are identified as capacity constrained for wastewater and draining systems.
- Water quality in Thornton Creek is an issue, and the drainage pipe at Beaver Pond faces capacity challenges that negatively impact the watershed. Investment is needed to increase infrastructure capacity and improve water quality.
- The undersupply of gathering spaces does not meet cultural needs for affordable, public spaces that can support family events, holiday celebrations, and other cultural traditions.
- The light rail does not connect seamlessly to the hospital, making commuting and visiting this essential facility more challenging for those who rely on nonvehicular modes of mobility.
- Northgate is identified as a priority area for Seattle in improving access to the outdoors, but no dollars have been earmarked in existing capital plans for improvements or acquisitions.
- There are no picnic shelters available for rent in the Northgate Regional Center.
- Community members have reported feeling unsafe at certain bus stops in and around the regional center. Engagement with small businesses confirmed datapoints about property crime concerns.
- The pedestrian network in Northgate is fractured. The Safe Routes to School map identifies many updates that are needed to improve student connectivity to local schools. These challenges are particularly pronounced around the newly redeveloped James Baldwin Elementary.

