

Anti-Displacement Strategies Report

Date: December 19, 2025

Prepared for: Seattle Downtown Regional
Center Plan

Prepared by: BAE Urban Economics

FINAL DRAFT MEMORANDUM

To: Erica Bush, Urban Centers Planner
Jesse London, Urban Centers Planner

From: Paul Peninger, MCP, Principal

Date: Thursday, December 11, 2025

Re: DRAFT Residential and Commercial Anti-Displacement Strategies for the Downtown Seattle Regional Center Plan

Introduction

Over the course of the next 20 years, Downtown Seattle is projected to add 13,500 new households and 60,000 jobs, making Downtown both Seattle's second largest residential area and its largest job center. This scale of planned development within a relatively compact 1.5-square mile footprint, while promising new opportunities for new and future residents, also has the potential to exert physical, economic, and cultural displacement pressures on many of Downtown's most vulnerable households, businesses, and neighborhood institutions. Downtown Seattle has seen dramatic economic and cultural change over the last several decades, with many longtime residents already displaced, and many others facing current displacement pressures.

To proactively address ongoing and potential displacement risks, this memo details a targeted set of potential anti-displacement strategies building on the robust suite of existing City of Seattle programs and policies, national best practices, as well as local community feedback. The strategies are organized around the three types of displacement outlined in the City's Anti-Displacement Action Plan: physical, economic, and cultural displacement.

Plan Area Overview

For the purposes of the Regional Center Plan, Downtown Seattle is composed of five distinct neighborhoods, each with its own set of unique demographic, economic, and cultural characteristics: Denny Triangle; Belltown; Commercial Core; Pioneer Square; and the Chinatown-International District (CID). These neighborhoods include some of Seattle's fastest-growing and most affluent neighborhoods (Denny Triangle, Belltown) as well as neighborhoods with relatively lower incomes, high socioeconomic vulnerability, and significant risk of displacement. In particular, Pioneer Square and the CID are two Downtown neighborhoods

with a large number of lower-income households, small businesses, and BIPOC residents with heightened socioeconomic vulnerabilities.

Racial Equity Toolkit (RET) Outcomes

The strategies proposed below have been prepared considering the RET outcomes identified for the Downtown Plan Area:

- **Arts and Culture Representation:** A thriving, creative community lives in, works in, and shapes the Downtown experience.
- **Access to Housing:** Downtown offers diverse housing options that support where people are in their lives without creating a cost burden.
- **Access to Employment and Creating Businesses:** Downtown is a center for businesses of all sizes that create financial opportunity and stability for entrepreneurs, owners and employees.

What is Displacement?

The [Anti-Displacement Action Plan](#) published by the City of Seattle in March 2025 defines displacement as *when households are forced to move involuntarily for economic or physical reasons or are prevented from moving into a neighborhood because of high rents or home prices*. As described by the Action Plan, displacement is often concurrent with broad neighborhood change and gentrification. It can occur in several ways:

- Physical displacement can occur through eviction, acquisition, rehabilitation, or demolition of housing; when covenants expire on rent-restricted housing; and due to other factors, such as climate impacts.
- Economic displacement happens as housing becomes less affordable and residents can no longer weather rising rents or the costs of homeownership, like property taxes.
- Cultural displacement occurs as residents relocate because their cultural community is leaving, and culturally relevant businesses and institutions lose their customer base or membership.

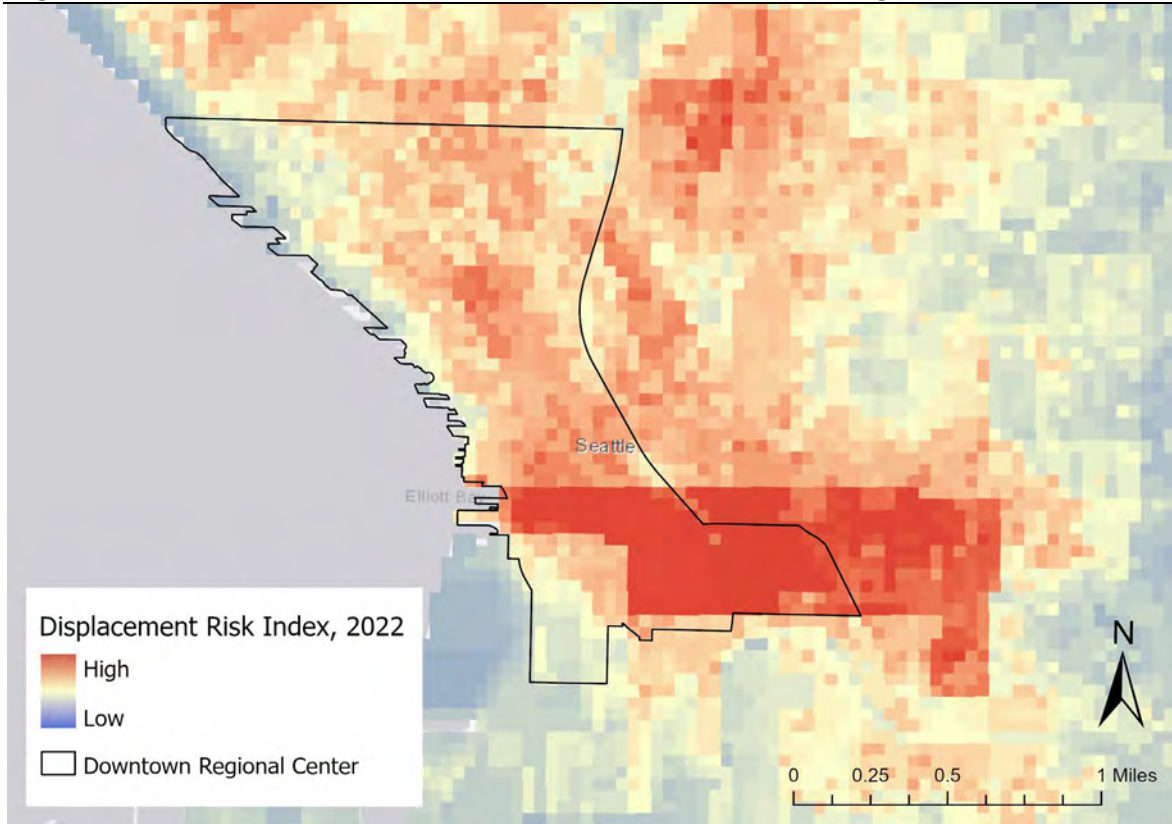
Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations From Existing Conditions Report

Significant portions of the Regional Center experience elevated displacement pressures.

Figure 1 below displays displacement risk across the Downtown Regional Center.

Displacement risks are highest for both residents and businesses in the southern portion of the Plan Area, including Pioneer Square and the CID. Indeed, examining the city as a whole, the Southern portion of the Plan Area has some of the highest displacement risks in Seattle as of 2022.

Figure 1: 2022 Seattle Displacement Risk Index, Downtown Regional Center



Source: City of Seattle, 2024.

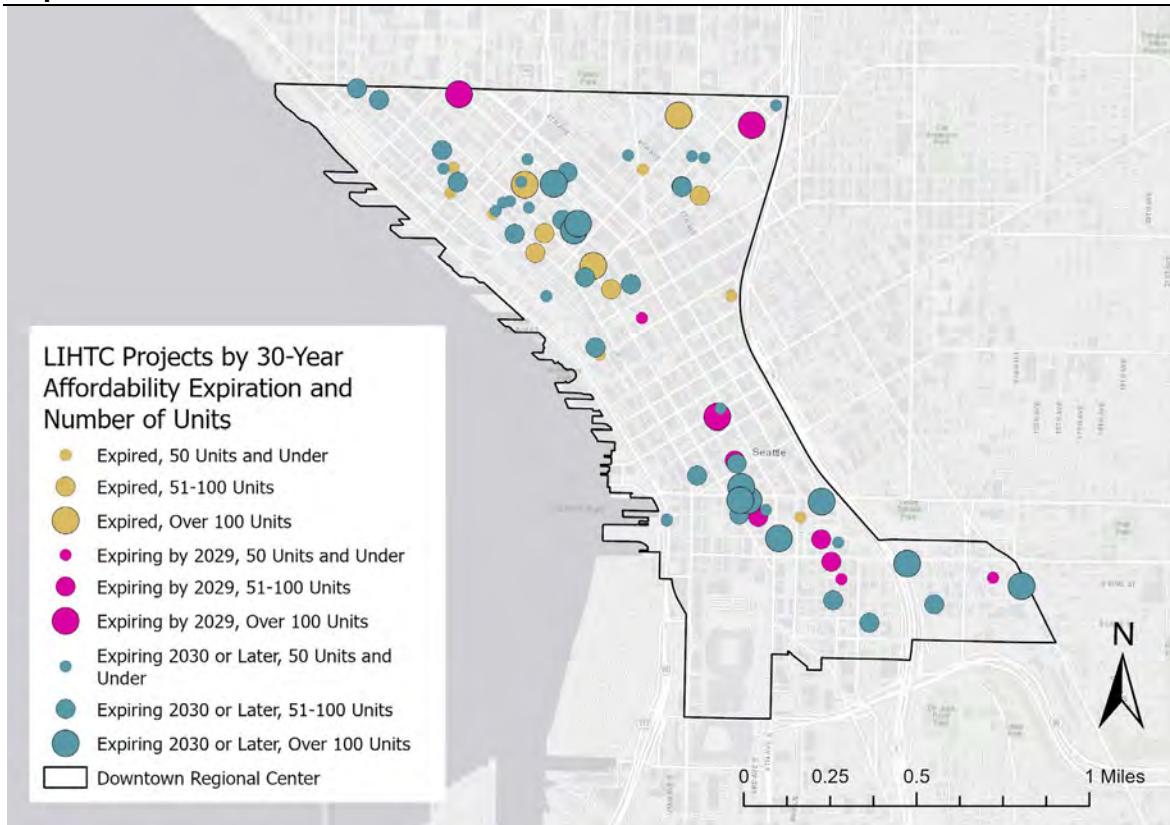
Household living downtown are overwhelmingly renters, and a significant portion pay more than 30 percent of their gross household income towards housing costs, indicating a risk of economic displacement in the absence of tenant protections or rent restrictions.

The Downtown Regional Center contains nearly double the share of extremely low-income households (24 percent) relative to the City of Seattle (15 percent) and Puget Sound Region (12 percent); Downtown households with lower incomes experience higher levels of housing cost burden, with half of all extremely low-income households spending more than 50 percent of their income on housing.

Of the 76 affordable housing developments located Downtown, one-third have rent restrictions that have expired (15 buildings with 1,140 units) or are expiring by 2029 (10 projects with 863 units), indicating the need for preservation efforts to address the risk of physical displacement for households living in these developments. Figure 2 below shows the geographic distribution of these projects by expiration status and number of units. Although many of these properties are owned by mission-driven organizations unlikely to raise rents to

reflect prevailing market rates, residents of these at-risk properties remain at critical threat of displacement, unless acquired and or refinanced with new deed restrictions and affordability covenants, along with initial efforts to support existing residents.

Figure 2: Downtown Regional Center LIHTC Projects by 30-Year Affordability Expiration and Number of Units



Sources: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development LIHTC Database; BAE, 2024.

Downtown is home to a large number of small businesses, including family-owned and heritage businesses. These businesses face increasing economic pressures, particularly in Pioneer Square and the CID. Businesses in older commercial structures on properties zoned to allow for higher densities are at a particular risk for redevelopment. New development may not provide comparable commercial space at lease rates affordable to existing tenants' business models.

Major planned transit and other public infrastructure projects have the potential to disrupt existing neighborhood business districts absent proactive business assistance efforts. In addition to various construction-related impacts that can interfere with normal business operations and deter customers, transit and other infrastructure improvements will also affect land values, which can incentivize the redevelopment of older properties and displace longtime business and neighborhood institutions.

Anti-Displacement Strategies

The following strategies include a mix of proposed policies and programs grouped into three broad categories that address physical, economic, and cultural displacement.

Physical Anti-Displacement Strategies for Residents

- 1. Preserve Existing Affordable Housing with Expiring Income Restrictions**
 - 1a. Continue to conduct outreach to affordable housing property owners to refinance and preserve existing affordable housing with currently expired or soon to expire affordable housing deed restrictions and/or covenants.
 - 1b. Leverage existing funding sources and explore new public and private sources to fund the acquisition and refinance of properties at risk of conversion to market rates.

- 2. Promote Community Ownership of Residential Properties through Community Land Trusts**
 - 2a. Building on successful examples of community land trust-sponsored projects in other Seattle neighborhoods which serve lower-income household with high risks of displacement, provide technical assistance and financial support to community and tenant organizations exploring the feasibility of acquiring existing residential properties.
 - 2b. Conduct outreach to public and private funding partners to explore the feasibility of establishing a dedicated fund for the purpose of supporting community acquisition of residential properties.

Economic Anti-Displacement Strategies for Residents

- 3. Continue to Support the Development of Affordable Housing throughout the Downtown Regional Center.**
 - 3a. Increase focus on affordable housing development efforts in neighborhoods with the highest socioeconomic needs and displacement risks.
 - 3b. Leverage publicly owned sites to create a managed pipeline of housing development opportunities for affordable housing developers.
 - 3c. Continue to seek new public and private sources to fund affordable housing; this may include District-scale tax increment financing as feasible.

- 4. Explore the Creation Enhanced Tenant Protections for Lower-Income Renters.**
 - 4a. Expand the suite of tenant protection strategies that conform with Washington State law and provide tenants with legal assistance, financial support, and other resources in the event that they face eviction or displacement.

5. **Continue to Implement Community Preferences for Rental and Ownership Housing as Allowed the through the City's Existing [Community Preference Policy](#).**
 - 5a. Work with nonprofit and community-based organizations to tailor community preference policies for each eligible Downtown neighborhood.

Cultural and Commercial Anti-Displacement Strategies

6. **Develop and Implement a Small Business Assistance Program in Anticipation of Planned Transit and Other Infrastructure Improvements.**
 - 6a. Partner with Sound Transit, other public sector agencies, and private funders to create a comprehensive business assistance and anti-displacement program modeled on the example of the [Central Corridor Funders Collaborative](#) in Minneapolis-Saint Paul.
 - 6b. Design a tailored program to provide small businesses and community institutions with support such as legal assistance, marketing assistance, new signage, and financial resources such as grants or forgivable loans.
 - 6c. Prioritize assistance efforts to support BIPOC- and immigrant-owned businesses.
 - 6d. Provide technical assistance to new and existing businesses and community organizations to qualify for Equitable Development Initiative funding, ensuring that proposed projects meet the six key Equity Drivers outlined in the [Implementation Plan](#).
7. **Increase Funding and Support for Existing BIAs and Nonprofits Serving At-Risk Neighborhood Business Districts.**
 - 7a. Work with existing BIAs in Pioneer Square and the CID to provide increased financial and technical support for small businesses, including but not limited to: rent support and mitigation; renovations and improvements; and special events and attractions to draw increased visitation and spending.
 - 7b. Support the [Little Saigon 2030 Action Plan](#)
 - 7c. Convene a working group of existing organizations to study the feasibility of using community land trusts, Equitable Development Initiative funds, and/or other community development financing tools to acquire and improve existing commercial properties.
8. **Consider Adopting Commercial Preservation Zones for Business Districts and Corridors at High Risk of Displacement.**
 - 8a. Conduct a study to determine the feasibility and economic impacts of creating commercial preservation zones in the CID generally and Little Saigon specifically.
 - 8b. As a strategy for addressing both commercial and cultural displacement, work with commercial property owners of underutilized warehouse and light

industrial buildings to consider the feasibility and economic impacts of preserving these buildings for future use as entertainment venues, and/or production, distribution and repair businesses.

Appendix A: Commercial Preservation Zone Case Studies

Cities across the United States have utilized zoning overlays as a method to both promote and control new development within specific neighborhoods. Zoning can be a powerful community and commercial preservation tool, helping to ensure that existing businesses can stay in place and that any new development is consistent with the existing neighborhood. Preservation zoning can include urban design guidelines, prioritizing certain commercial uses, or emphasizing a specific cultural heritage in the planning process.

Case Studies

San Francisco Cultural Districts

“[The Cultural Districts program](#) is a place-making and place-keeping program that preserves, strengthens and promotes cultural communities. There are ten Cultural Districts located across San Francisco, each embodying a unique cultural heritage. The program is a partnership between community and City and is coordinated by the Mayor’s Office of Housing and Community Development, in collaboration with the Office of Economic and Workforce Development, SF Planning, and Arts Commission.” The Cultural Districts have their own Special Area Design Guidelines, to ensure that the design elements respond to the unique characteristics¹.

Boston Chinatown Rezoning

“Since the late 19th century, Boston’s Chinatown has been a gateway for generations of immigrants and families, and the neighborhood continues to be a hub for housing, business and employment opportunities, education and resource sharing, and social and cultural connectivity. The purpose of the Chinatown Rezoning process is to work with community members to identify key neighborhood assets, such as housing, commercial development, and cultural spaces, which are necessary for the continued success of Chinatown, and establish zoning regulations for land uses and dimensions that ensure the protection and promotion of such developments.” Learn more: www.bostonplans.org/planning-zoning/zoning-initiatives/chinatown-rezoning-process

New York City Special Purpose Districts

“The City Planning Commission has been designating special zoning districts since 1969 to achieve specific planning and urban design objectives in defined areas with unique characteristics. Special districts respond to specific conditions; each special district designated by the Commission stipulates zoning requirements and/or zoning incentives tailored to distinctive qualities that may not lend themselves to generalized zoning and standard development.”

¹ An example of these [guidelines for 24th Street](#) is an example of this strategy.

Some of the special purpose districts are focused on incentivizing new development, both commercial and residential, while others are focused on preservation of commercial uses and historic character.

Learn more: <https://www.nyc.gov/site/planning/zoning/districts-tools/special-purpose-districts.page>

Los Angeles Local Historic Districts

“The City’s local historic districts program aims to identify and protect the distinctive architectural and cultural resources of Los Angeles’s historic neighborhoods. Designating a neighborhood as a local historic district—also called a Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ)—means that any new projects in that neighborhood must complement its historic character. Like other zoning overlays, HPOZs provide an additional layer of planning control during the project review process. All exterior work proposed in an HPOZ, including landscaping, alterations, additions, and new construction, is subject to additional review. Each district has a Preservation Plan with design guidelines and an HPOZ Board that reviews proposed work. Some projects are reviewed at a staff level, while others also go to the district’s HPOZ Board for consultation and review.”

Learn more: <https://planning.lacity.gov/preservation-design/local-historic-districts>

Community Engagement Summary

Date: December 19, 2025

Prepared for: Seattle Downtown Regional
Center Plan

Prepared by: Agency Landscape + Planning

Downtown Seattle Urban Center

Engagement Summary

10.08.2024

The Downtown plan has engaged with several different audiences

Phase One Engagement

- 1 youth work session
- 4 pop-up events
- 4 small-group discussions (+ Tahoma Peak conversations underway)
- 2 artist-led event documentations
- 1 community workshop + survey

Phase Two Engagement

- 3 pop-up events
- 5 follow-up small-group discussions
- 1 draft plan workshop



Emerging Downtown Themes

More Collective Community Support

"PEOPLE NEED MORE HOUSING AND SHELTERS. IT IS DANGEROUS TO LIVE OUTSIDE AS AN UNHOUSED PERSON"

"LOVE AND CARE"

"THERE IS A HIGH MENTAL COST TO HAVING TO WORRY ABOUT WHAT KINDS OF INTERACTIONS YOU MIGHT HAVE ON A DAILY BASIS"

"MAKE SURE DOWNTOWN IS NOT A FOOD DESERT"

"MORE SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR DRUG USERS"

"SUPPORT FOR HOMELESS AND NEEDY"

"CRIME, ESPECIALLY ALONG 3RD AVENUE IS BAD"

"NEIGHBORHOODS SUCH AS PIONEER SQUARE FEEL A SENSE OF WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER"

Keep Growing Downtown Activations

"MORE ACTIVITIES FOR ALL AGES, NOT JUST IN THE SUMMER"

"NOT ENOUGH KIDS PROGRAMMING"

"MORE CELEBRATION"

"MORE ARTS PROGRAMMING"

"THERE IS A LOT OF ACTIVATION HAPPENING AND I WANT TO SEE MORE OF THAT"

"FOCUS ENERGY AND VITALITY AT TRAIN STATIONS. FERRIES"

"PEOPLE NEED A REASON TO COME DOWNTOWN"

"HAVE STUFF DOWN HERE!"

"MORE ENTERTAINMENT, MORE BARS"

"MORE ACTIVITY!"

Put People First

"MORE PLAY GROUNDS AT GROUND LEVEL AND SKY LEVEL. PLUS MORE DAYCARE SERVICES AFFORDABLE FOR EVERYONE."

"THERE ARE FEWER PEOPLE AROUND WHICH HAS DOMINO EFFECTS FOR SAFETY AND LIVABILITY"

"IT'S GREAT TO SEE PEOPLE UTILIZING THE SIDEWALKS AND TAKING TRANSIT"

"WE NEED TO HAVE CLEAN STREETS SO THAT IT IS INVITING FOR FOLKS TO WANT TO COME IN"

"THE NEIGHBORHOODS FEEL LIKE THEIR OWN SMALL TOWNS"

"MORE PEOPLE FOCUSED!"

"WOULD LIKE TO WALK MORE"

"[WE NEED] A SENSE OF SAFETY FOR US TO ALLOW OUR CHILDREN TO ROOM FREELY ABOUT OUR NEIGHBORHOODS & DOWNTOWN"

"NOT EVERYONE IS WELL-SERVED BY TRANSIT AT THE MOMENT"

"POLICE ARE NOT RESPONSIVE"

"CENTRAL PARK OVER 1-5 / PLAY GROUNDS, LAWN WATER FEATURES, BALL FIELDS, RUNNING PATHS"

Go Big in Arts + Culture

"MANY AVAILABLE SPACES ARE TOO BIG FOR SMALL SHOPS"

"THE THING THAT I NEED MOST IS SPACE TO CREATE OUR ART"

"MORE SPACE FOR PEOPLE TO CREATE ART AND GATHER"

"I WOULD LIKE TO SEE OUR CITY BECOME MORE VIBRANT"

"WE NEED SOMETHING REALLY GENEROUS AND BIG AND IMPRESIVE"

"ART WALK MAP ACROSS THE ENTIRE CITY"

"NOT JUST FOR BUSINESS"

"WE NEED PERMANENT SPACE THAT WE CAN ACTUALLY OWN AND NOT JUST BE KICKED OUT OF WHEN A NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVES"

"MORE ART AND RETAIL OPPORTUNITIES TO BRING VIBRANCY TO THESE AREAS"

"THERE IS A LOT OF EQUIPMENT, MATERIALS, AND TOOLS THAT GO INTO THE THINGS THAT WE MAKE AND WE NEED SPACE FOR THOSE THINGS"

Make Processes Easier

"BUSINESSES CAN SIT ON EMPTY SPACE FOR UP TO A YEAR BC THEY ARE WAITING FOR PERMITS"

"LONG PERMIT LINES WITHOUT A CENTRAL POINT OF CONTACT"

"CULTURAL AREAS LIKE CID HAVE MANY BIPOC BUSINESSES, BUT THE REGULATIONS IN CULTURAL AREAS FEEL LIKE A CONCENTRATION OF BARRIERS"

"TOO MANY BOARDED UP BUSINESS SPACES"

"REDESIGN STREETS FOR LOW SPEED"

"WE NEED SUSTAINABLE SYSTEMS PUT IN PLACE FOR ARTISTS THROUGHOUT THE CITY"

"LAND ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT COSTS ARE JUST TOO HIGH TO MAKE MANY PROJECTS DOWNTOWN SEEM FEASIBLE"

Housing Downtown Leaves People Out

"DOWNTOWN SHOULD BE A LIVEABLE PLACE"

"MISSING SOME DIVERSITY IN THE TYPES OF PEOPLE WHO QUALIFY FOR HOUSING ASSISTANCE"

"THERE ARE A LOT OF UNOCCUPIED UPSTAIRS SPACE THAT WOULD MAKE GREAT HOUSING"

"IT'S TOO EXPENSIVE"

"CONVERT VACANT OFFICE SPACE INTO AFFORDABLE HOUSING!"

"WE ARE LEAVING BEHIND AGING, REFUGEE, ELDERLY AND LOW-INCOME WORKPOCE (50-80% AMI)"

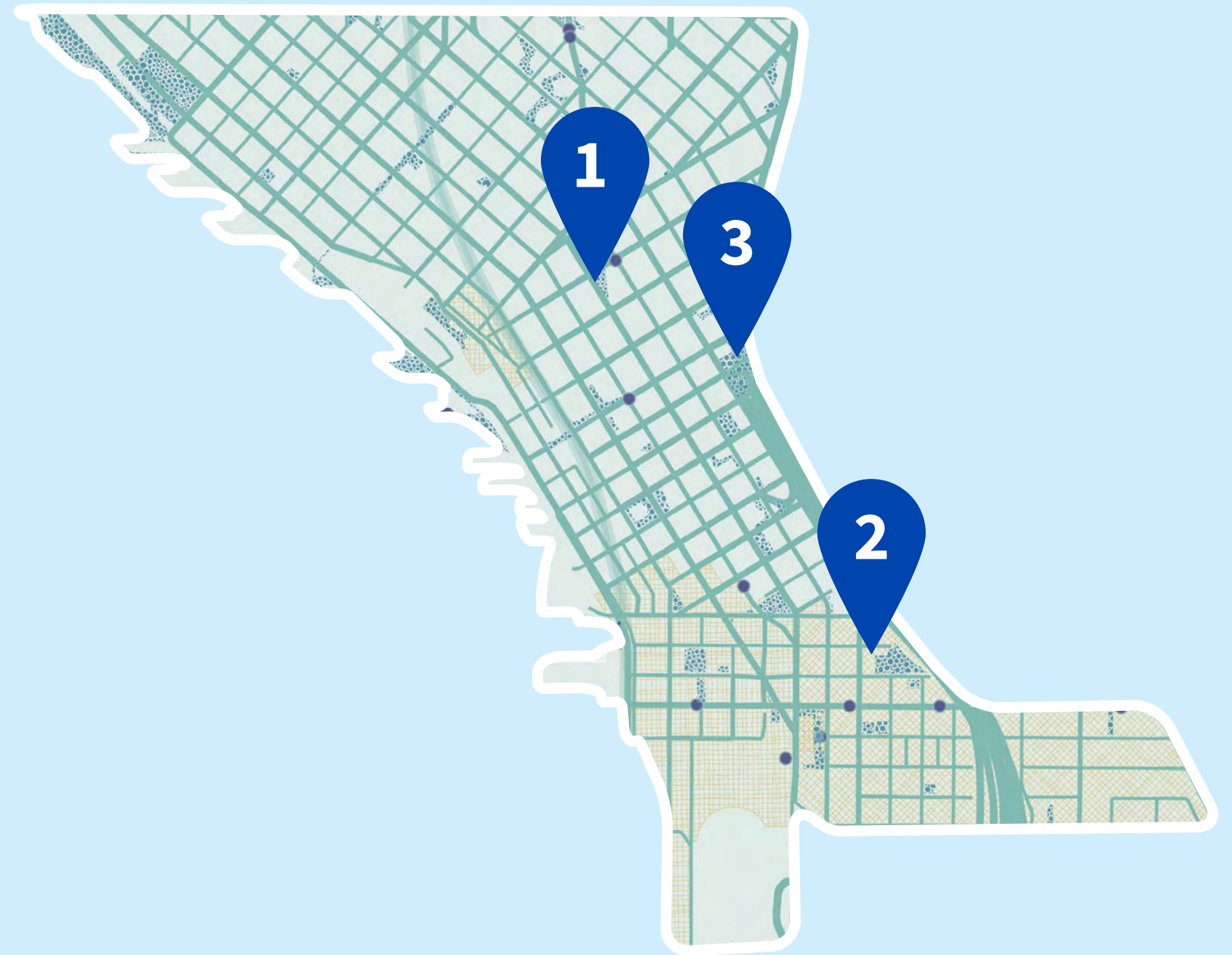
"COST OF LIVING MAKES IT HARD TO SET ANYTHING ASIDE"

"WE NEED MORE AND BETTER IDEAS ABOUT WHAT TO DO FOR [THE CITY'S] HOMELESS SITUATION"

Pop-Up Events

Pop-up events at Westlake Park¹, Hing Hay Park² and the Lantern Festival³ drew in **91** community comments.

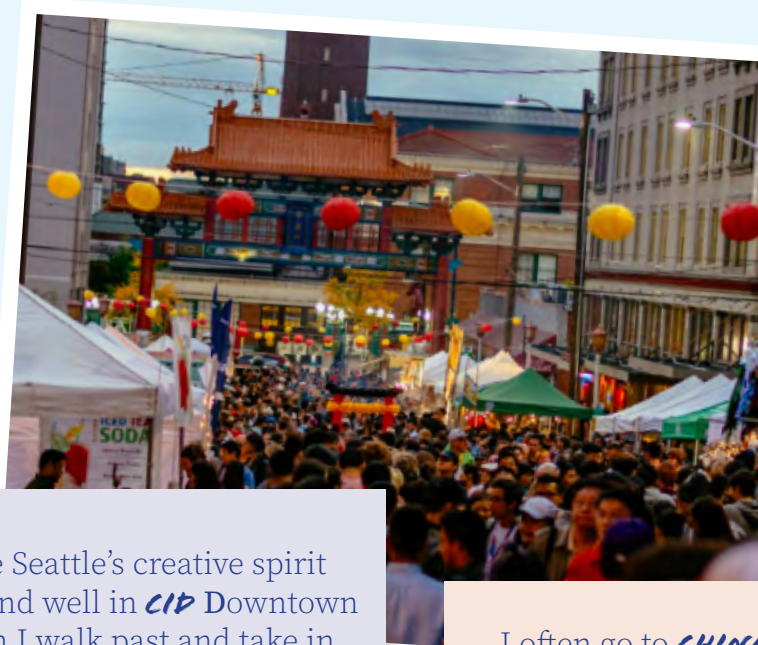
Conversations with community members focused on the need for **more arts & culture programming**, **support services for unhoused people**, the **high cost of living**.



1

Westlake Park Pop-Up

- ▶ Downtown should have more support for unhoused people
- ▶ There should be programming and activities year-round
- ▶ Downtown needs more culturally-inclusive spaces
- ▶ This should be an actionable plan



I see Seattle's creative spirit alive and well in **CID** Downtown when I walk past and take in **WINGLUKE MUSEUM**. If only we had more **CULTURALLY ROOTED GALLERIES** to celebrate our history, art, and culture more!

I often go to **CHINATOWN** because it has the best **NOODLES**. Downtown could use more **NIGHTLIFE** to support residents, workers, and visitors alike.

Today is **BRIGHT**. When I think about Downtown's future, I am inspired by **FOOD** and believe that this will make Downtown more inclusive of **CULTURE**.

"MORE ACTIVITY!"

"MORE ARTS PROGRAMMING"

"MORE ACTIVITIES FOR ALL AGES, NOT JUST IN THE SUMMER"

Today is **STRUGGLING**. When I think about Downtown's future, I am inspired by **BUSINESS RE-OPENING** and believe that this will make Downtown more inclusive of **ALL PEOPLE**.

I Live with my **FAMILY + DOG** in **BALLARD**. My home is **COMFORTABLE**. I wish Downtown had **MORE** housing for **EVERYONE TO HELP SOLVE THE CRISIS**.

"PEOPLE NEED MORE HOUSING AND SHELTERS. IT IS DANGEROUS TO LIVE OUTSIDE AS AN UNHOUSED PERSON"



"SUPPORT FOR HOMELESS AND NEEDY"

"LOVE AND CARE"

"MORE SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR DRUG USERS"

"THIS SHOULD BE A PLAN FOR ACTION"

I often go to **THEATRE** because it has the best **PRODUCTIONS**. Downtown could use more **CLEANUP OF STREETS AND HOMELESS/DRUG ADDICT SUPPORT SERVICES** to support residents, workers, and visitors alike.

I often go to **PIKE PLACE** because it has the best **SPIRIT**. Downtown could use more **HUMAN SERVICES AND SUPPORT** to support residents, workers, and visitors alike.

Jobs Economy

Housing

Process

Arts/Culture

Hing Hay Park Pop-Up

- ▶ Cost of living/housing is too high
- ▶ Downtown feels focused on business
- ▶ There should be more entertainment, especially for kids
- ▶ Downtown is too car-centric

Today is **CAR CENTRIC** When I think about Downtown's future, I am inspired by **COPENHAGEN** and believe that this will make Downtown more inclusive of **BIKERS, WALKERS, ALL PEOPLE.**



"NOT JUST FOR BUSINESS"

"SHARE THE WEALTH"

"MORE PEOPLE FOCUSED!"

I see Seattle's creative spirit alive and well in **CHINATOWN** Downtown when I walk past and take in **FREE MOVIE NIGHTS.** If only we had more **MORE CULTURAL FOOD FESTIVALS AND PERFORMANCES** to celebrate our history, art, and culture more!



"HAVE STUFF DOWN HERE!"

"MORE ENTERTAINMENT, MORE BARS"

"NOT ENOUGH KIDS PROGRAMMING"

"I CURRENTLY GO OUT OF THE CITY TO DO FUN THINGS WITH KIDS"

"THE VIBE BRINGS PEOPLE HERE - DIVERSITY AND INNOVATION"

I Live with **MY PARENTS, SISTER, AND DOG** in **SINGLE-FAMILY HOME.** My home is **SPACIOUS WITH OUTDOOR SPACE.** I wish Downtown had **AFFORDABLE** housing for **EVERYONE.**

"**COST OF LIVING MAKES IT HARD TO SET ANYTHING ASIDE**"

I Live with **ALONE** in **APARTMENT.** My home is **SAFE SPACE/COMFORT.** I wish Downtown had **MORE WALKABLE AND GATHERING SPACE** housing for **ALL INCOMES, ESPECIALLY LOW-INCOME.**

I Live with **6 ROOMMATES** in **A HOUSE.** My home is **BUSTLING.** I wish Downtown had **MORE AFFORDABLE** housing for **EVERYONE.**

"**COST OF LIVING SHOULD BE LOWER**"

"**DOWNTOWN SHOULD BE A LIVEABLE PLACE**"

"**ITS TOO EXPENSIVE**"

Jobs Economy
Housing
Process
Arts/Culture

The Lantern Festival Pop-Up | Freeway Park

- ▶ Downtown could be more pedestrian-friendly
- ▶ More festivals/programing would draw people Downtown
- ▶ Downtown should be more inclusive of low-income people



"SEATTLE NEEDS COVERED WALKWAYS"

"WOULD LIKE TO WALK MORE"

Today is **GROWING** When I think about Downtown's future, I am inspired by **POTENTIAL** and believe that this will make Downtown more inclusive of **PEOPLE OF ALL SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS.**

I often go to **QFC** because it has the best **GROCERIES** Downtown could use more **FESTIVALS** to suport residents, workers, and visitors alike.



Today is **VIBRANT** When I think about Downtown's future, I am inspired by **ARTIST + CREATORS** and believe that this will make Downtown more inclusive of **VISITORS + LOCALS ALIKE.**

I Live with **GIRLFRIEND AND DOG** in **3-BEDROOM HOME.** My home is **GREEN.** I wish Downtown had **ABUNDANT** housing for **LOW-INCOME PEOPLE.**

I often go to **PIKE STREET PRESS** because it has the best **STUFF!** Downtown could use more **SOCIAL WORKERS** to suport residents, workers, and visitors alike.

Jobs Economy

Housing

Process

Arts/Culture

Transportation Plan Meeting Pop-Up

- ▶ Pedestrian friendly and transit accessible streets are a priority for residents
- ▶ Free public events and food trucks will help draw people in
- ▶ We are in a housing crisis and need to prioritize those that are unhoused in new development



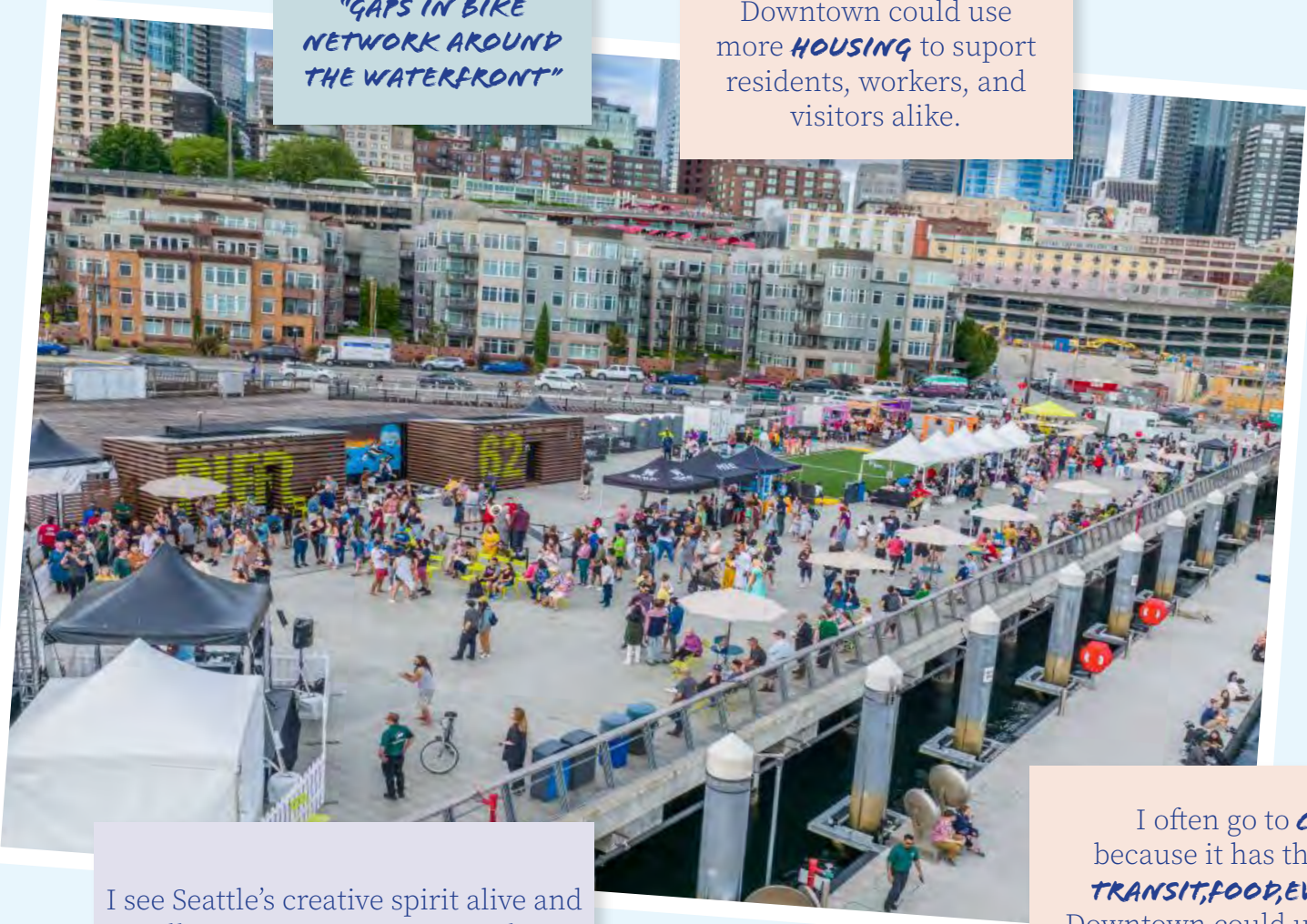
I see Seattle's creative spirit alive and well in **PIKE PLACE** Downtown when I walk past and take in **MARKET**. If only we had more **HISTORIC AREAS** to celebrate our history, art, and culture more!

"MORE FOOD TRUCKS"

"ZONING CODE IS TOO COMPLICATED"

I see Seattle's creative spirit alive and well in **CENTRAL DISTRICT** Downtown when I walk past and take in **SMALL BUSINESSES + ART**. If only we had **BETTER SERVICE FOR STREETS** to celebrate our history, art, and culture more!

I often go to **PIKE PLACE** because it has the best of **EVERYTHING** Downtown could use more **FOOD TRUCKS AND OPEN MARKETS** to support residents, workers, and visitors alike.



"GAPS IN BIKE NETWORK AROUND THE WATERFRONT"

I often go to **THE PIER** because it has the best **PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY** Downtown could use more **HOUSING** to support residents, workers, and visitors alike.

I see Seattle's creative spirit alive and well in **THE CID** Downtown when I walk past and take in **ALL THE STREET ART** If only we had **HOUSING FOR ALL** to celebrate our history, art, and culture more!

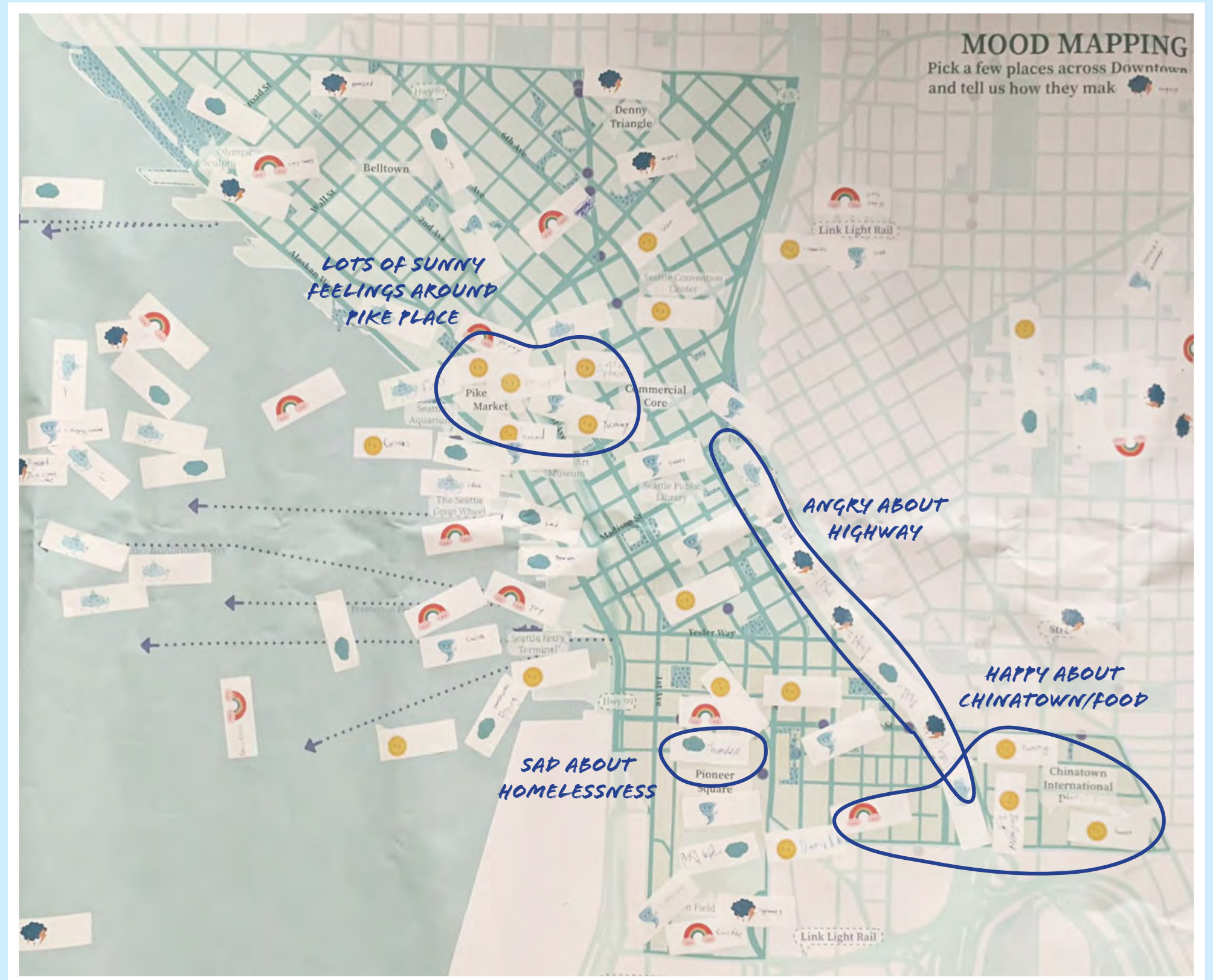
I often go to **CID** because it has the best **TRANSIT, FOOD, EVENTS** Downtown could use more **ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC EVENTS** to support residents, workers, and visitors alike.

I often go to **SAM** because it has the best **ART** Downtown could use more **SAFETY** to support residents, workers, and visitors alike.

- Jobs Economy
- Housing
- Process
- Arts/Culture

Youth Workshop

Youth visited the City of Seattle Planning Office and created a mood map of how they were feeling about specific parts of Downtown.



Artist-Led Event Documentations

LeLeita McKILL conducted interviews at the Seattle Arts Fair 2023 and Vivid Matter Collectives “Subway Cypher” Event in Occidental Square.

Conversations with artists focused on the need for more permanent space to create art, system-wide city investments, and the importance of activations to draw people in.



Jane Richlousky
Local Artist



Seattle Arts Fair

Jobs Economy

Housing

Process

Arts/Culture

- ▶ Street activation is important to drawing people into the patron the arts
- ▶ We need more creative solutions to help house people
- ▶ Downtown's arts scene is really important to the larger artistic community in Seattle
- ▶ Artists are currently supporting each other, but the City could do more to engage with this group

"WE NEED TO HAVE CLEAN STREETS SO THAT IT IS INVITING FOR FOLKS TO WANT TO COME IN"

"IT'S GREAT TO SEE PEOPLE UTILIZING THE SIDEWALKS AND TAKING TRANSIT"

"THERE ARE SO MANY FOLKS WHO ARE OUT THERE ... SUPPORTING THE ARTS AND SUPPORTING COMMUNITY"

"I LIVE AND WORK IN PIONEER SQUARE"

"EVEN ARTISTS THAT DON'T HAVE A STUDIO IN PIONEER SQUARE CAN STILL THINK OF IT AS THEIR ARTISTIC HOME"

"I DON'T FEEL THAT THE CITY IS ABLE TO TAP INTO THE ARTIST ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT"

"WE NEED SOMETHING REALLY GENEROUS AND BIG AND IMPRESIVE"

"WHY NOT HOUSE PEOPLE IN SOME OF THESE [EMPTY] SPOTS?"

"WE NEED MORE AND BETTER IDEAS ABOUT WHAT TO DO FOR [THE CITY'S] HOMELESS SITUATION"

"THERE IS A LOT OF ACTIVATION HAPPENING AND I WANT TO SEE MORE OF THAT"

"PEOPLE NEED A REASON TO COME DOWNTOWN"

"I WOULD LIKE TO SEE OUR CITY BECOME MORE VIBRANT"



Vivid Matter Collective

- ▶ Artists need more permanent space
- ▶ Artists need more space to actually create and build their artworks
- ▶ Art is what draws people into the city and it should be invested in at a system-wide level

"WE NEED SUSTAINABLE SYSTEMS PUT IN PLACE FOR ARTISTS THROUGHOUT THE CITY"

"WE NEED SPACE"

"WE NEED PERMANENT SPACE THAT WE CAN ACTUALLY OWN AND NOT JUST BE KICKED OUT OF WHEN A NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVES"

"MORE CELEBRATION"

"THE THING THAT I NEED MOST IS SPACE TO CREATE OUR ART"

"ARTISTS ARE THE BEST TENANTS BECAUSE WHEN WE FIND A PLACE THAT WE FEEL SAFE, WE WILL STAY THERE FOREVER"

"LETS SPEND SOME MONEY ON WHAT DRAWS PEOPLE INTO THE CITY"

"THERE IS A LOT OF EQUIPMENT, MATERIALS, AND TOOLS THAT GO INTO THE THINGS THAT WE MAKE AND WE NEED SPACE FOR THOSE THINGS"

"WHEN THEY TAKE AWAY MY PIECES THE WALLS LOSE PROTECTION"

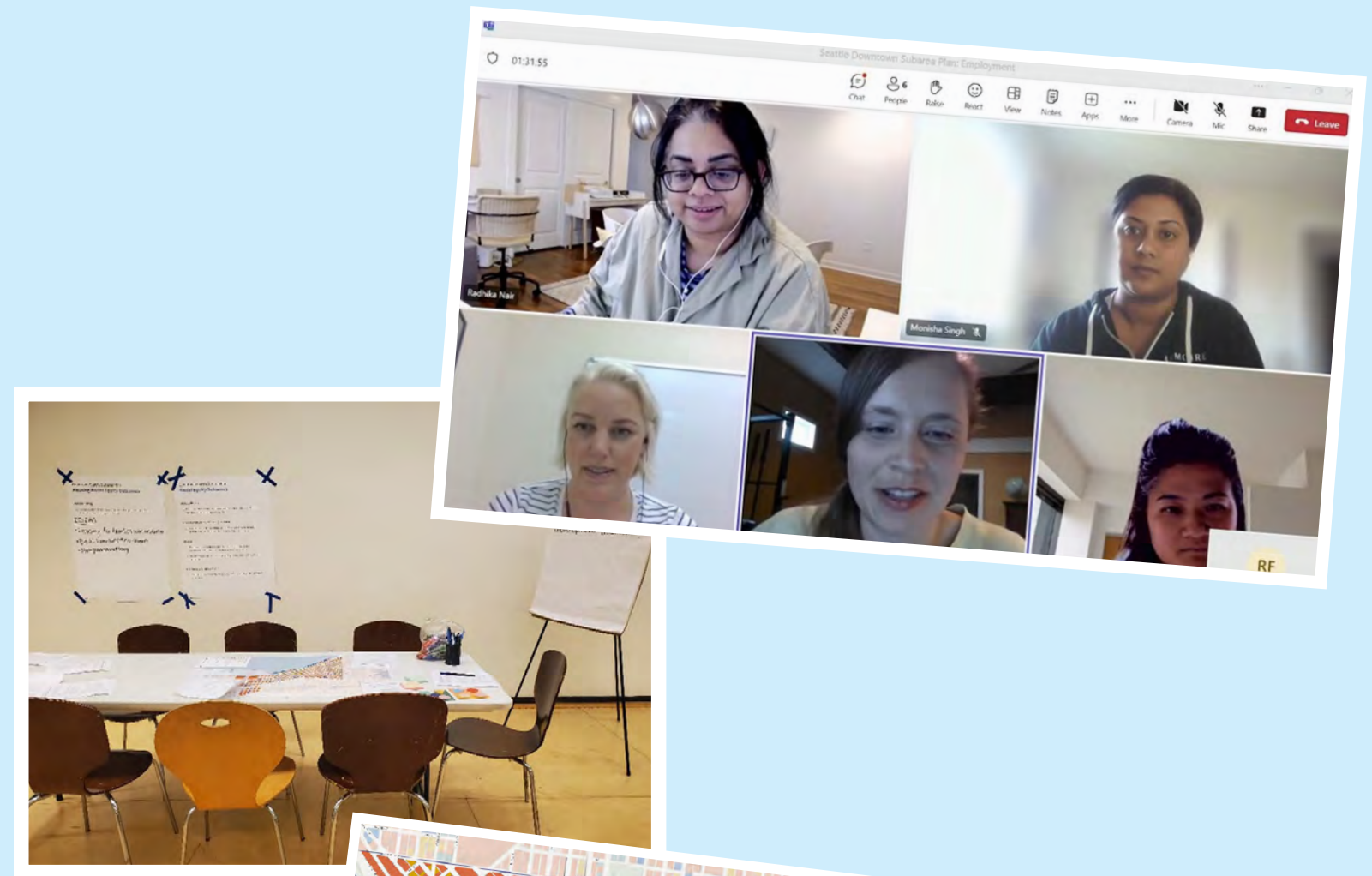
"MORE SPACE FOR PEOPLE TO CREATE ART AND GATHER"

Jobs Economy
Housing
Process
Arts/Culture

Small-Group Discussions

Small-group discussions took place around each of the Draft RET Outcome topics, as well as additional sessions around youth and indigenous perspectives.

These conversations focused on Downtown safety and perceptions of safety, need for different types of housing, strong community ties, and barriers to business operations.



Housing

- ▶ Safety for Downtown residents is a concern
- ▶ Improved neighborhood quality and nearby-services are needed to attract more families
- ▶ There is a need for many types of housing
- ▶ Preparing for seismic retrofits in the CID will be important
- ▶ We need to add more affordable housing in the areas with the best concentrations of resources

Housing Draft RET

Downtown offers diverse housing options that support where people are in their lives without creating a cost burden

What has worked well for you and your organization as you've looked to build or promote housing Downtown?

"PIKE PLACE MARKET AREA AND HOUSING HAVE BEEN WORKING WELL"

"THE DEVELOPMENT BONUS IS HELPFUL HERE"

"WE HAVE SOME PRESERVED SUBSIDIZED HOUSING UNITS IN SLU THAT FEEL IMPORTANT"

"IN THE CENTRAL AREA, LIHI PARTNERED WITH A CHURCH TO DO A TINY HOUSE VILLAGE, WHICH THEN TURNED INTO A PROJECT FOR MORE PERMANENT TRANSITIONAL HOUSING"

What challenges does your organization face?

"WE TALK TO A LOT OF PEOPLE AROUND 30% AMI FACING DISPLACEMENT RISK IN THE CID"

"NOT ENOUGH HEALTHY HOUSING OPTIONS: SOBRIETY FOCUSED OR FOR REFUGEE / IMMIGRANT GROUPS"

"LAND ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT COSTS ARE JUST TOO HIGH TO MAKE MANY PROJECTS DOWNTOWN SEEM FEASIBLE"

"IT IS DIFFICULT TO GET FUNDING FOR 30% AMI HOUSING IF YOU AREN'T ADDRESSING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS SPECIFICALLY"

"MISSING SOME DIVERSITY IN THE TYPES OF PEOPLE WHO QUALIFY FOR HOUSING ASSISTANCE"

"WE ARE LEAVING BEHIND AGING, REFUGEE, ELDERLY AND LOW-INCOME WORKFORCE (50-80% AMI)"

"THERE ARE FEWER PEOPLE AROUND WHICH HAS DOMINO EFFECTS FOR SAFETY AND LIVABILITY"

"CRIME, ESPECIALLY ALONG 3RD AVENUE IS BAD"

"POLICE ARE NOT RESPONSIVE"

"EVERYTHING IS TIED TO LIHTC BUT THAT DOESN'T MEET ALL NEEDS"

Employment Access

- ▶ Health and safety, as well as transportation into Downtown are concerns for businesses
- ▶ The City should review it's own barriers to starting and opening businesses
- ▶ Various Downtown neighborhoods operate under different regulatory frameworks and varying levels of access to capital
- ▶ There is a strong sense of community support among business owners
- ▶ Foot-traffic of office workers has not returned
- ▶ The City should be strategic around priority corridor investments

Employment Access Draft RET

Downtown is a center for businesses - of all sizes - that create financial opportunity and stability for entrepreneurs, owners and employees.

What aspects of Downtown make it a good place to work or do business?



What makes Downtown a challenging place to work or do business?



Arts and Culture

- ▶The City needs to demonstrate a sustained, increased, and coordinated commitment to the arts world
- ▶Space is needed - all kinds, all sizes
- ▶Artists aren't fairly compensated for their work
- ▶Safety concerns are growing
- ▶Construction projects are long and disruptive
- ▶Center racial equity and bring Black, Indigenous, and Brown artists back home Downtown

Arts and Culture Draft RET

A thriving, creative community lives in, works in, and shapes the Downtown experience.

What has worked well for your organization as you have promoted/created/experienced art Downtown?



What challenges does your organization face?



Youth

- ▶ More spaces where kids can just hang out
- ▶ Youth are a transit-dependant population
- ▶ Safety for kids, both experienced and perceived is important
- ▶ If we want families to live Downtown, we need mixed-income housing and public schools
- ▶ Youth need to see themselves Downtown
- ▶ Downtown has many identities

Process Draft RET

There are clear and direct connections between diverse lived experiences of Downtowners and the plan recommendations.

The Downtown Plan policies and projects prioritize historically excluded communities.

What has worked well for your organization as you've worked Downtown?

"DOWNTOWN IS THE CENTER FOR MANY WRAPAROUND SOCIAL SERVICES AND THERE IS HOPE FOR CONTINUING TO BUILD OUT SPACES FOR YOUTH, WHO RELY ON THESE SERVICES TO JUST HANG OUT"

"DOWNTOWN LOCATIONS ARE GOOD CONVENING LOCATIONS"

"MANY DOWNTOWN LOCATIONS FEEL FANCY AND INSPIRE STUDENTS TO THINK OF THEMSELVES WORKING IN SKYSCRAPERS"

"TRANSPORTATION ACCESS IS STRONG, WHICH ALLOWS FOR A WIDER REACH FOR YOUTH AND VOLUNTEERS"

"TEENS AND FAMILIES TAKE ADVANTAGE OF FREE/LOW COST PROGRAMMING - LIKE THE WATERFRONT CONCERT SERIES, LIBRARY EVENTS, TEEN TIX, AND KING ST EVENTS"

What challenges does your organization, or the youth you serve, face?

"TEENS JUST WANT TO STAND IN A CIRCLE AND TALK. IN MANY PLACES, THEY ARE RUN OUT AND MADE TO FEEL UNWELCOME"

"THE TIME AFTER SCHOOL, BUT BEFORE PARENTS ARE HOME FROM WORK IS AN IMPORTANT WINDOW - WE NEED SPACES WHERE KIDS WHO ARE NON-CULTURE CONFORMING FEEL WELCOME"

"WHO IS AT THE TABLE IS REALLY IMPORTANT SO THAT IT'S NOT JUST THE SAME ORGS GETTING RECOGNIZED ALL THE TIME"

"[WE NEED] SAFE SPACES THAT ARE FREE AND DECRIMINALIZED"

"FEELS LIKE SO MANY ORGS ARE FIGHTING OVER THE SAME, SMALL NUMBER OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES"

"PARENTS OF YOUTH, PARTICULARLY OF IMMIGRANT BACKGROUNDS ARE NOT COMFORTABLE SENDING THEIR KIDS DOWNTOWN"

"SPACES NEED TO BE YEAR-ROUND (AKA INDOOR AND/OR COVERED AND HAVE BASIC FACILITIES"

"THINGS LIKE BETTER WAYFINDING AND FREE TRANSIT IS IMPORTANT"

"NEED MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO MEET UP IN AN INTENTIONAL AND FACILITATED WAY"

Downtown Workshop 03

On February 15th, more than **120 participants** gathered to exchange ideas and establish priorities that will shape the Downtown Seattle Plan.

The workshop was structured around “a day in the life”. Participants walked through activity stations based on different times of the day and how they move thorough the city at those times.

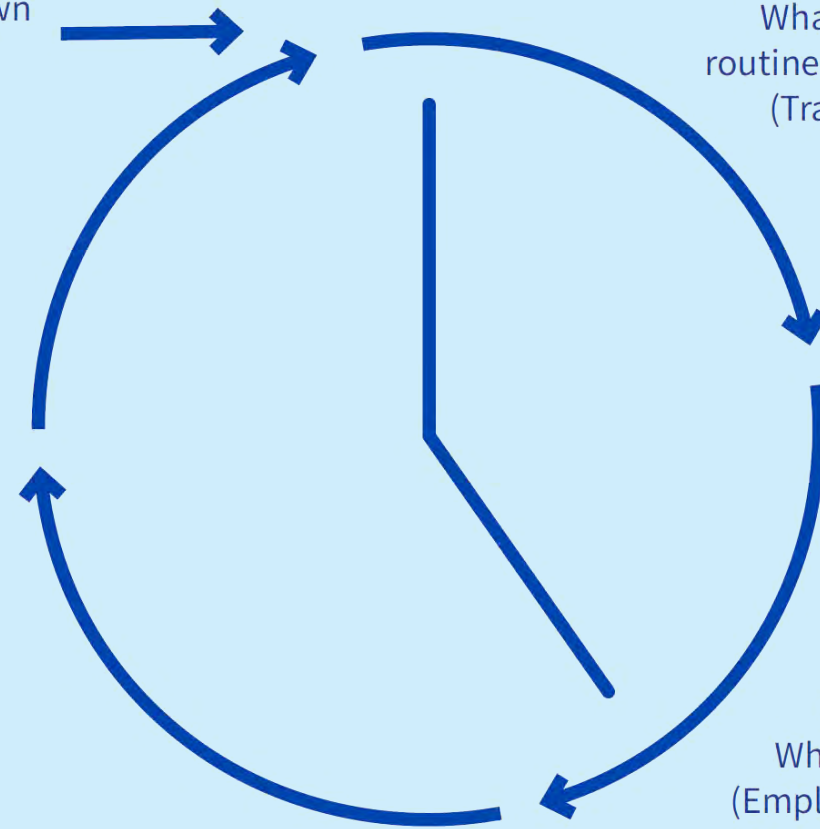
540 ideas were shared with post-it notes and flags!

1. Intro Station
Information about what a Subarea plan is, Downtown 101, Plan timeline.
(Process)

4. Evening
Where is your favorite place to eat or shop? Do you like to see shows?
(Arts + Culture)

2. Morning
What is your home like?
Who do you live with?
(Housing)
What is your daily routine and destination?
(Transportation)

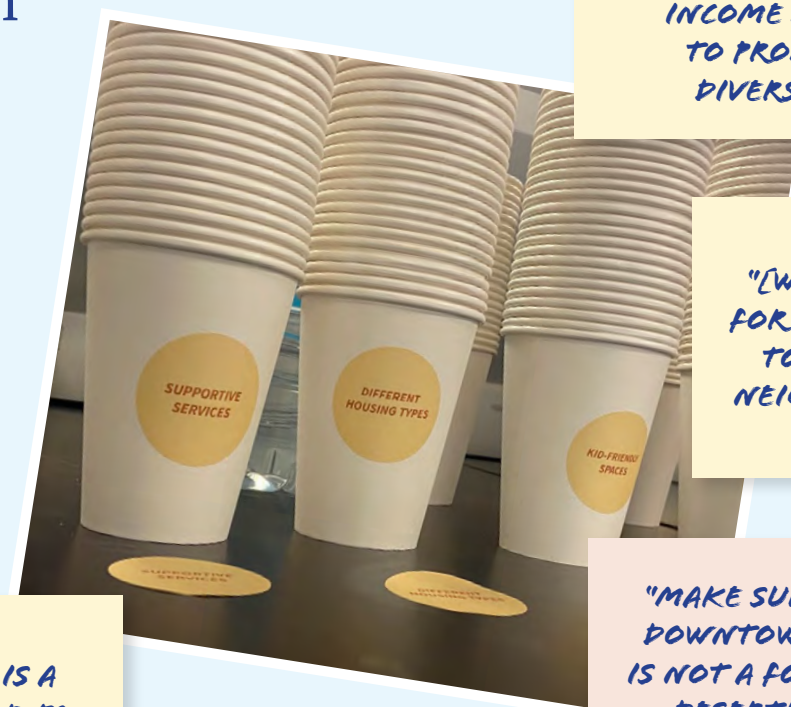
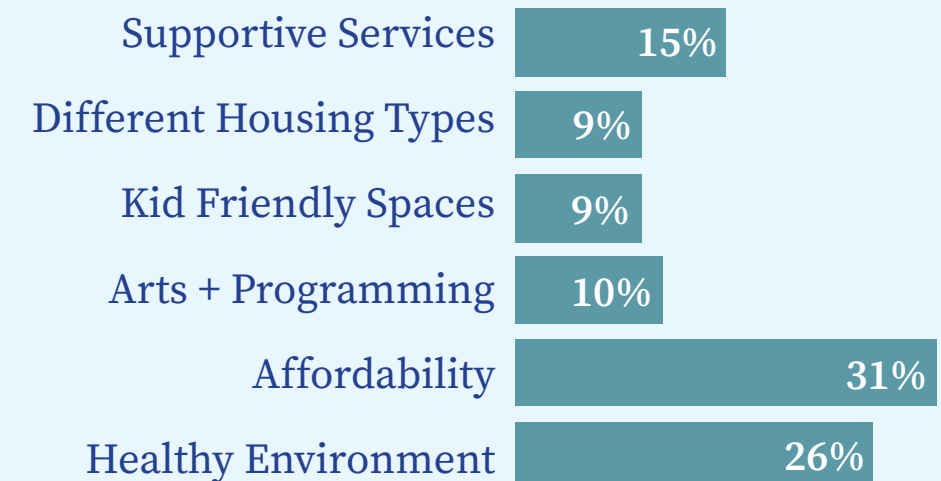
3. Daytime
Where do you work?
(Employment) Do you run errands at the library, post office, play at the park?
(City Services)



Morning Station (Housing/Transportation)

- ▶ Ensuring that housing in Downtown is affordable is a primary concern
- ▶ Everyday amenities, such as grocery stores are needed to support Downtown housing
- ▶ More programming, activities, and green space are needed to draw families to live Downtown
- ▶ There are empty spaces in Downtown that are not being fully utilized and could be better used for housing
- ▶ More services for unhoused people, such as day shelters are needed
- ▶ Families with children do not currently feel safe Downtown
- ▶ Support is needed for the diverse populations that currently live Downtown

What does Downtown need to be a great place to live?



"AVOID TOO MANY HIGH-INCOME DEVELOPMENTS. LOW INCOME SEEMS TO PROMOTE DIVERSITY."

"[WE NEED] A SENSE OF SAFETY FOR US TO ALLOW OUR CHILDREN TO ROOM FREELY ABOUT OUR NEIGHBORHOODS & DOWNTOWN"

"CONVERT VACANT OFFICE SPACE INTO AFFORDABLE HOUSING!"

"MORE PLAY GROUNDS AT GROUND LEVEL AND SKY LEVEL. PLUS MORE DAYCARE SERVICES AFFORDABLE FOR EVERYONE."

"COST IS A BARRIER TO LIVING HERE"

"MAKE SURE DOWNTOWN IS NOT A FOOD DESERT"

"THERE ARE A LOT OF UNOCCUPIED UPSTAIRS SPACE THAT WOULD MAKE GREAT HOUSING BUT NEEDS INCENTIVES FROM LANDLORDS"

Daytime Station

(Land Use, Employment, City Services)

- ▶ There is a lot of interest and support for the I-5 lid project
- ▶ More places for passive recreation
- ▶ A community center that can operate regardless of the weather
- ▶ Pedestrian-first streets and traffic calming would make people feel safer
- ▶ Excitement for increased transit connections and worries about lack of a CID station
- ▶ Perception of Downtown vitality is tied to ground floor retail activity



"USE UNDER-UTILIZED SPACES FOR POP-UP BUSINESSES. REDUCE PERMITTING BARRIERS"

"FOCUS ENERGY AND VITALITY AT TRAIN STATIONS, FERRIES"



"DOWNTOWN NEEDS A FULL-SIZE COMMUNITY CENTER"

"CENTRAL PARK OVER I-5! PLAY GROUNDS, LAWN WATER FEATURES, BALL FIELDS, RUNNING PATHS"

"REDESIGN STREETS FOR LOW SPEED"

"TOO MANY BOARDED UP BUSINESS SPACES"

Evening Station (Arts + Culture)

- ▶ Increase the availability of public facilities, such as public restrooms
- ▶ Expand opportunities to explore Seattle's diverse history and culture
- ▶ Provide more temporary retail options, such as food trucks, night markets, and sidewalk busking
- ▶ Establish sustainable funding and support mechanisms for artists and small businesses
- ▶ Enhance Downtown's nighttime economy
- ▶ Activate public spaces through concerts, performances, markets, and community events

"OPPORTUNITIES FOR SMALL BIZ/ARTISTS SOLOPRENEURS TO SHARE RETAIL SPACE"

"BUSKER PROGRAM"

"ART WALK MAP ACROSS THE ENTIRE CITY"

"MORE PUBLIC RESTROOMS"

"DOWNTOWN SHOULDN'T FEEL CLOSED AT 8 PM"

"MORE ART AND RETAIL OPPORTUNITIES TO BRING VIBRANCY TO THESE AREAS"

"HISPANIC PIONEER SQUARE & CHINATOWN ARE SEATTLE TREASURES"

"STORE FRONT REPAIR PROGRAM + MAXIMIZE PUBLIC SPACE ACTIVATION"

"ACTIVITIES - WELL LIT"

"MORE POP-UP CONCERTS / PERFORMANCES IN PUBLIC SPACES"

"SUSTAINABLE FUNDING FOR DOWNTOWN ARTS ORG THAT BRING VISITORS AND BOLSTER DOWNTOWN'S AFTER-WORK ECONOMY!"

"MAKE IT WORK FOR PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN DOWNTOWN"



Downtown Outreach

Arts and Culture

Design in Public
Seattle Art Museum
Seattle Parks Foundation
Washington Multicultural Services
Seattle Urban Natives Nonprofits
Visit Seattle
Friends of Waterfront Seattle
Seattle Symphony
Arte Noire
Good Arts Building
Path with Art
Shunpike
The Cultural Space Agency
Totem Star
Urban Artworks
Whipsmart

Freeway Park Association

The Stadiums

Visit Seattle

Seattle Center/ Office of The Waterfront

Friends of Waterfront Park

Community Groups

FANHS Seattle

Hmong Association of Washington

Friends of Little Sài Gòn

Ethiopian Community in Seattle

EchoX

Feet First

Seattle Chinatown International District
Preservation and Development Authority
(SCIDpda)

Economic Development + Employment

CIDBIA

Commute Seattle

Pike Place Market PDA/Downtown District

Leadership Tomorrow

Belltown Housing and Land Use Committee

Pioneer Square Community Association

Pike Place Market Foundation

Alliance for Pioneer Square

CIDBIA

Pastry Project

Seattle Chinatown International District
Preservation and Development Authority
(SCIDPDA)

Seattle Restored

Pay Up Campaign

The Chamber

Safco Field

Downtown Outreach

Housing

Senior Services

Seattle Works

AIA

Downtown Seattle Families

Compass Housing Alliance

Housing Development Consortium

CDA

Low Income Housing Institute

Pike Place PDA - Senior Housing

Indigenous Groups

Chief Seattle Club

Seattle Indian Health Board

Urban Indian Health Institute

Red Eagle Soaring

Potlatch Fund

Muckleshoot Fishers and Food Producers

Land Use + Development

Office of the Mayor

Downtown Seattle Association

Forterra

Museum Development Authority

Sightline

PSRC Regional Equity Network

APA

Historic Seattle PDA

King County

ULI

Seattle Chinatown/International District
PDA

UW Runstad Center

Historic South Downtown

Seattle University Center for Community
Engagement

Religious Groups

Seattle Choeizan Enkyoji Buddhist Temple

Diamond Way Buddhist Center

Christ Our Hope Catholic Church

Trinity Episcopal Parish

Chabad of Downtown Seattle

Gethsemane Lutheran Church

Downtown Muslim Association of Seattle

Muslim Association of Puget Sound

Transportation

Seattle Transit Blog

Commute Seattle

Washington Bus The Port

WSDOT

Youth

Creative Advantage

Minds Matter Seattle

Skate like a girl

YMCA

Media + Communications

News + Blogs

Seattle Chinatown International District

DSA News

PubliCola

OPCD Blog/News

Junglecity.com

Events12 - Seattle

Seattle Weekly / Onebox Scene Think

The Seattle Medium

Northwest Asian Weekly

North American Post

Crossings TV Seattle

The Facts

International Examiner

Converge Media

SEAToday

Fil Am Chronicle

Social Media + Bulletins

South Seattle Emerald Events Page

Japanese in Seattle!

Friends and Neighbors in Cap Hill/Central District/Downtown Facebook

Downtown Dwellers Facebook

SLU, Lower Queen Anne, Uptown, Cap Hill, Belltown, Downtown Facebook

Vietnamese in Seattle Facebook Group

Somali Bridge - WA

Nextdoor - Downtown Seattle

The Evergrey

Seattle Department of Neighborhoods Newsletter

Friends of the Market Newsletter

Alliance for Pioneer Square BIA Newsletter

Seattle Polish News Newsletter

Seattle Housing Authority: The Voice

Tu Decides/You Decide

Alzagil Media

Oromia Freedom Media

OPCD Meetings & Events

Seattle.gov Submit Events

Downtown Workshop 02

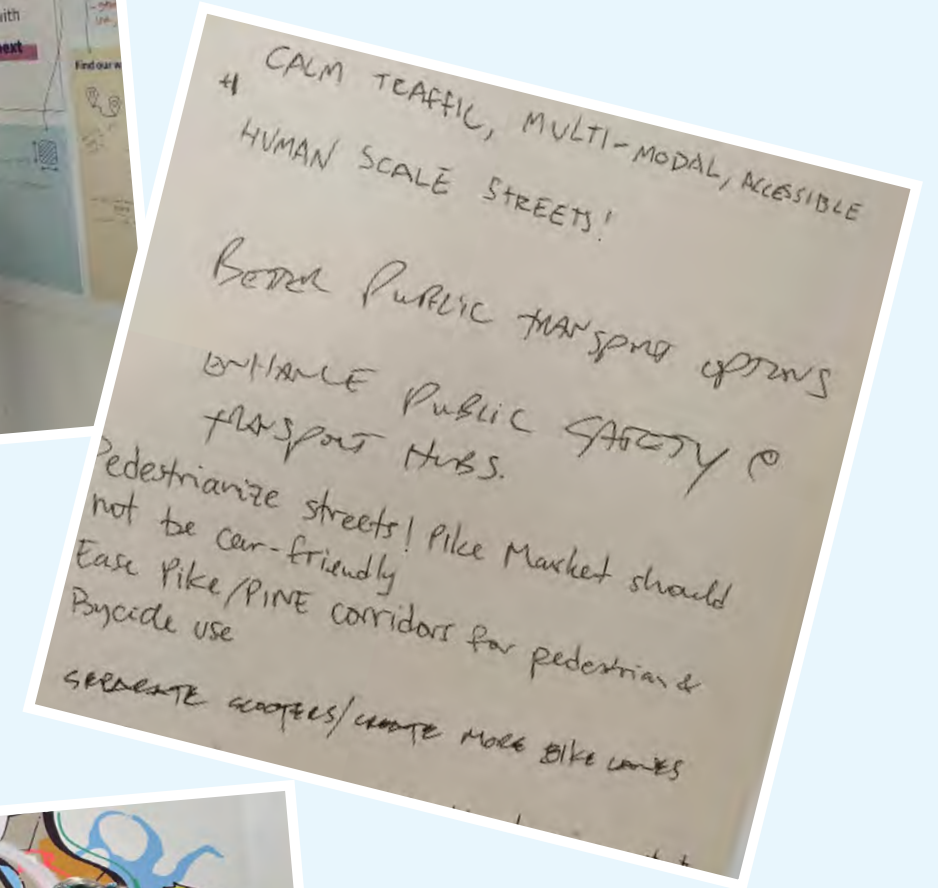
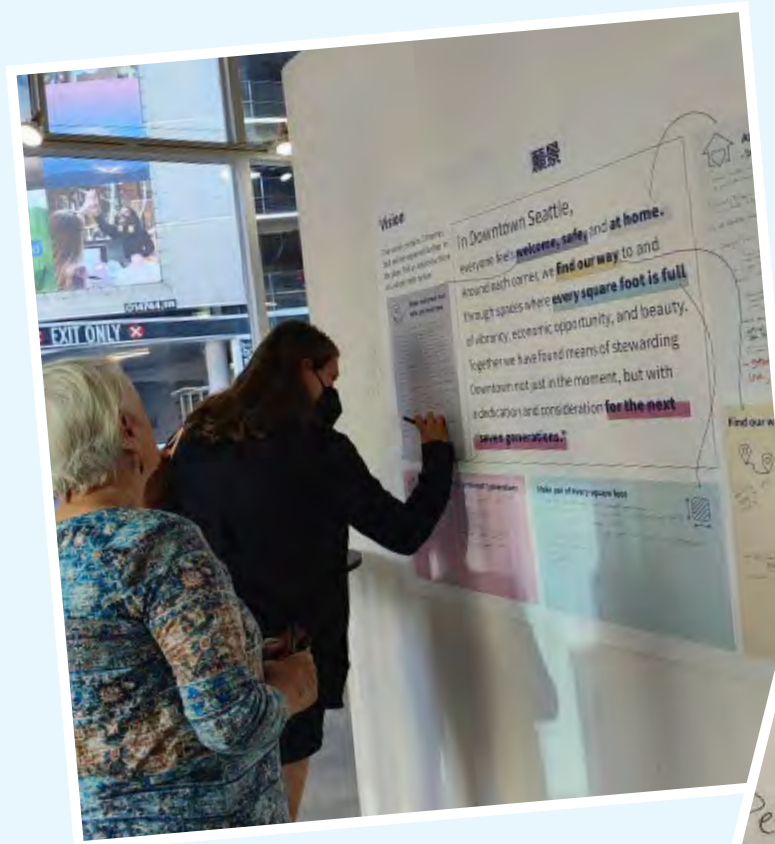
On September 24th, more than **120 participants** gathered help craft goals and policy directions for Downtown Seattle.

The workshop led participants through a several stations that centered around the 5 main components of the draft vision. Over **355** comments were shared.



Vision

In Downtown Seattle,
everyone feels **welcome, safe,** and **at home.**
Around each corner, we **find our way** to and
through spaces where **every square foot is full**
of vibrancy, economic opportunity, and beauty.
Together we have found means of stewarding
Downtown not just in the moment, but with a
dedication and consideration **for the next**
“seven generations.”



Make everyone feel safe and welcome



Make use of every square foot



At home Downtown



Find our way



Steward our home for the next 7 generations

Source: City of Seattle and Tahoma Peak Solutions, Indigenous Inclusivity Guide

Vision

- ▶ Participants shared constructive ideas to ground the vision statement, often sharing how they imagined each theme could be successful.
- ▶ The most commented themes on the vision board were welcome, safe and at home Downtown.
- ▶ Ideas ranged from policies to encourage balanced, affordable development, to projects that amplify indigenous voices and programs to support the unhoused.

Most Comments on Vision Board

Make everyone feel safe and welcome

15

At home Downtown

13

Find our way

10

Make use of every square foot

10

Steward our home for the next 7 generations

8

"EXPAND ACCESS TO
RESOURCES SO OUR
UNHOUSED NEIGHBORS
CAN GET SUPPORT"

"ENCOURAGE
MORE LOCAL
SMALL BUSINESS
PERMITTING"



Vision

Make everyone feel safe and welcome

- ▶ In order for people to feel safe Downtown, it needs to be activated
- ▶ Unhoused people need supportive services and help, rather than regulation
- ▶ Street ambassadors are an important community safety resource
- ▶ A public realm that is cared for (well-lit and maintained) would make people feel safer Downtown
- ▶ Representation of cultures, especially Indigenous culture, would make more people feel welcome

Top voted goals:

1. Activate Downtown parks for community-wide events [10]
2. Make Downtown safe for everyone, all hours of the day [9]
3. Provide recreation amenities for Downtown residents [8]



"MORE NATIVE AMERICAN
PRESENCE - ART, CULTURE,
BUSINESS"

"WE NEED MORE SOCIAL
WORKERS, NOT ARMED POLICE
TO DE-ESCALATE CONFLICT IN
NON-VIOLENT WAYS SO THAT
EVERYONE ACTUALLY FEELS
SAFE"

"MAKE IT MORE LIVABLE
BY IMPLEMENTING MORE
COMMON SPACE + PARKS"

"WE NEED
MORE STREET
AMBASSADORS"

"THERE IS A DIRE NEED
TO ACTIVATE DOWNTOWN
AGAIN"

Make everyone feel safe and welcome



●● 9 Make Downtown safe for everyone, all hours of the day

●●●●● 14 Continued to implement a focused approach to respond to safety and environmental concerns along 3rd Ave

●● 10 Improve accessibility, lighting, and safety

●●●● 9 Adopt an inclusive management approach to Downtown public spaces, with the intention to accommodate everyone's needs within a public health framework (such as providing access to drinking water, public restrooms, and safe needle disposal.)

●●● 8 Enhance community policing services and alternative response programs

NEED FOR 3RD AVENUE APPROACH TO BE INCLUSIVE AND SUPPORTIVE OF UNHOUSED COMMUNITY

"INVEST IN THE NIGHT TIME ECONOMY! NURSES, WORKERS, MUSICIANS!"

● 5 Wrap Downtown in a Green Embrace

●●●●● 18 Advance the vision for the I-5 Lid Park [Continue to explore the lidding of I-5 to create park spaces and pedestrian connections from Capitol Hill to Downtown (DAP)]

●● 10 Adapt land use regulations to further support activation of ground floors adjacent to the waterfront along Alaskan Way

●●●● 8 Reduce the impacts of steep slopes between the waterfront and other neighborhoods

● 6 Complete the full construction of the Seattle Waterfront by 2025 (DAP)

LOTS OF SUPPORT FOR THE I-5 LID!

"EMBRACE THAT MOMENT TO CONNECT TO CAPITOL HILL."

"MORE DISABLED ACCESS!"

Make everyone feel safe and welcome



2 Make Downtown welcoming and inclusive to all

- 17 Provide all-gender public restrooms in Downtown parks
- 11 Expand the role of arts in public spaces Downtown
- 9 Provide multilingual signage and communications in Downtown spaces, with an emphasis on indigenous naming



NEED FOR RESTROOMS
TO BE MAINTAINED AND
CLEANED AS WELL.

8 Provide recreation amenities for Downtown residents

- 10 Provide new neighborhood gathering spaces (indoor and outdoor)
- 9 Increase youth and all ages park amenities in existing and new Downtown parks, focusing first on areas that are taking on more residential units
- 7 Complete planned improvements to Downtown parks (DAP)
- 6 Increase access to community growing spaces or farmers' markets
- 5 Improve public water access and cooling areas by installing spray pads or water features in existing parks and plazas close to residential areas.
- 3 Partner to offer free, family-friendly programming at the Waterfront and in neighborhood spaces (DAP)

"DON'T FORGET EXERCISE
AND PROGRAMMING FOR
THE OLDER FOLKS"

"DOWNTOWN WILL
NOT BE FAMILY-
FRIENDLY UNTIL
[THERE IS A SCHOOL
DOWNTOWN]"

"MORE 3RD
PLACES
"PLACE
MAKING""

5 Reveal, celebrate, and protect Downtown's history and culture

- 11 Preserve Downtown's built history while enabling contemporary evolution
- 8 Add expand opportunities for musical performances across Downtown
- 5 Communicate and share Downtown's untold and unique stories, people and places



Make everyone feel safe and welcome



● 4 Increase park access as Downtown grows

- ▶● 7 Expand park access in areas with gaps: the CID, Belltown, and Denny Triangle (Seattle PR)
- ▶● 7 Create and advance new Gateway Parks, proximate to transit stations and gateways from other neighborhoods into Downtown.
- ▶● 7 Create a placemaking strategy to activate neighborhood alleyways
- ▶ 2 Explore partnerships to provide indoor recreation spaces
- ▶ 1 Seek opportunities to repurpose right of way for recreational opportunities, and advance the SDOT “Pavements to Parks” program Downtown

“WITH OUT PARKS, YOU DON'T HAVE A CITY THAT SUPPORTS FAMILIES”



IMPROVED PARKS AND RECREATION ARE NEEDED FOR FAMILIES

●● 10 Activate Downtown parks for community-wide events

- ▶●● 13 Continue to partner with non-profit organizations to deliver events and programming
- 9 Support community-driven activations and cultural celebrations Downtown (DAP)
- ▶● 7 Adapt and develop parks with flexible programming and events infrastructure (access to power, lawns, or flexible space)

AGREEMENT THAT FUNDING IS NEEDED FOR PARKS



“FUND THE PORTAL PARK”

“PARTNER WITH FOR PROFITS, TOO”

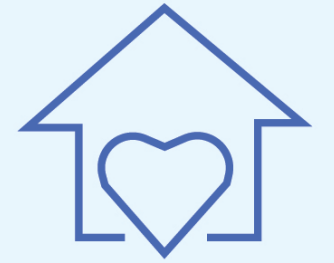
Vision

At home Downtown

- ▶ Remove barriers to development (including height and lot size restrictions)
- ▶ Support development of buildings with a mix of affordable and market rate units, as well as mixed uses on the ground floor
- ▶ Support for more daily services and amenities (grocery, school, parks)
- ▶ Desire for more unit types (that support families) and ownership opportunities

Top voted goals:

1. Support Downtown's unhoused residents with services, shelter and permanent housing [26]
2. Preserve and expand affordable and workforce housing [25]
3. Grow housing across all Downtown neighborhoods [23]



"REMOVE ROADBLOCKS IMMEDIATELY - FAST TRACK CONSTRUCTION"

"DESIGN FROM A CHILDREN AND FAMILY FIRST APPROACH"

"CREATE AFFORDABLE / MARKET RATE / MIDDLE INCOME HOUSING IN THE SAME BUILDING"

"DOWNTOWN / BELLTOWN IS A FOOD DESERT AND ALL CVS AND RITE-AID HAVE CLOSED"

"SUPPORT RESIDENTS LIVING IN DOWNTOWN"

"CREATE SPACES FOR CHILDREN TO PLAY"

At home Downtown



●●●●● 23 **Grow housing across all Downtown neighborhoods**

- 15 Simplify the housing production process and incentivize the creation of more diverse downtown residential units where appropriate
- 15 Allow more flexibility for residential development in areas of Downtown currently zoned “Downtown Office Core”
- 13 Reduce the regulatory and financial burdens of frequent energy code updates and seismic and energy upgrades in historic buildings through incentives and regulatory changes.
- 11 Encourage shared, district-level garage parking strategies to reduce project development costs and manage parking holistically
- 9 Convert existing commercial buildings to housing, with an emphasis on securing long-term affordable units

DISAGREEMENT ABOUT ROLE OF DESIGN REVIEW AND IF IT IS HELPFUL OR IF IT SLOWS HOUSING CREATION

“PROTECT HISTORIC BUILDINGS IN THE PROCESS”

“INCLUDE CULTURAL SPACES AND PROGRAMS WITHIN LIVING SPACES”

●●●●● 25 **Preserve and expand affordable and workforce housing**

- 13 Work with foundations, major employers, community-based organizations, and Community Development Financial Institutions to explore the feasibility of new grant and/or loan funds for affordable housing developments serving areas of Downtown with the highest socioeconomic needs
- 11 Support new forms of affordable and workforce housing ownership (community land trusts, cooperative or shared equity models, and co-housing)
- 7 Focus housing resources and programs toward protecting lower-income households in areas with high displacement risks, such as the CID and Pioneer Square



At home Downtown



Continued - **Preserve and expand affordable and workforce**

- ▶● 7 Expand the funding tools available to assist in creating long-term affordable housing, such as TIF districts
- 6 Retain existing affordable housing that exists Downtown today
- 4 Assess MHA requirements to support bringing additional larger scale housing units online

Evolve Downtown neighborhoods to be inclusive of the diverse needs of all residents and families.

- ▶●● 12 Support the creation of housing that provides a mix of units that support residents in different life stages (work-live housing, accessible senior housing, and family housing)
- ▶●● 12 Work with development projects to provide publicly accessible private open space that meets each neighborhood's goals and needs
- 9 Expand family-focused services and programming around housing clusters and transit, including childcare, basic neighborhood-serving retail, and play experiences.
- ▶● 7 Reinforce what makes each neighborhood Downtown special or unique

DIFFERING OPINIONS ABOUT MHA AND ITS IMPACT

"MHA NEEDS TO ENCOURAGE MIXED-INCOME HOUSING REGARDLESS OF A DEVELOPER."

"MAKE THE MHA REAL WHAT IS IT DOING NEEDS A LARGER IMPACT"

"ELIMINATE MHA!"

"THE CURRENT MHA IS TOO CHEAP!"

NEED FOR MORE PARKS AND BASIC AMENITIES DOWNTOWN

At home Downtown



Support Downtown's unhoused residents with services, shelter and permanent housing

●●●●● 26

- 8 Increase permanent housing assistance and transitional housing to support the need to rapidly rehouse people and help them stay housed.
- 8 Support the creation of a drop-in center or crisis services center.
- 6 Ensure that emergency shelter and day centers are safe and accessible for those who need it.
- 5 Ensure that housing alternatives are available for people who may not be candidates for traditional shelter accommodations (families, those with significant medical needs, people with pets, and others).
- 3 Collaborate with King County and Health Services to connect people to intensive services promoting housing and job stability.

SUPPORT FOR MORE ACCESS TO SOCIAL SERVICES AND FEAR OF OVER CONCENTRATION DOWNTOWN

"WORK WITH SOME OF THE NEEDS OF THE HOMELESS COMMUNITY TO ENSURE THAT THEIR VOICES ARE HEARD AND NEEDS ARE MET, SO THAT NEIGHBORHOODS ARE TRULY INCLUSIVE OF ALL RESIDENTS"

Partner with the private sector to advance innovations in new construction

●●●●● 14

- 16 Encourage construction techniques and materials that are cost-effective and efficient to build (Cross-laminated Timber buildings, volumetric modular, pre-fab)
- 11 Work with SDCI to increase the financial feasibility of sustainable building practices
- 8 Promote emerging green building and sustainable development practices

WORRY THAT PRIVATE SECTOR IS NOT PROVIDING QUALITY DESIGNED BUILDINGS

"DO NOT ELIMINATE DESIGN REVIEW FOR DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOODS"

"MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES SHOULD NOT BE BOTTOM OF THE BARREL IF WE WANT THE CITY TO LAST"

Vision

Steward our home for the next 7 generations

Source: City of Seattle and Tahoma Peak Solutions, Indigenous Inclusivity Guide

- ▶ Support building electrification
- ▶ Incentivize retrofitting historic buildings for natural disasters
- ▶ Need more access to green spaces and an increased tree canopy
- ▶ De-carbonization efforts need to happen across multiple sectors (construction, transportation, waste)

Top voted goals:

1. Celebrate Downtown's unique connection to water [17]
2. Ensure all Downtowners have access to resilient spaces [15]
3. Care for Downtown's water, land and natural resources [12]
4. Ensure Downtown assets are resilient to natural disasters and climate change impacts [12]



"DECARBONIZE /
ELECTRIFY BUILDINGS
IN DOWNTOWN"

"RETROFITTING / UPGRADING
HISTORIC FOR EARTHQUAKE
/ FLOOD / HEAT / NATURAL
DISASTER SAFETY"

"GREEN ROOFS AND
COMMUNITY GARDENS"

"7 GENERATIONS IS A
NATIVE TEACHING"

"PROVIDE CREDITS FOR
MICROMOBILITY IN
EXCHANGE TO RESIDENTS
GIVING UP THEIR
AUTOMOBILE HABITS"

"PRESERVE OUR LANDMARK
BUILDINGS - GIVE THEM
SPACE / LIGHT TO CONTINUE
TO SERVE AS AFFORDABLE
HOUSING AND SMALL
BUSINESS INCUBATORS FOR
THE NEXT GENERATION"

Steward our home for the next 7 generations

Source: City of Seattle and Tahoma Peak Solutions, Indigenous Inclusivity Guide



17 Celebrate Downtown's unique connection to water

- 15 Collaborate with Indigenous Tribes and local non-profits to broaden Downtown's historic and future engagement with water
- 11 Amplify and protect Downtown views of the water and surrounding mountain ranges
- 11 Effectively maintain existing water based design features and integrate water based design features and play into public space investment whenever possible
- 9 Leverage the waterfront's economic development value by balancing maritime industry needs with public waterfront access and experiences
- 5 Communicate the value of water resources, urban habitat, and ecological systems

"CONNECT WATERFRONT INITIATIVES WITH OTHER EFFORTS. ARTS + CULTURE, PUBLIC SAFETY"

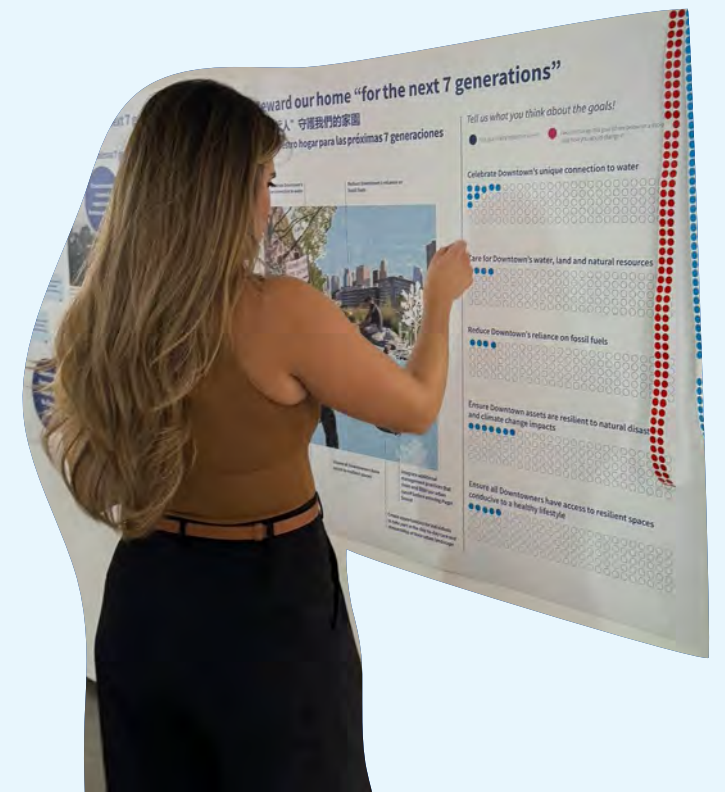
"INCLUDE DUWAMISH TRIBE"

12 Care for Downtown's water, land and natural resources

- 19 Reimagine Downtown streets as green corridors
- 18 Protect and expand Downtown's tree canopy
- 9 Manage stormwater responsibly to clean and minimize run-off into the Puget Sound
- 9 Reduce the strain on Downtown's combined sewer overflow and stormwater overflow facilities
- 5 Raise awareness about water quality through public art and resident programs
- 4 Explore ways to translate existing stormwater mitigation partnership programs with landowners to Downtown's unique, urban context

LOTS OF AGREEMENT TO CARE FOR WATER + NATURAL RESOURCES!

● = 5 upvotes ● = 1 change



Steward our home for the next 7 generations

Source: City of Seattle and Tahoma Peak Solutions, Indigenous Inclusivity Guide



●●● 10 Reduce Downtown's reliance on fossil fuels

●●● 13 Address buildings in need of seismic retrofits

●●● 12 Increase participation in the programs that reduce individual emissions (e.g. composting program, heating and cooling conversions)

●● 11 Explore a local power generation/district energy model and low pollution neighborhood model.

●● 11 Implement and expand sustainable building practices, including promotion of adaptive reuse.

●●●●● 10 Ensure new buildings achieve high environmental and emissions standards

●● 9 Work with the Port to continue shifting to an electrified fleet and facilities.

NOTE THAT THIS POLICY ALTERNATIVE SHOULD NOT IMPACT FEASIBILITY OF HOUSING PRODUCTION

Ensure Downtown assets are resilient to natural disasters

●●● 12 and climate change impacts

●●●● 14 Support electrification of WSDOT fleet as additional waterfront transportation options are explored

● 5 Collaborate with the Port to support the industrial maritime strategy

●●● 15 Ensure all Downtowners have access to resilient spaces

●●● 15 Expand resilience hubs beyond libraries, with a focus on increasing access in the CID and SODO

●●● 13 Integrate green stormwater and traditional land management alternatives in new development

●● 9 Address flooding in low-lying, flood prone streets and public spaces

"RECOGNIZE THAT AS SEATTLE'S DENSEST DISTRICT, DOWNTOWN HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE THE GREENEST AS WELL"

"MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL IS THE MOST EFFICIENT ENERGY USER FOR HOUSING"

"BE CREATIVE ABOUT THIS!"

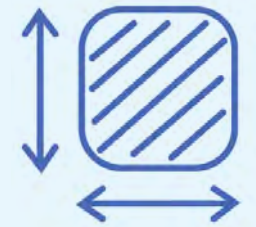
Vision

Make use of every square foot

- ▶ Encourage private property owners to create public spaces
- ▶ Matchmaking for small businesses and pop-up retail opportunities that support entrepreneurship
- ▶ Flexibility in zoning and permitting to allow spaces to change use
- ▶ More general support for small business (there are some existing programs that we can build off of and better fund)

Top voted goals:

1. Unlock development or open space opportunities on vacant/underutilized sites [19]
2. Fill Downtown spaces with a mix of commercial uses [15]
3. Attract, grow and make the creative economy visible Downtown [14]



"ENCOURAGE PRIVATE PROPERTY OWNERS TO CREATE PUBLIC SPACES THROUGH INCENTIVES"

"ACTIVATE UNDERUTILIZED SPACES DOWNTOWN"

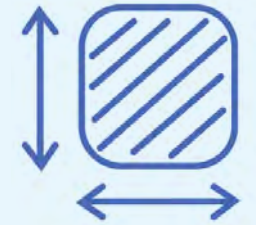
"MORE EVENTS AT WESTLAKE AGAIN"

"MORE SEATTLE RESTORED"

"ENCOURAGE MORE LOCAL SMALL BUSINESS PERMITTING"

"EASY CHANGE OF USE"

Make the most of every square foot



●●● 15 **Fill Downtown spaces with a mix of commercial uses**

- ▶●●● 17 Support and grow Downtown jobs and small businesses
- 16 Retain and expand access to affordable retail rents and scales for cultural arts uses
- 14 Adapt underutilized Downtown office spaces and upper floors to alternate uses
- ▶●● 13 Remove barriers to pop-up businesses and new small business starts.
- ▶● 7 Retain and increase the diversity of industries and opportunities Downtown
- 5 Bolster education and workforce training in support of growing Downtown industries

THIS POLICY ALTERNATIVE SHOULD INCLUDE EASY CHANGE OF USE PROCESSES

"ENCOURAGE POSITIVE ACTIVITIES (OR EDUCATION) BY YOUTH IN DOWNTOWN"

Attract, grow and make the creative economy visible

●●● 14 **Downtown**

- 15 Grow and support Downtown's arts and culture, entertainment, and sports districts.
- 15 Expand opportunities for public art to be appreciated and celebrated in public gathering spaces.
- 14 Expand placemaking and activation in public and private spaces around the cultural hubs in each neighborhood (such as continued support for the Belltown Mural Festival or short term activations around festivals and conferences).
- 11 Simplify the process for special events requirements or funding opportunities to help BIPOC and emerging artists and performers participate more.
- ▶● 7 Implement the Cultural Strategies for Downtown Revitalization action plan.
- ▶ 1 Create a coalition focused on action from many recent planning efforts.

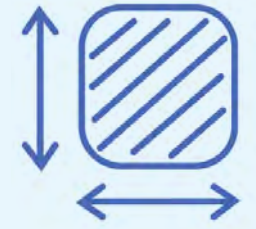
CONTINUED PROGRAMMING AND MONETARY SUPPORT IS NEEDED

"MONEY NEEDED HERE AS INVESTMENT"

"INCENTIVES FOR SPECIAL EVENTS AND FILM PERMITS"

"WE HAVE SO MANY PLANS! START TESTING WITH GOOD PARTNERS"

Make the most of every square foot



● 4 **Preserve or reposition key retail destinations**

- 14 Continue placemaking events centered on the Downtown commercial and retail core, including Pioneer Square, the mall clusters, and Third Avenue.
- 11 Partner with BIPOC business and organizations to implement retail and business support services
- 11 Support retail areas with enhanced community policing services and alternative response program
- 8 Focus on small business support for existing and future retailers in hubs like Pioneer Square
- 6 Partner with Pike Place Market to implement the Pike Place Strategic Plan

●● 11 **Ensure growth is equitable and aligned with community goals**

- 11 Leverage underutilized commercial spaces to support community groups and cultural agencies
- 7 Direct additional resources and civic service investments to Downtown areas that rank highest on the City's Racial and Social Equity Composite Index (designate these areas as Community Resource Areas)
- 5 Explore new TIF opportunities to align future development with investment in community needs, including long-term affordable housing
- 4 Expand language access for all planning and development processes Downtown
- 3 Ensure each project achieves potential co-benefits through transportation/utility projects, job creation, and public space creation
- 0 Explore ways to leverage community benefits agreements and other public benefit tools for major developments

● = 5 upvotes ● = 1 change

"CONSIDER INCENTIVE TO RETAIN HISTORICAL VENUES"

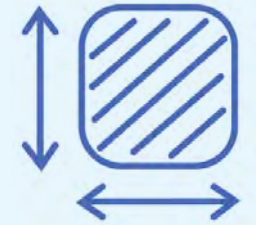


SUPPORT FOR ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE PROGRAMS - SUCH AS "WE DELIVER CARE"



"INCLUDE UNHOUSED"

Make the most of every square foot



Support existing and future key industry clusters including maritime, tourism, information technology, professional services, arts, and green economy

- 8 Increase local education and workforce training resources, including access to locally driven non-traditional educational routes
- 7 Connect pathways to middle income jobs, particularly opportunities in healthcare, education, life sciences, and technology sectors
- 6 Partner with large employers in maritime, tourism, information technology to create job pathways
- 5 Elevate the quality of roads and water infrastructure in the CID and Pioneer Square
- 4 Connect educational institutions with employers and low-income residents
- 4 Plan for the needed expansion or accommodation of large scale, regional serving uses (major destinations, large employers)

CRIMINAL HISTORY OR DRUG CHARGES CAN BE BARRIERS TO ENTERING THE WORKFORCE

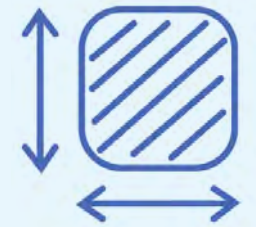
"ENTRY-LEVEL JOB OPPORTUNITIES AND EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS FOR FOLKS WITH CRIMINAL HISTORY IS NECESSARY!"

NEED FOR SCHOOLS AND EXISTING EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS TO HAVE MORE PARTNERSHIPS

"JOB TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES ARE ESSENTIAL!"

"ENCOURAGE HYPER-LOCAL EMPLOYMENT"

Make the most of every square foot



Unlock development or open space opportunities on vacant/

●●●●● 19 underutilized sites

●●●●● 19 Create “vertical neighborhoods” with increased density and mixed-use buildings around transit stations.

●●●●● 13 Use underutilized publicly owned land to realize community benefits through development, open space, or infrastructure projects

●●●●● 10 Enact needed infrastructure improvements and regulatory changes to enable privately owned vacant land to reach its full potential, including potential taxes on long-standing vacancies

●●●●● 8 Provide Downtown parking that is sufficient, but not excessive, to meet the needs of visitors

SUPPORT FOR LEVERAGING PUBLIC LAND FOR COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC USES

"THERE SHOULD BE NO SURFACE PARKING DOWNTOWN"

"CONSIDER PUBLIC SPACE OPTIONS IN VACANT LOCATIONS - URBAN GARDENS, PARKS, AND PLAYGROUNDS"

"EXPLORE OPTIONS FOR REDISTRIBUTION OF UNDERUTILIZED LAND. RETURN LAND TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN DISPLACED AND SUBSIDIZE LOCAL COMMUNITY OVER CORPORATE LAND."



Vision

Find our way

- ▶ Activation and events need to be more visible/easy to find in the public realm
- ▶ Wayfinding systems are needed to help people move through Downtown (maps at bus stops, markers for important places)
- ▶ Separation of mobility types would make people feel safer to walk and bike
- ▶ Feeling that cars are prioritized and Downtown would benefit from a pedestrian -first mindset
- ▶ Using transportation should feel safe and be enjoyable

Top voted goals:

1. Rethink and re-allocate space on streets to put people first [13]
2. Make traveling through Downtown a safe and comfortable experience [11]
3. Create a sustainable and resilient Downtown transportation system [9]



"MORE VISIBLE SIGNAGE FOR EVENTS GOING ON"

"CALM TRAFFIC, MULTI-MODAL STREETS, ACCESSIBLE AND HUMAN SCALE STREETS"

"MORE WAY FINDING LIKE THE RECENT CHANGES / UPDATES IN PIONEER SQUARE"

"PEDESTRIAN FIRST MINDSET"

"WE DON'T NEED MANY CARS DOWNTOWN"

"MORE BIKE LANES"

"REMOVE SOME OF THE BUSES OFF 3RD TO REDUCE THE CHAOTIC FEELING"

Find our way



13 Rethink and re-allocate space on streets to put people first

- 17 Advance a mix of seasonal, weekend, and in some cases, permanent restrictions for personal vehicle traffic to make areas of Downtown car-free or “car-lite”
- 12 Pursue street transformations to create more space for walking, rolling, biking, transit and lingering or gathering
- 8 Co-create and implement innovative People Streets and Public Spaces concepts, such as community and mobility hubs and a pilot “Low Pollution Neighborhood”
- 8 Pursue major expansions of car-free gathering spaces in partnership with local venues, such as Lumen Field and T-Mobile Park, and alongside community groups, such as the Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority
- o When providing maintenance, update the street to reflect right-of-way allocation needs that support adjacent land uses and planned transportation networks



SUPPORT FOR CAR-LITE PROGRAMS, AS LONG AS CURB LOGISTICS ARE FIGURED OUT

"CARS AREN'T NEEDED ON SO MANY STREETS. AT LEAST RESTRICT THROUGH TRAFFIC"

"WE MUST ALLOW FOR TRUCK LOADING AND BUILDING LOGISTICS"

"LET'S CREATE A SAFE, HUMAN-SCALED CITY WHERE WE CAN WALK TO WORK, TO THE PARK, AND OUR KIDS CAN CYCLE TO SCHOOL!"

Make traveling through Downtown a safe and comfortable

11 experience

- 12 Focus investment to make Downtown more navigable to children, the elderly, and disabled populations, through solutions like seating, hill-climb assists, pedestrian lighting, shade, and more
- 9 Use High Injury Network (HIN) + Bike Pedestrian Safety Analysis (BPSA) data to inform investments and programming to calm traffic, reduce collisions, and slow down vehicles

Find our way



Continued - **Make traveling through Downtown a safe and comfortable experience**

- 9 “Daylight” every intersection in Downtown, supported by programming such as micromobility parking, greenery, and others
- 9 Pilot creative forms of emergency response and access such as through smaller vehicles and mountable infrastructure
- 7 Apply new policies to reduce the number of vehicle travel lanes on multi-lane streets with excess capacity, to “right-size” them for slower speeds and safer outcomes
- 1 Expand successful No Turn on Red pilot program to the entirety of Downtown, and continue to pursue “daylighting” opportunities, to eliminate confusion and make all intersections safer
- Separate pedestrians from vehicles by physical barriers such as trees, parklets, and vehicle or bike parking

Create a sustainable and resilient Downtown transportation

●● 9 **system**

- 12 Implement more green streets designations with a particular focus on areas deficient in park space and tree canopy, such as Chinatown and the International District
- 11 Install pilots to de-pave streets, and pursue a strategy to increase tree canopy and green stormwater infrastructure

*"ALL DOWNTOWN STREETS
HAVE EXCESS CAPACITY"*

*NEED FOR BETTER PUBLIC TRANSIT
ACCESSIBILITY ACROSS SEATTLE
(AND INTO DOWNTOWN)*

*"WHAT'S MISSING? TRANSIT
PRIORITY AT NIGHTS, ON/OFF
RAMP REMOVAL, COMMERCIAL
BIKE PARKING LOTS, FIX THE
ROUTE AND BUS LANE"*

*"IT'S NOT HARD TO TRAVEL
ACROSS DOWNTOWN,
IT'S HARD TO TRAVEL
FROM OTHER PLACES TO
DOWNTOWN (+1)"*

Find our way



Continued - Create a sustainable and resilient Downtown transportation system

- 8 Influence Downtown commuters to “flip their trips” away from personal vehicles to more efficient and sustainable travel options through existing and new programs
- 4 Explore mobility partnerships among public organizations, private firms, and foundations to accelerate sustainable mobility innovations
- 3 Reduce off-street parking capacity and manage it holistically at a district level, to reduce demand for car trips and reimagine spaces for sustainable investment
- 3 Leveraging the designation of a Low Pollution Neighborhood in Downtown to co-create sustainable mobility solutions with local communities

WANT TO MAKE SURE
THAT REDUCTION COMES
WITH ALTERNATIVES

"PAIR WITH CAFE SEATING
AND PUBLIC BENEFITS"

Design Downtown streets to support innovation and a

●● 7 thriving local economy

- 10 Continue to reduce permit requirements, with more flexibility for outdoor dining, food trucks, and other vending
- 5 Pilot adaptations of curb lanes for the benefit of local commerce, such as café seating, vending, and other programming – including in areas vacated by transit lanes (due to bus service changes with Link expansion)
- 5 Repurpose “slip lanes”, dead ends, and other irregular street grid locations for local activities
- 5 Use right-sized vehicles, such as e-cargo bikes, to showcase innovation in freight movement and pilot new curb uses for new methods for “last 50 feet” urban deliveries

"EMBRACE SEATTLE'S
UNIQUE SHIFTING
GRID AND AWKWARD
INTERSECTIONS"



Find our way



Continued - **Design Downtown streets to support innovation and a thriving local economy**

- 4 Partner with developers, private sector businesses, and event organizers on major street activations
- 4 Ensure the important roles of the Port of Seattle and related freight movement and logistics are considered as upgrades are made Downtown
- ▶ 3 Avoid expensive repair of “Areaways” for heavy vehicle use but instead provide more space to lighter delivery solutions and other gathering space

“EXPLORE/EXPERIMENT AND SUPPORT BUSINESSES TO UTILIZE NON-CARBON MEANS OF LAST MILE DELIVERIES. IKEA IS ALREADY DOING THIS.”

Celebrate the many unique cultures and histories of Downtown – especially its Indigenous population –

▶ ● 8 **throughout its transportation system and public spaces**

- ▶ ● ● 13 Reflect Indigenous art, culture, language, and gathering spaces throughout Downtown’s streets and public spaces, especially on the shoreline to honor Native cultures and our deep relationship with the water
- ▶ ● ● 13 Transform Pier 48 for public use for waterborne transportation, community space including a native space (cultural center or museum), and an installation that honors the history of Ballast Island
- ● ● 9 Expand passenger-only ferry and small boat travel options, furthering our connection to the water
- ▶ ● 7 Use transportation and public space investments to help repair past and current harms to BIPOC groups, in concert with Seattle’s transportation equity strategy
- ● 5 Advance People Streets and Public Spaces concepts, encouraging self-expression and neighborhood identity in the right-of-way conjunction with large events

“PARK WITH AMENITIES”

“THE CONSTRAINT IS TERMINAL SPACE”

Find our way



Use streets to help people navigate and find their way

● 5 through a legible Downtown

- 12 Stitch neighborhood divides through ground floor activations, re-design of space under I-5 at S Jackson, S King, and S Dearborn streets, and potential lidding of I-5 and BNSF railway tracks
- 10 Create frequent and reliable transit service corridors as bus service is restructured downtown in concert with light rail system expansion, with transit consolidated on certain streets, and in creating great public spaces for folks transferring or waiting for transit
- 5 Make approaches to the land from the water feel welcoming and clear through wayfinding, and provide safe opportunities for recreational canoeing and kayaking
- 4 Continue to install Seamless Seattle wayfinding columns and kiosks to aid navigation Downtown, and identify and expand publicly accessible “hill climbs”
- 3 Capitalize on the Downtown street grid’s views of the Puget Sound, and pursue new pocket parks and enhance view corridors
- 2 Test pilots of sustainable, zero-emission autonomous vehicle technology in conjunction with large events

SUPPORT FOR MORE ADA ACCESSIBLE HILL CLIMBS AND GENERAL WAY FINDING

"STEEP SLOPE" - CONSIDER WAYS TO MAKE EXISTING ESCALATORS FROM 1ST-5TH AVAILABLE TO ALL / FOR LONGER HOURS (AND TO WATERFRONT!)"

"KEEPING ZONING STAIR STEPS SO VIEWS ARE MAINTAINED"

"KAYAK/CANOES PARKING DOWNTOWN"

"NEIGHBORHOOD GUIDES"

"NEED LIGHTING ON DOWNTOWN SIDEWALKS"

Community Engagement Survey #1 Report

Date:

December 19, 2025

Prepared for:

Seattle Downtown Regional
Center Plan

Prepared by:

Agency Landscape + Planning

Downtown Seattle Urban Center

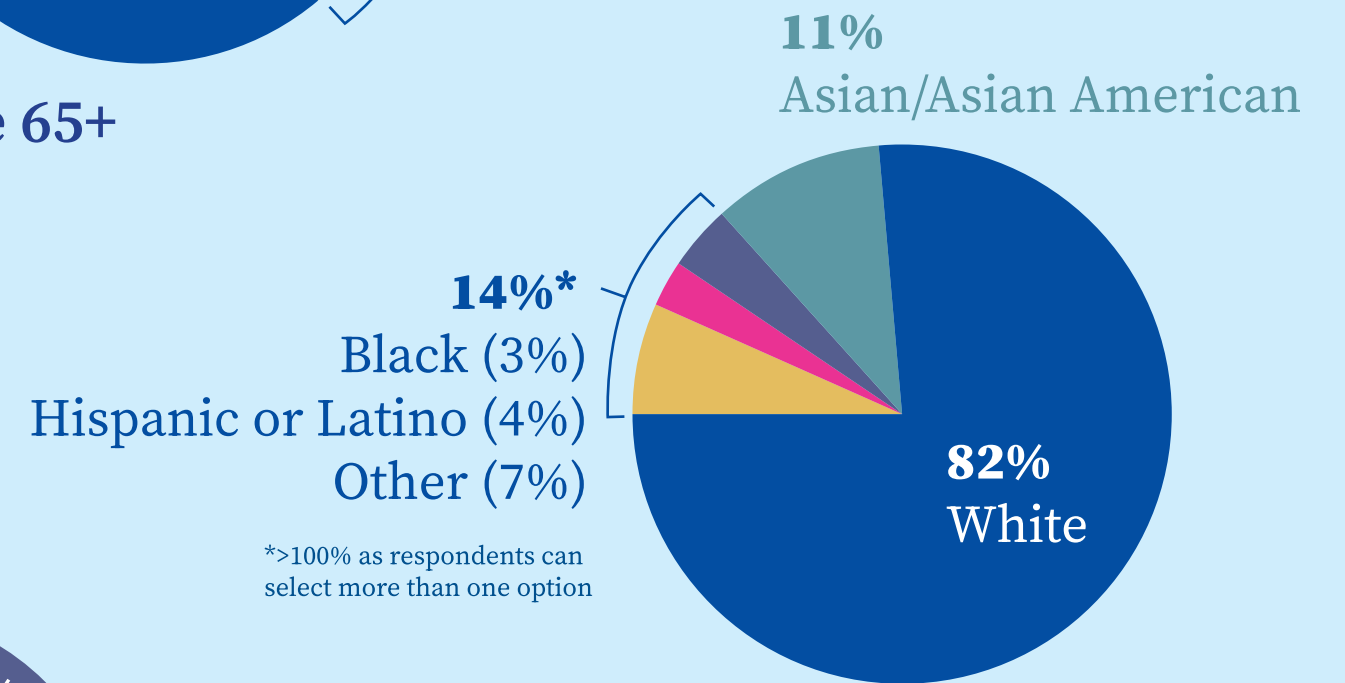
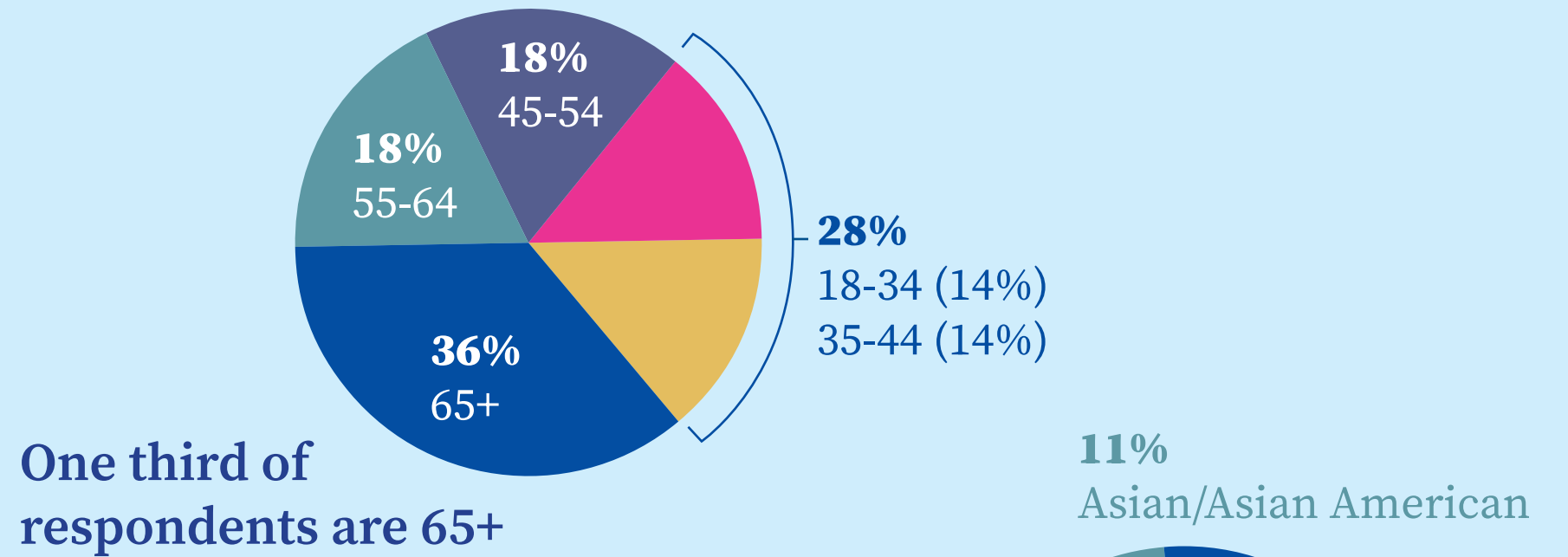
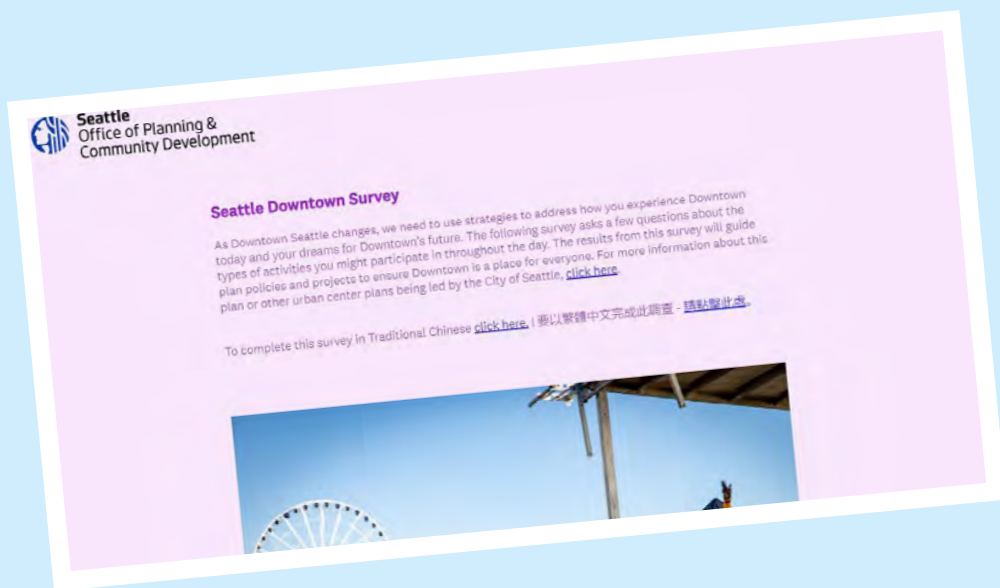
Survey Summary

10.08.2024

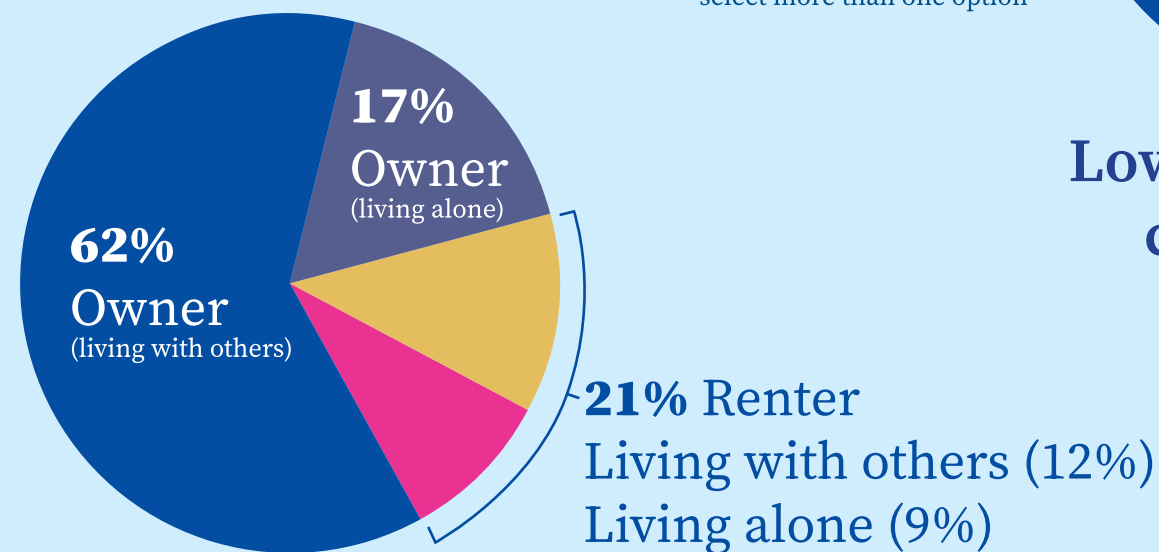
Online Survey

Between 22 Feb and 10 May, **609 respondents** completed an online survey to share their experiences in Downtown Seattle.

The survey asked respondents about their relationship to the Downtown, what they loved, and what they would change.

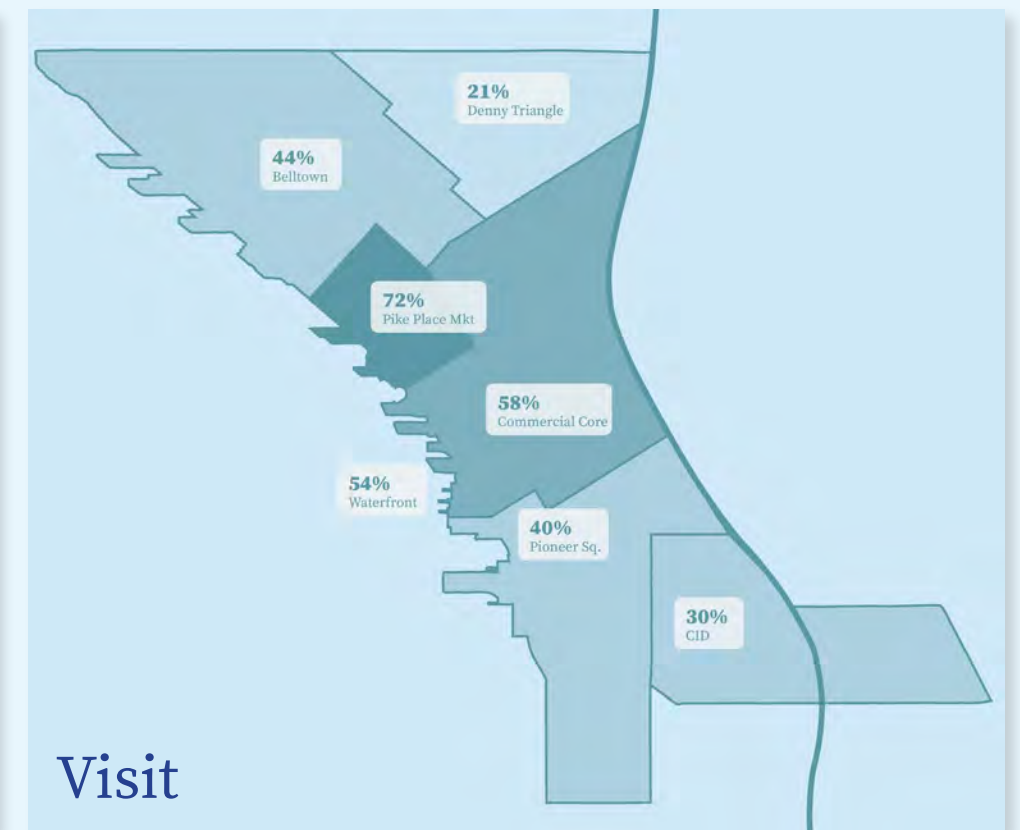
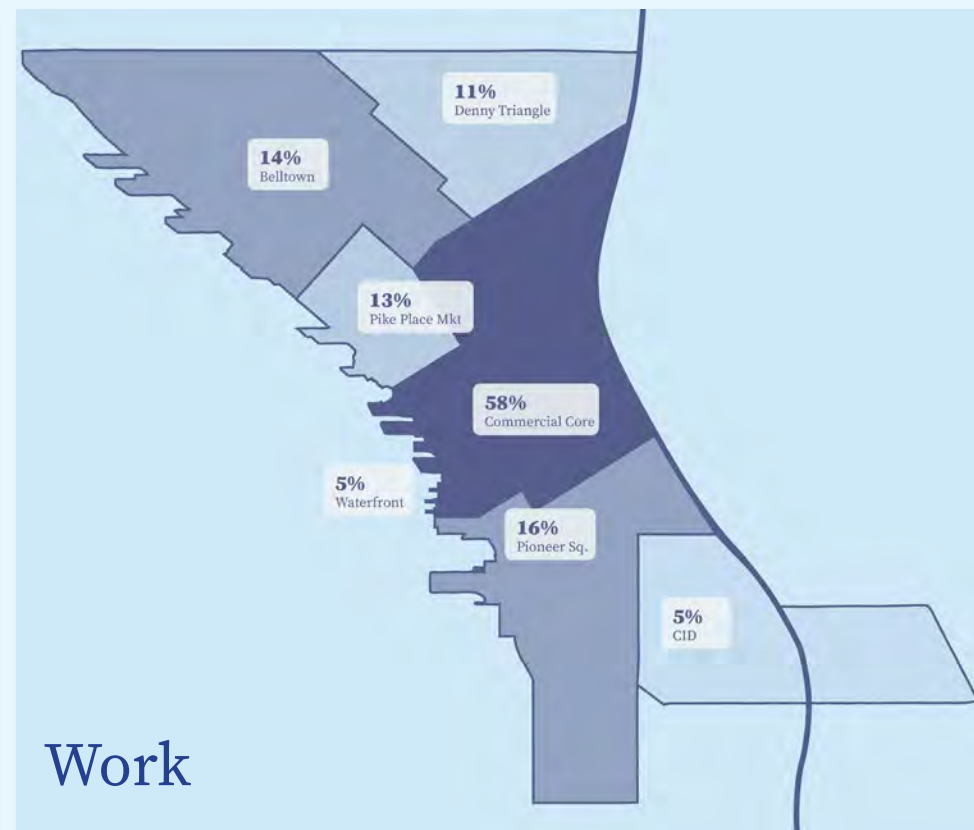
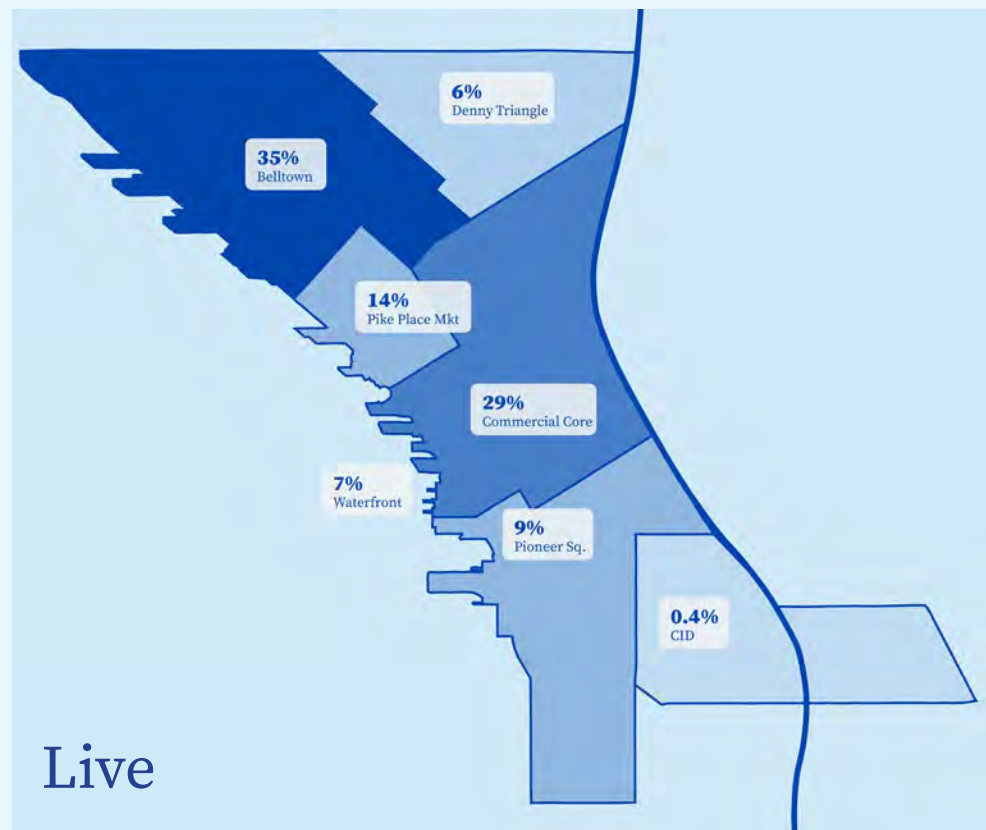


Lower representation of communities of color



Most respondents are home owners

Where do you go in the Downtown?



Theme 1: Safety

Jobs Economy
Housing
Process
Arts/Culture

Many parts of Downtown feel unsafe because of drug use and crime.

Street-level vacancies, hostile public spaces, and a lack of greenery amplify this feeling.

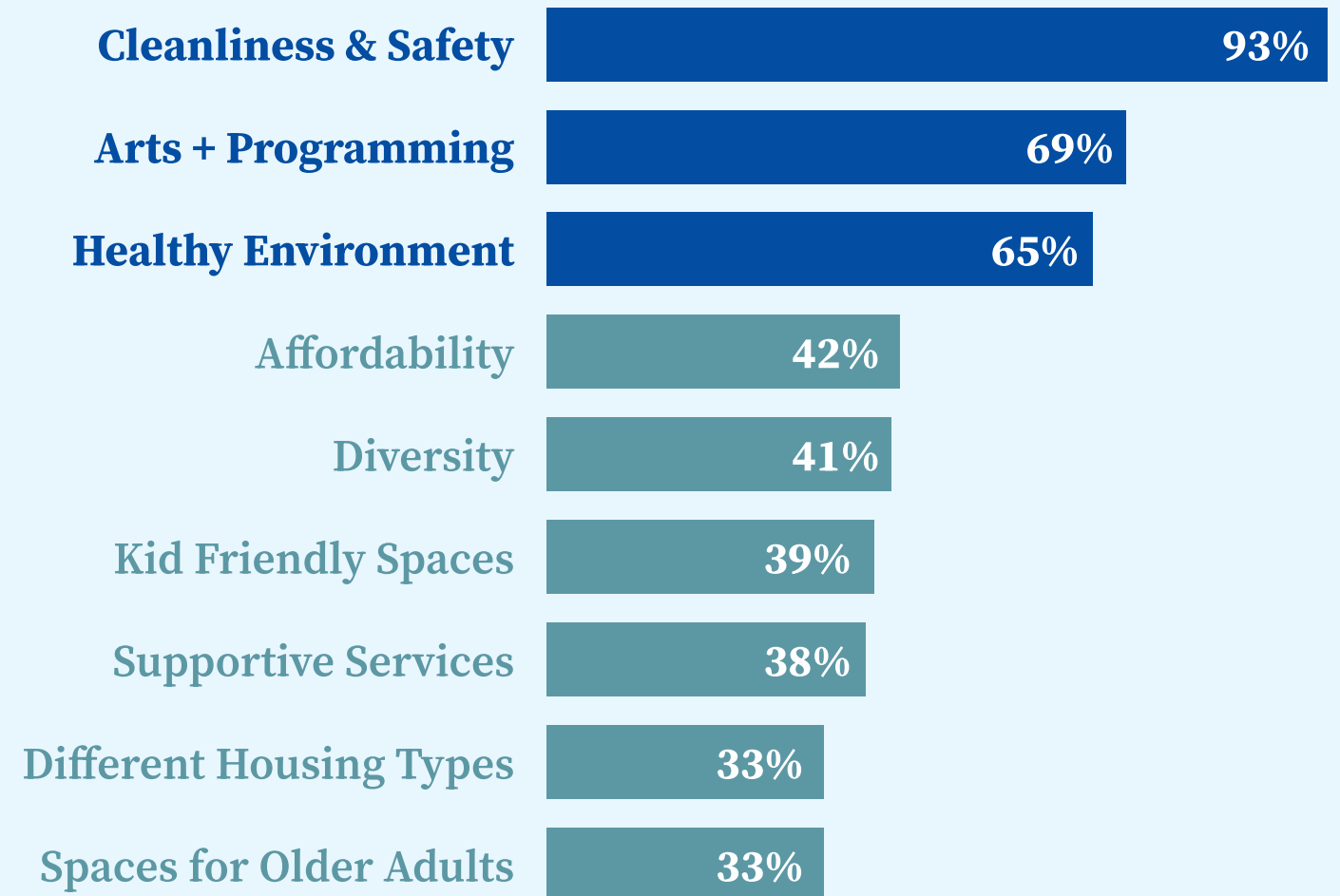
"MORE ARTS AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND SPACES THAT PEOPLE WANT TO BE IN"

"I USED TO LOVE BEING DOWNTOWN, BUT NOW I'M CONSTANTLY CONCERNED FOR MY SAFETY"

"THE CRIME - I DON'T FEEL SAFE, PEOPLE ON DRUGS - AGAIN I DON'T FEEL SAFE"

"SPORTING EVENTS, SHOWS AT THE THEATER VENUES AND RESTAURANTS"

What does Downtown need to be a great place to live?



Theme 2: Vibrant Retail

Retail, arts, and culture were a historic draw to the Downtown, but vibrancy and variety of retail has subsided post-COVID. Despite this, Pike Place and the Waterfront remain important draws to the Downtown.

A lack of parking makes it harder to visit the retail that remains.

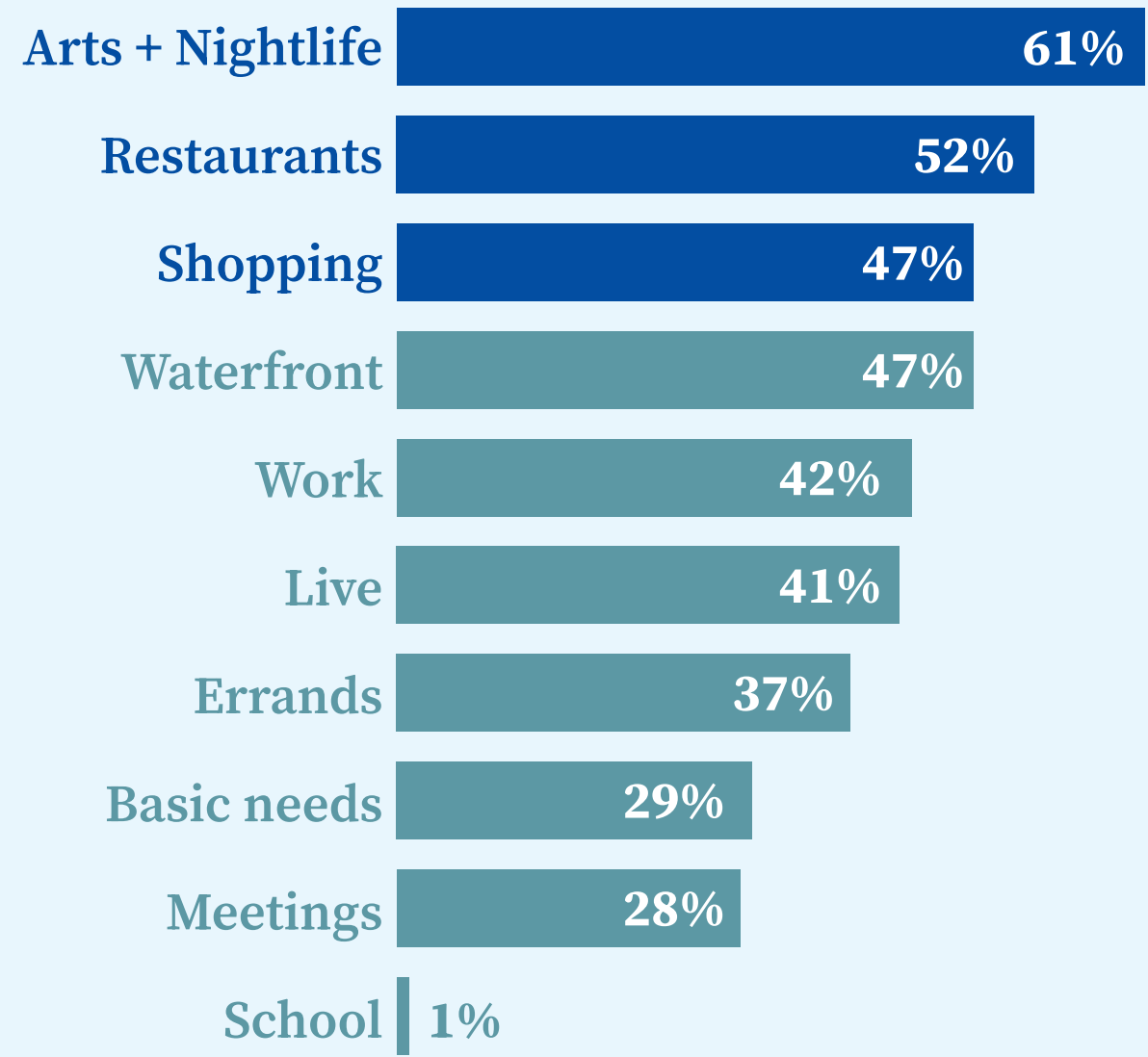
"WATERFRONT AND PIKE PLACE HAVE GREAT ENERGY AND LOVE SEEING THE WATER AND MOUNTAINS"

"SHOPPING IS NOT VERY EXCITING DOWNTOWN"

"LOVE THE NEW WATERFRONT IMPROVEMENTS!"

"I USED TO SHOP AND VISIT MORE IN THE COMMERCIAL CORE AND PIONEER SQUARE, BUT NOT SO MUCH NOW DUE TO LACK OF SAFETY AND VIBRANCY"

What brings you to the Downtown?



Theme 3: Housing Diversity

Affordable housing important to attract and retain a diverse community in the Downtown

"WE NEED MORE DIVERSITY IN THE KINDS OF PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN THE CITY"

"THE LACK OF HOUSING AND INCOME DIVERSITY AND SMALL BUSINESS IS VERY CONCERNING."

"MORE HOUSING IN DOWNTOWN WILL LEAD TO INCREASED ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IN THE REGIONAL CENTER"

"WE NEED HOUSING FOR THE WORK FORCE, NOT EVERYONE IS MAKING HIGH WAGES OR IS IN THE TECH INDUSTRY"

"EVERYTHING BEING BUILT TODAY IS LUXURY CONDO TOWERS, OUT OF REACH FOR MOST"

"THE HOUSING SHOULD BE FOR PEOPLE OF ALL AGES AND BACKGROUNDS TO CREATE A MORE EQUITABLE DOWNTOWN"

Theme 4: Opportunity Areas

Jobs Economy
Housing
Process
Arts/Culture

Third Avenue, Pike, and Pine are commonly cited areas of opportunity, with a focus on improving safety, pedestrianizing, and activating

"THE AREA BETWEEN PIONEER SQUARE AND PIKE PLACE HAS A REMARKABLY HIGH CONCENTRATION OF EMPTY STORE FRONTS"

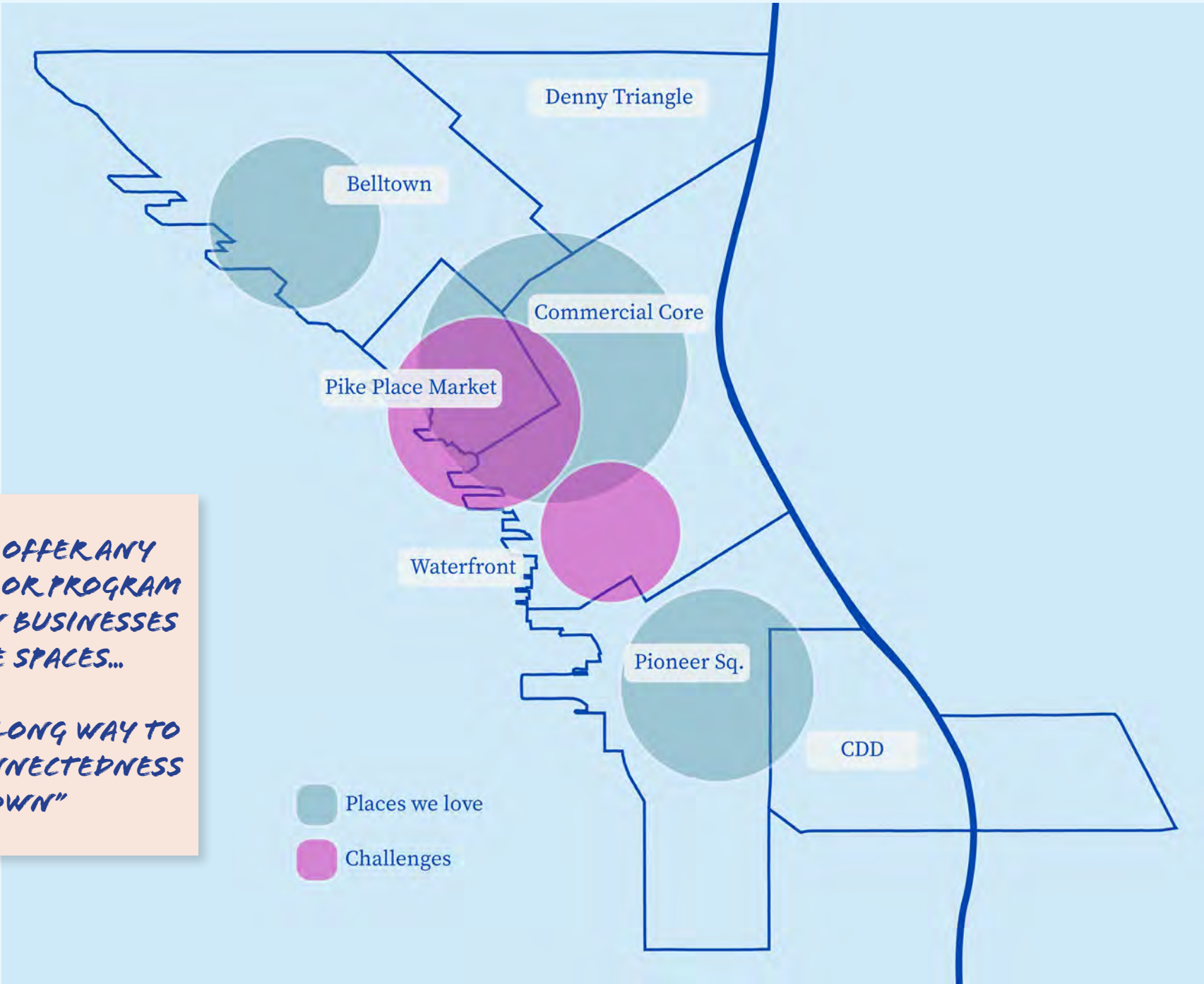
"WITH THE IMPROVEMENTS HAPPENING TO THE WATERFRONT AND THE PIKE/PINE CORRIDOR, THIS IS A PRIME SPACE TO GET RETAIL BACK INTO"

*"THIRD AVENUE NEEDS MORE LOVE AND ATTENTION SO IT CAN FEEL SAFE AND CLEAN.

IT'S DESIGNED TO BE A TRANSPORTATION HUB, BUT NOT ONE WANTS TO WAIT FOR BUSES ON THAT STREET"*

*"THE CITY COULD OFFER ANY SORT OF INCENTIVE OR PROGRAM TO ENCOURAGE NEW BUSINESSES TO ENTER THESE SPACES...

... THIS COULD GO A LONG WAY TO IMPROVING THE CONNECTEDNESS OF DOWNTOWN"*



Community Engagement Survey #2 Report

Date:

December 19, 2025

Prepared for:

Seattle Downtown Regional
Center Plan

Prepared by:

Agency Landscape + Planning

Downtown Seattle Urban Center

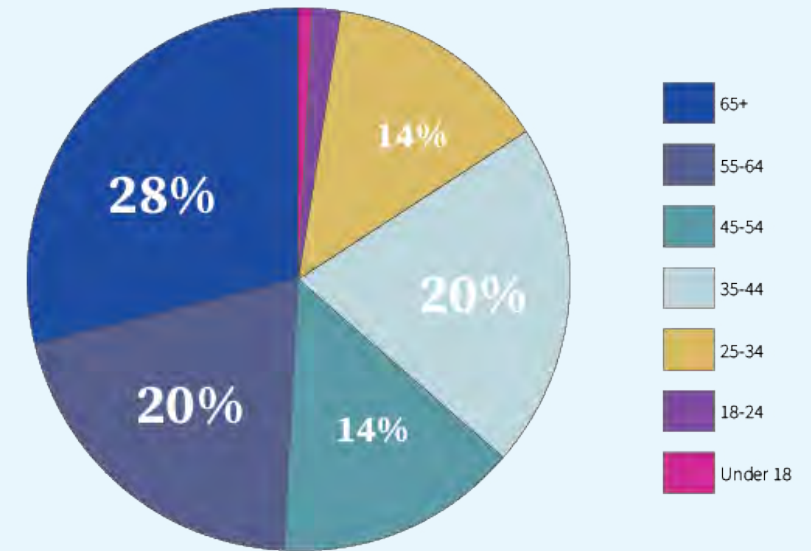
Online Survey - Vision & Goals Summary

ONLINE SURVEY - VISION + GOALS

Between September and December 2024, **180 respondents** completed an online survey about Downtown Seattle.

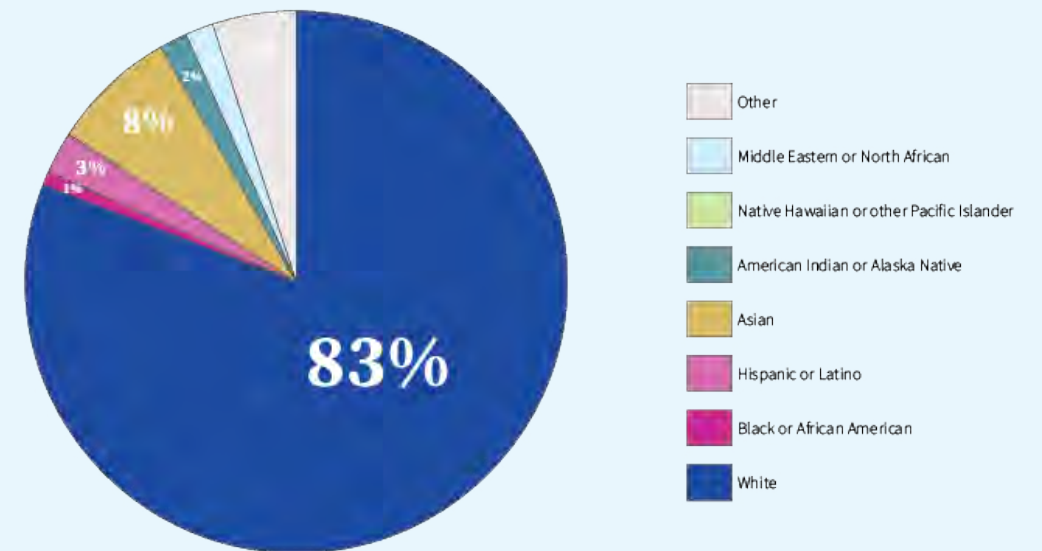
The survey asked respondents about the **draft vision, goals, and policy directions** for the Downtown Seattle Regional Plan.

Half of respondents are over 55

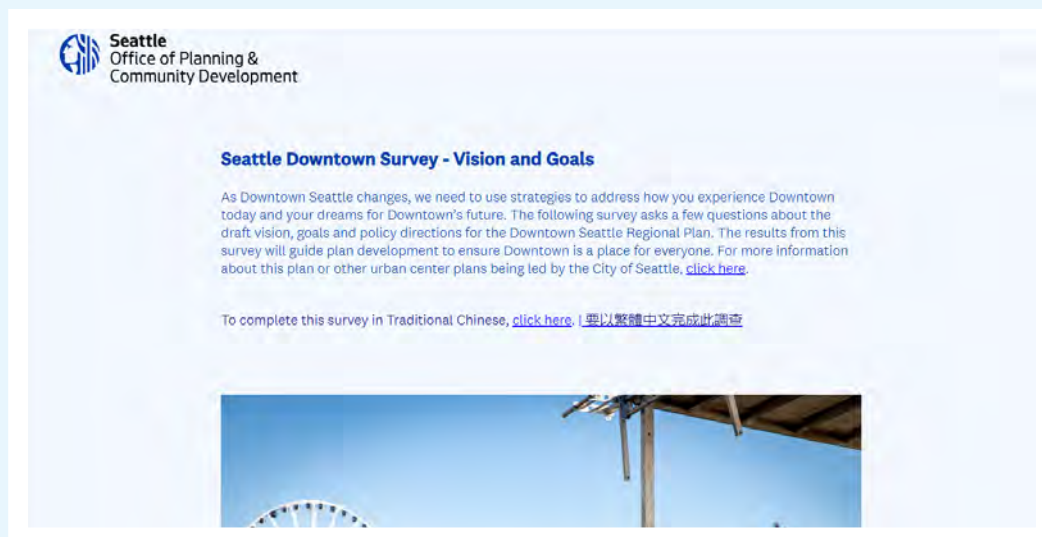
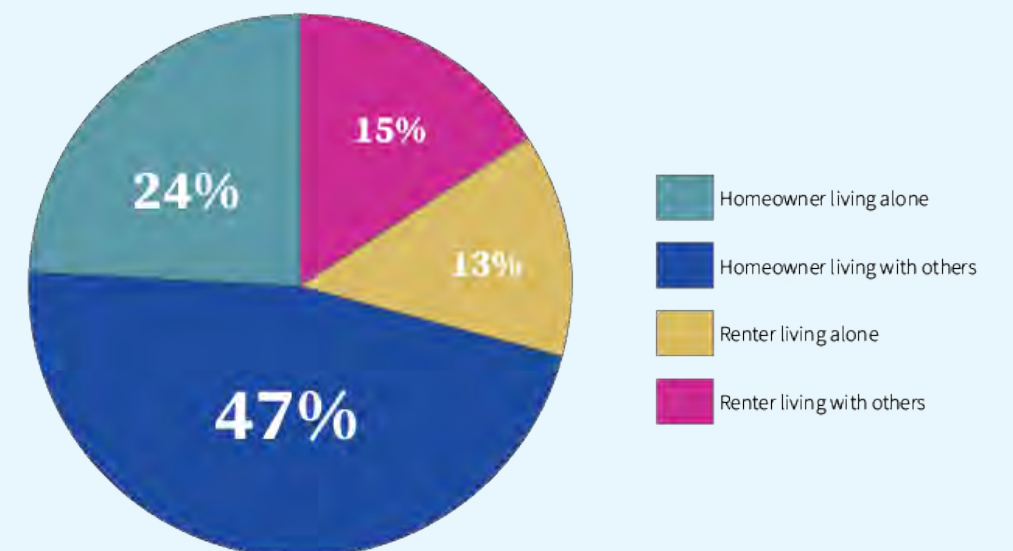


A large majority of respondents are White

Lower representation of people of color



3/4 of Respondents are Homeowners



Vision

In Downtown Seattle, everyone feels **welcome, safe,** and **at home.** Around each corner, we **find our way** to and through spaces where **every square foot is full** of vibrancy, economic opportunity, and beauty. Together we have found means of stewarding Downtown not just in the moment, but with a dedication and consideration **for the next “seven generations.”**



Make everyone feel safe and welcome



Make use of every square foot



At home Downtown



Find our way



Steward our home for the next 7 generations

Source: City of Seattle and Tahoma Peak Solutions, Indigenous Inclusivity Guide

ONLINE SURVEY

Does this vision resonate with you?



Which theme is most important to you for Downtown's future?



Vision

Make everyone feel safe and welcome



ONLINE SURVEY

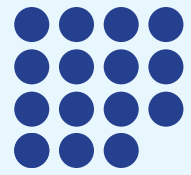
Top voted goals:

1. Make Downtown safe for everyone, all hours of the day [75 votes]
2. Make Downtown welcoming and inclusive to all [26 votes]
3. Wrap Downtown in a Green Embrace [11 votes]
4. Increase park access as Downtown grows [11 votes]

Takeaways

- ▶ In order for people to feel safe Downtown, it needs to be activated
- ▶ Unhoused people need supportive services and help, rather than regulation
- ▶ A public realm that is cared for (well-lit and maintained) would make people feel safer Downtown
- ▶ Representation of cultures, especially Indigenous culture, would make more people feel welcome

Make everyone feel safe and welcome **ONLINE SURVEY**



75 Make Downtown safe for everyone, all hours of the day



36 Continued to implement a focused approach to respond to safety and environmental concerns along 3rd Ave



43 Improve accessibility, lighting, and safety



35 Adopt an inclusive management approach to Downtown public spaces, with the intention to accommodate everyone's needs within a public health framework (such as providing access to drinking water, public restrooms, and safe needle disposal.)



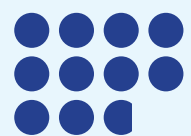
51 Enhance community policing services and alternative response programs



ADDRESS SAFETY AND DRUG USE



11 Wrap Downtown in a Green Embrace



54 Advance the vision for the I-5 Lid Park [Continue to explore the lidding of I-5 to create park spaces and pedestrian connections from Capitol Hill to Downtown (DAP)]



LOTS OF SUPPORT FOR THE I-5 LID!



31 Adapt land use regulations to further support activation of ground floors adjacent to the waterfront along Alaskan Way



22 Reduce the impacts of steep slopes between the waterfront and other neighborhoods



34 Complete the full construction of the Seattle Waterfront by 2025 (DAP)

"MAKE MORE SPACES CAR-FREE"

Make everyone feel safe and welcome **ONLINE SURVEY**



●●●●● 26 **Make Downtown welcoming and inclusive to all**

●●●●● 47 Provide all-gender public restrooms in Downtown parks

●●●●● 49 Expand the role of arts in public spaces Downtown

●●●●● 31 Provide multilingual signage and communications in Downtown spaces, with an emphasis on indigenous naming

●● 8 **Provide recreation amenities for Downtown residents**

●●●●● 29 Provide new neighborhood gathering spaces (indoor and outdoor)

●●●●● 29 Increase youth and all ages park amenities in existing and new Downtown parks, focusing first on areas that are taking on more residential units

●●●●● 40 Complete planned improvements to Downtown parks (DAP)

●●● 15 Increase access to community growing spaces or farmers' markets

●●● 13 Improve public water access and cooling areas by installing spray pads or water features in existing parks and plazas close to residential areas.

●●●●● 25 Partner to offer free, family-friendly programming at the Waterfront and in neighborhood spaces (DAP)

*"DON'T DO THINGS
JUST FOR TOURISTS"*

*"DON'T DO THINGS
JUST FOR TOURISTS"*

Make everyone feel safe and welcome **ONLINE SURVEY**



●● 8 **Reveal, celebrate, and protect Downtown's history and culture**

●●●● 48 Preserve Downtown's built history while enabling contemporary evolution

●●●● 41 Add expand opportunities for musical performances across Downtown

●●●● 44 Communicate and share Downtown's untold and unique stories, people and places

●●● 11 **Increase park access as Downtown grows**

●●●● 37 Expand park access in areas with gaps: the CID, Belltown, and Denny Triangle (Seattle PR)

●●●● 25 Create and advance new Gateway Parks, proximate to transit stations and gateways from other neighborhoods into Downtown.

●●●● 23 Create a placemaking strategy to activate neighborhood alleyways

●●● 14 Explore partnerships to provide indoor recreation spaces

●●●● 42 Seek opportunities to repurpose right of way for recreational opportunities, and advance the SDOT "Pavements to Parks" program Downtown

"COMMITMENT TO
MAINTAINING +
ADDING TREE CANOPY

"DOWNTOWN NEEDS A
PEDESTRIAN SPINE"

Make everyone feel safe and welcome *ONLINE SURVEY*



●● 10 **Activate Downtown parks for community-wide events**

●●●● 44 Continue to partner with non-profit organizations to deliver events and programming

●●●● 43 Support community-driven activations and cultural celebrations Downtown (DAP)

●●●● 38 Adapt and develop parks with flexible programming and events infrastructure (access to power, lawns, or flexible space)

Vision

At home Downtown



ONLINE SURVEY

Top voted goals:

1. Grow housing across all Downtown neighborhoods [38 votes]
2. Support Downtown's unhoused residents with services, shelter and permanent housing [36 votes]
3. Evolve Downtown neighborhoods to be inclusive of the diverse needs of all residents and families [25 votes]

Takeaways

- ▶ Simplify & and make development more flexible
- ▶ Support development of buildings with a mix of affordable and market rate units
- ▶ Support alternative ownership models
- ▶ Build housing everywhere, especially in high displacement areas
- ▶ Create housing for different stages of life, especially around families
- ▶ Increase assistance to rehouse

At home Downtown *ONLINE SURVEY*



●●●●● 38 **Grow housing across all Downtown neighborhoods**

●●●●● 36 Simplify the housing production process and incentivize the creation of more diverse downtown residential units where appropriate

●●●●● 40 Allow more flexibility for residential development in areas of Downtown currently zoned “Downtown Office Core”

●●● 14 Reduce the regulatory and financial burdens of frequent energy code updates and seismic and energy upgrades in historic buildings through incentives and regulatory changes.

●●● 15 Encourage shared, district-level garage parking strategies to reduce project development costs and manage parking holistically

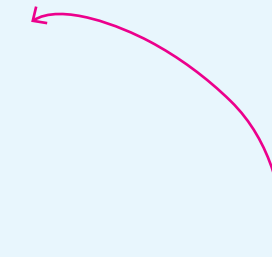
●●●●● 34 Convert existing commercial buildings to housing, with an emphasis on securing long-term affordable units

●●●●● 16 **Preserve and expand affordable and workforce housing**

●●●●● 22 Work with foundations, major employers, community-based organizations, and Community Development Financial Institutions to explore the feasibility of new grant and/or loan funds for affordable housing developments serving areas of Downtown with the highest socioeconomic needs

●●●●● 40 Support new forms of affordable and workforce housing ownership (community land trusts, cooperative or shared equity models, and co-housing)

●●●●● 37 Focus housing resources and programs toward protecting lower-income households in areas with high displacement risks, such as the CID and Pioneer Square



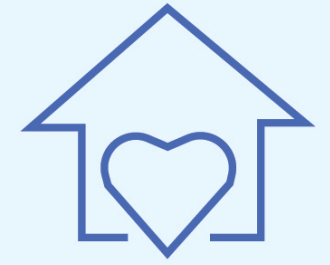
AGREEMENT TO BUILD EVERYWHERE + REMOVE RED TAPE

"BUILD MORE HOUSING. FASTER"



CONSIDER SOCIAL HOUSING

At home Downtown *ONLINE SURVEY*



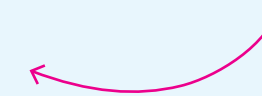
Continued - **Preserve and expand affordable and workforce housing**

- 8 Expand the funding tools available to assist in creating long-term affordable housing, such as TIF districts
- 26 Retain existing affordable housing that exists Downtown today
- 12 Assess MHA requirements to support bringing additional larger scale housing units online

●●●● 25 **Evolve Downtown neighborhoods to be inclusive of the diverse needs of all residents and families.**

- 56 Support the creation of housing that provides a mix of units that support residents in different life stages (work-live housing, accessible senior housing, and family housing)
- 13 Work with development projects to provide publicly accessible private open space that meets each neighborhood's goals and needs
- 44 Expand family-focused services and programming around housing clusters and transit, including childcare, basic neighborhood-serving retail, and play experiences.
- 17 Reinforce what makes each neighborhood Downtown special or unique

DIFFERING OPINIONS ABOUT MHA AND IT'S IMPACT



"REQUIRE NEW TOWERS TO BUILD A CERTAIN % OF 3-BEDROOMS FOR FAMILIES"

At home Downtown *ONLINE SURVEY*



Support Downtown's unhoused residents with services, shelter and permanent housing



52 Increase permanent housing assistance and transitional housing to support the need to rapidly rehouse people and help them stay housed.



17 Support the creation of a drop-in center or crisis services center.



17 Ensure that emergency shelter and day centers are safe and accessible for those who need it.



36 Ensure that housing alternatives are available for people who may not be candidates for traditional shelter accommodations (families, those with significant medical needs, people with pets, and others).



32 Collaborate with King County and Health Services to connect people to intensive services promoting housing and job stability.



SUPPORT FOR MORE ACCESS TO SOCIAL SERVICES AND FEAR OF OVER CONCENTRATION DOWNTOWN

"HOUSING FIRST SHOULD BE A PRIORITY"



Partner with the private sector to advance innovations in new construction



35 Encourage construction techniques and materials that are cost-effective and efficient to build (Cross-laminated Timber buildings, volumetric modular, pre-fab)



32 Work with SDCI to increase the financial feasibility of sustainable building practices



35 Promote emerging green building and sustainable development practices

Vision

Steward our home for the next 7 generations

Source: City of Seattle and Tahoma Peak Solutions, Indigenous Inclusivity Guide



ONLINE SURVEY

Top voted goals:

1. Care for Downtown's water, land and natural resources [43 votes]
2. Ensure Downtown assets are resilient to natural disasters and climate change impacts [34 votes]
3. Celebrate Downtown's unique connection to water [20 votes]

Takeaways

- ▶ Support building electrification
- ▶ Incentivize retrofitting historic buildings for natural disasters
- ▶ Need more access to green spaces and an increased tree canopy
- ▶ De-carbonization efforts need to happen across multiple sectors (construction, transportation, waste)

Steward our home for the next 7 generations **ONLINE SURVEY**

Source: City of Seattle and Tahoma Peak Solutions, Indigenous Inclusivity Guide



●●●●● 20 **Celebrate Downtown's unique connection to water**

●●●●● 38 Collaborate with Indigenous Tribes and local non-profits to broaden Downtown's historic and future engagement with water

●●●●● 26 Amplify and protect Downtown views of the water and surrounding mountain ranges

●●●●● 22 Effectively maintain existing water based design features and integrate water based design features and play into public space investment whenever possible

●●●●● 35 Leverage the waterfront's economic development value by balancing maritime industry needs with public waterfront access and experiences

●●●●● 17 Communicate the value of water resources, urban habitat, and ecological systems

●●●●● 43 **Care for Downtown's water, land and natural resources**

●●●●● 29 Reimagine Downtown streets as green corridors

●●●●● 39 Protect and expand Downtown's tree canopy

●●●●● 44 Manage stormwater responsibly to clean and minimize run-off into the Puget Sound

●●●●● 20 Reduce the strain on Downtown's combined sewer overflow and stormwater overflow facilities

● 3 Raise awareness about water quality through public art and resident programs

●● 10 Explore ways to translate existing stormwater mitigation partnership programs with landowners to Downtown's unique, urban context

● = 5 upvotes

"BEAUTIFYING THROUGH GREEN IMPROVEMENTS WILL GIVE PEOPLE A SENSE OF PRIDE THEY WILL WANT TO MAINTAIN FOR THE FUTURE"

Steward our home for the next 7 generations **ONLINE SURVEY**

Source: City of Seattle and Tahoma Peak Solutions, Indigenous Inclusivity Guide



●●● 11 **Reduce Downtown's reliance on fossil fuels**

●●●● 24 Increase participation in the programs that reduce individual emissions (e.g. composting program, heating and cooling conversions)

●●●● 32 Explore a local power generation/district energy model and low pollution neighborhood model.

●●●● 39 Implement and expand sustainable building practices, including promotion of adaptive reuse.

●●●● 32 Work with the Port to continue shifting to an electrified fleet and facilities.



LOTS OF AGREEMENT TO REDUCE CARS

"MENTION THE EVOLUTION OR ELIMINATION OF THE CRUISE INDUSTRY"

●●●● 34 **Ensure Downtown assets are resilient to natural disasters and climate change impacts**

●●●● 53 Address buildings in need of seismic retrofits

●●●● 32 Ensure new buildings achieve high environmental and emissions standards

●●●● 26 Support electrification of WSDOT fleet as additional waterfront transportation options are explored

●●●● 18 Collaborate with the Port to support the industrial maritime strategy

"EXPAND THE WA STATE HEAT PUMP PROGRAM FOR 80%AMI+"

●●● 12 **Ensure all Downtowners have access to resilient spaces**

●●●● 36 Expand resilience hubs beyond libraries, with a focus on increasing access in the CID and SODO

Steward our home for the next 7 generations **ONLINE SURVEY**

Source: City of Seattle and Tahoma Peak Solutions, Indigenous Inclusivity Guide



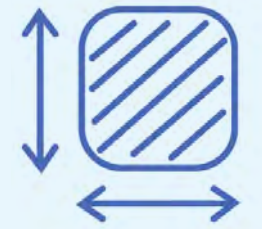
Continued - Ensure all Downtowners have access to resilient spaces

●●●●● 46 Integrate green stormwater and traditional land management alternatives in new development

●●●●● 35 Address flooding in low-lying, flood prone streets and public spaces

Vision

Make use of every square foot



ONLINE SURVEY

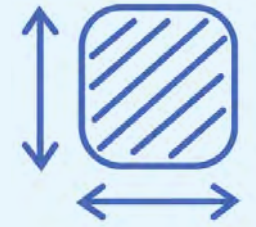
Top voted goals:

1. Unlock development or open space opportunities on vacant/underutilized sites [32 votes]
2. Support existing and future key industry clusters including maritime, tourism, information technology, professional services, arts, and green economy [20 votes]
3. Attract, grow and make the creative economy visible Downtown [20 votes]

Takeaways

- ▶ Encourage private property owners to create public spaces
- ▶ Matchmaking for small businesses and pop-up retail opportunities that support entrepreneurship
- ▶ Flexibility in zoning and permitting to allow spaces to change use
- ▶ More general support for small business (there are some existing programs that we can build off of and better fund)

Make the most of every square foot **ONLINE SURVEY**



●●●● 18 **Fill Downtown spaces with a mix of commercial uses**

●●●●● 30 Support and grow Downtown jobs and small businesses

●●●● 16 Retain and increase the diversity of industries and opportunities Downtown

●●●●● 39 Adapt underutilized Downtown office spaces and upper floors to alternate uses

●●●●● 28 Remove barriers to pop-up businesses and new small business starts.

●●●●● 34 Retain and increase the diversity of industries and opportunities Downtown

●● 10 Bolster education and workforce training in support of growing Downtown industries

●●●●● 20 **Attract, grow and make the creative economy visible Downtown**

●●●●● 37 Grow and support Downtown's arts and culture, entertainment, and sports districts.

●●●●● 20 Expand opportunities for public art to be appreciated and celebrated in public gathering spaces.

●●●●● 26 Expand placemaking and activation in public and private spaces around the cultural hubs in each neighborhood (such as continued support for the Belltown Mural Festival or short term activations around festivals and conferences).

●●●●● 21 Simplify the process for special events requirements or funding opportunities to help BIPOC and emerging artists and performers participate more.

●●● 14 Implement the Cultural Strategies for Downtown Revitalization action plan.

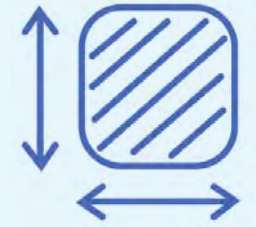
●●● 11 Create a coalition focused on action from many recent planning efforts.

"MORE EVENTS LIKE THE BELLTOWN MURAL FESTIVAL"

"MORE PUBLIC PLACES, PEDESTRIAN ONLY SPACES"

"MORE STREET CAFES IN OCCIDENTIAL PARK"

Make the most of every square foot *ONLINE SURVEY*



●●● (11 **Preserve or reposition key retail destinations**

●●●●● 31 Continue placemaking events centered on the Downtown commercial and retail core, including Pioneer Square, the mall clusters, and Third Avenue.

●●●●● 19 Partner with BIPOC business and organizations to implement retail and business support services

●●●●● 39 Focus on small business support for existing and future retailers in hubs like Pioneer Square

●●●●● 26 Partner with Pike Place Market to implement the Pike Place Strategic Plan

"PEDESTRIANIZE PIKE PLACE MARKET"

●●●● (17 **Ensure growth is equitable and aligned with community goals**

●●●●● 31 Leverage underutilized commercial spaces to support community groups and cultural agencies

●●●●● 24 Direct additional resources and civic service investments to Downtown areas that rank highest on the City's Racial and Social Equity Composite Index (designate these areas as Community Resource Areas)

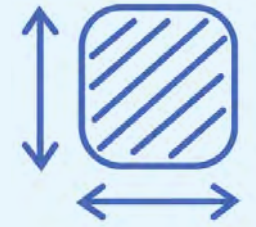
●●●●● 22 Explore new TIF opportunities to align future development with investment in community needs, including long-term affordable housing

●● (6 Expand language access for all planning and development processes Downtown

●●●●● 24 Ensure each project achieves potential co-benefits through transportation/utility projects, job creation, and public space creation

●●●●● 19 Explore ways to leverage community benefits agreements and other public benefit tools for major developments

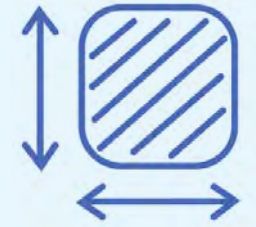
Make the most of every square foot *ONLINE SURVEY*




Support existing and future key industry clusters including maritime, tourism, information technology, professional services, arts, and green economy

- ²⁰ Increase local education and workforce training resources, including access to locally driven non-traditional educational routes
- ³⁴ Connect pathways to middle income jobs, particularly opportunities in healthcare, education, life sciences, and technology sectors
- ³⁰ Partner with large employers in maritime, tourism, information technology to create job pathways
- ²⁴ Elevate the quality of roads and water infrastructure in the CID and Pioneer Square
- ¹⁷ Connect educational institutions with employers and low-income residents
- ¹⁸ Plan for the needed expansion or accommodation of large scale, regional serving uses (major destinations, large employers)
- ⁸


Make the most of every square foot *ONLINE SURVEY*




Unlock development or open space opportunities on vacant/underutilized sites

 ³² Create “vertical neighborhoods” with increased density and mixed-use buildings around transit stations.

 ³⁹ Use underutilized publicly owned land to realize community benefits through development, open space, or infrastructure projects

 ³³ Enact needed infrastructure improvements and regulatory changes to enable privately owned vacant land to reach its full potential, including potential taxes on long-standing vacancies

 ¹⁶ Provide Downtown parking that is sufficient, but not excessive, to meet the needs of visitors

DIFFERING OPINIONS ON PARKING FOR RETAIL AND TOURISTS

Vision

Find our way



ONLINE SURVEY

Top voted goals:

1. Rethink and re-allocate space on streets to put people first [37 votes]
2. Make traveling through Downtown a safe and comfortable experience [34 votes]
3. Create a sustainable and resilient Downtown transportation system [22 votes]


Takeaways


- ▶ Activation and events need to be more visible/easy to find in the public realm
- ▶ Wayfinding systems are needed to help people move through Downtown (maps at bus stops, markers for important places)
- ▶ Separation of mobility types would make people feel safer to walk and bike
- ▶ Feeling that cars are prioritized and Downtown would benefit from a pedestrian -first mindset
- ▶ Using transportation should feel safe and be enjoyable

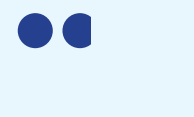
Find our way **ONLINE SURVEY**

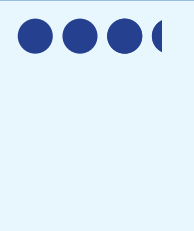


³⁷ **Rethink and re-allocate space on streets to put people first**

 ³² Advance a mix of seasonal, weekend, and in some cases, permanent restrictions for personal vehicle traffic to make areas of Downtown car-free or “car-lite”

 ³⁸ Pursue street transformations to create more space for walking, rolling, biking, transit and lingering or gathering


 ⁹ Co-create and implement innovative People Streets and Public Spaces concepts, such as community and mobility hubs and a pilot “Low Pollution Neighborhood”

 ¹⁶ Pursue major expansions of car-free gathering spaces in partnership with local venues, such as Lumen Field and T-Mobile Park, and alongside community groups, such as the Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority

 ²³ When providing maintenance, update the street to reflect right-of-way allocation needs that support adjacent land uses and planned transportation networks

³⁴ **Make traveling through Downtown a safe and comfortable experience**

 ²⁷ Focus investment to make Downtown more navigable to children, the elderly, and disabled populations, through solutions like seating, hill-climb assists, pedestrian lighting, shade, and more

 ¹⁷ Use High Injury Network (HIN) + Bike Pedestrian Safety Analysis (BPSA) data to inform investments and programming to calm traffic, reduce collisions, and slow down vehicles

*SUPPORT FOR CAR-LITE PROGRAMS,
AS LONG AS CURB LOGISTICS ARE
FIGURED OUT*

*"WE'VE TRIED TO MAKE PIONEER
SQUARE CAR-LITE AND IT'S
IMPACTED BUSINESS DELIVERIES."*

*"RETURN TO FREE TRANSIT
DOWNTOWN"*

Find our way **ONLINE SURVEY**



Continued - **Make traveling through Downtown a safe and comfortable experience**

- 8 “Daylight” every intersection in Downtown, supported by programming such as micromobility parking, greenery, and others
- 14 Pilot creative forms of emergency response and access such as through smaller vehicles and mountable infrastructure
- 17 Apply new policies to reduce the number of vehicle travel lanes on multi-lane streets with excess capacity, to “right-size” them for slower speeds and safer outcomes
- 14 Expand successful No Turn on Red pilot program to the entirety of Downtown, and continue to pursue “daylighting” opportunities, to eliminate confusion and make all intersections safer
- 35 Separate pedestrians from vehicles by physical barriers such as trees, parklets, and vehicle or bike parking

●●●● **Create a sustainable and resilient Downtown transportation system**

- 28 Implement more green streets designations with a particular focus on areas deficient in park space and tree canopy, such as Chinatown and the International District
- 27 Install pilots to de-pave streets, and pursue a strategy to increase tree canopy and green stormwater infrastructure

Find our way **ONLINE SURVEY**



Continued - **Create a sustainable and resilient Downtown transportation system**

-
- ¹⁹ Influence Downtown commuters to “flip their trips” away from personal vehicles to more efficient and sustainable travel options through existing and new programs

 - ¹² Explore mobility partnerships among public organizations, private firms, and foundations to accelerate sustainable mobility innovations

 - ¹⁷ Reduce off-street parking capacity and manage it holistically at a district level, to reduce demand for car trips and reimagine spaces for sustainable investment

 - ¹⁰ Leveraging the designation of a Low Pollution Neighborhood in Downtown to co-create sustainable mobility solutions with local communities
-

Design Downtown streets to support innovation and a

●●●●● ¹⁶ **thriving local economy**

-
- ²⁵ Continue to reduce permit requirements, with more flexibility for outdoor dining, food trucks, and other vending

 - ²³ Pilot adaptations of curb lanes for the benefit of local commerce, such as café seating, vending, and other programming – including in areas vacated by transit lanes (due to bus service changes with Link expansion)

 - ¹⁴ Repurpose “slip lanes”, dead ends, and other irregular street grid locations for local activities

 - ¹⁸ Use right-sized vehicles, such as e-cargo bikes, to showcase innovation in freight movement and pilot new curb uses for new methods for “last 50 feet” urban deliveries
-

Find our way **ONLINE SURVEY**



Continued - **Design Downtown streets to support innovation and a thriving local economy**

- 9 Partner with developers, private sector businesses, and event organizers on major street activations
- 18 Ensure the important roles of the Port of Seattle and related freight movement and logistics are considered as upgrades are made Downtown
- 6 Avoid expensive repair of “Areaways” for heavy vehicle use but instead provide more space to lighter delivery solutions and other gathering space

Celebrate the many unique cultures and histories of Downtown – especially its Indigenous population –

● 3 **throughout its transportation system and public spaces**

- 27 Reflect Indigenous art, culture, language, and gathering spaces throughout Downtown’s streets and public spaces, especially on the shoreline to honor Native cultures and our deep relationship with the water
- 24 Transform Pier 48 for public use for waterborne transportation, community space including a native space (cultural center or museum), and an installation that honors the history of Ballast Island
- 23 Expand passenger-only ferry and small boat travel options, furthering our connection to the water
- 22 Use transportation and public space investments to help repair past and current harms to BIPOC groups, in concert with Seattle’s transportation equity strategy
- 14 Advance People Streets and Public Spaces concepts, encouraging self-expression and neighborhood identity in the right-of-way conjunction with large events

Find our way *ONLINE SURVEY*



Use streets to help people navigate and find their way

●● 7 through a legible Downtown

●●●● 29 Stitch neighborhood divides through ground floor activations, re-design of space under I-5 at S Jackson, S King, and S Dearborn streets, and potential lidding of I-5 and BNSF railway tracks

●●●● 37 Create frequent and reliable transit service corridors as bus service is restructured downtown in concert with light rail system expansion, with transit consolidated on certain streets, and in creating great public spaces for folks transferring or waiting for transit

●● 8 Make approaches to the land from the water feel welcoming and clear through wayfinding, and provide safe opportunities for recreational canoeing and kayaking

●●● 12 Continue to install Seamless Seattle wayfinding columns and kiosks to aid navigation Downtown, and identify and expand publicly accessible “hill climbs”

●●●● 18 Capitalize on the Downtown street grid’s views of the Puget Sound, and pursue new pocket parks and enhance view corridors

● 5 Test pilots of sustainable, zero-emission autonomous vehicle technology in conjunction with large events

*"IT'S DIFFICULT TO NAVIGATE
DOWNTOWN WITHOUT
ELECTRONIC ASSISTANCE"*

Economic Development Technical Report

Date: December 19, 2025

Prepared for: Seattle Downtown Regional
Center Plan

Prepared by: BAE Urban Economics

Downtown Seattle Regional Center Plan

FINAL DRAFT

Economic, Housing, and Real Estate
Existing Conditions Report

Prepared for: City of Seattle

Prepared by: BAE

Thursday, December 11, 2025

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Summary of Findings and Policy Implications

This report provides a detailed analysis of economic, housing, and real estate market conditions in Downtown Seattle in support of the Downtown Seattle Regional Center Plan. Home to over 200,000 jobs and 47,000 residents, Downtown Seattle is the vibrant cultural and commercial heart of the Puget Sound Region. With a rich history and diversity of neighborhoods, communities, cultural landmarks and attractions, Downtown Seattle is undergoing a period of significant economic and social change, presenting both opportunities and challenges as Downtown looks to chart a course for equitable and sustainable development over the next twenty years and beyond.

Demographic Trends

Downtown comprises some of Seattle's fastest growing and most affluent neighborhoods as well as neighborhoods with relatively lower incomes, high socioeconomic vulnerability, and significant risk of economic displacement. In particular, Pioneer Square and the Chinatown-International District (CID) are two Downtown neighborhoods with a large number of lower income households and communities of color with heightened socioeconomic vulnerabilities.

Economic Trends

From small "mom and pop" retail shops to T-Mobile Park, Lumen Field, Pike Place Market and major businesses and civic institutions with a global impact, Downtown Seattle is home to a dynamic and diverse range of economic activities. Although the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally changed the way that people work, shop and play, Downtown Seattle continues to attract new investment, new businesses, and new workers across industry sectors.

- ***Employment by Industry.*** Making up two-thirds of total Downtown jobs, employment is dominated by the Services sector. This sector is also responsible for most of the employment growth Downtown and citywide, adding over 53,000 jobs Downtown and over 105,000 jobs in Seattle between 2010 and 2020. More detailed sectoral data from the U.S. Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics program indicates that these service jobs are largely in the Professional, Scientific, and Technical services sector and the Information sector, reflecting the strong position of the high-tech sector in Seattle and the broader Puget Sound Region.

- ***Employment by Occupation and Unemployment.*** The unemployment rates for residents living Downtown, in Seattle, and in the Region are low, with Downtown’s unemployment rate at 3.9 percent, below that for the City or Region. According to the US Census American Community Survey (ACS), the top three major industry sectors for Downtown employed residents between 2018 and 2022 were Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services at 28 percent of employed residents; Retail Trade at 18 percent of employed residents; and Information at eight percent of employed residents.
- ***Small Business Conditions.*** Seattle’s Downtown Activation Plan views small businesses as being a key component of a thriving downtown, providing ownership opportunities for entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds and filling vacant retail, restaurant, and office spaces with thriving businesses serving Downtown’s resident and worker population. The average number of employees for private businesses located in the Downtown subarea is under 20 persons per business, indicating the presence of a large number of small firms across a variety of sectors.

Real Estate Trends

Residential Trends

Downtown contains approximately 36,000 residential units, or nearly nine percent of the city’s overall residential inventory. Approximately 75 percent of all residential units Downtown were built since 2000, highlighting the significant amount of recent development in Downtown. The cost of housing Downtown is generally higher than elsewhere in the City, particularly in terms of rental rates in multifamily apartments. According to the US Housing and Urban Development Department (HUD) Downtown has a significantly higher share of lower-income households relative to the City and Region, and these households experience a significant rate of cost burden and other housing problems. Future policies should be structured to support these existing households to improve their housing conditions.

Retail Trends

As for almost all cities in North America, in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and amidst growing consumer preferences for on-line and/or omni-channel retail options, demand for downtown and citywide retail has decreased over the last decade, with negative net absorption of 630,000 square feet in Downtown Seattle, and 1.4 million square feet citywide. There is currently limited retail development in the planning pipeline and declining demand from retail users; as such future planning and economic development policies Downtown will likely focus less on adding new

space and more on how to best utilize existing retail space and possibly reposition some of this space for other commercial users, like arts and culture as well as entertainment and recreation.

Office Trends

Despite significant demand for office space Downtown prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, more recent trends indicate declining demand for offices in Downtown as well as the City and Region. Between the beginning of 2020 and the end of 2023 office vacancy rates more than tripled, rising from six percent to 22 percent. As return-to-work trends continue, monitoring the overall demand and health of the office sector will be critical to Downtown's success.

Lodging

As both a tourism and business hub for the City, Downtown Seattle has a considerable number of hotels at a range of price points. While there are hotels throughout Downtown, the majority of hotels are concentrated in the Pike-Market, Denny Triangle, and Commercial Core neighborhoods. There are six additional hotels in various stages of the proposed development pipeline. The hotel building stock is older, with a median age of 55 years old across all hotel classes.

Attractions and Entertainment

Downtown Seattle is an entertainment center for tourists and locals alike, with attractions from Pike Place Market and the Seattle Art Museum to Lumen Field. While tourism has not fully recovered to pre-pandemic levels, according to a tourism report from the Downtown Seattle Association the neighborhood saw a post-pandemic high of almost 3.5 million unique out-of-town visitors in the summer of 2023. Many Downtown destinations, including the Seattle Aquarium, surpassed the 2019 levels of out-of-town visitor foot traffic in 2023.

The Downtown Regional Center is also a hub for special events, including music events, parades, and protests. According to special event permit data, in 2023 the City issued permits for 37 special events for a total of 572,000 attendees.

Racial Equity Toolkit (RET) Outcomes

This analysis has been prepared considering the Racial Equity Toolkit (RET) outcomes that have been identified for the Downtown Plan Area. The RET outcomes are listed below along with proposed data metrics for measuring Downtown's ability to meet the outcomes.

Arts and Culture Representation: A thriving, creative community lives in, works in, and shapes the Downtown experience.

Proposed Metrics: 1) Number of jobs and businesses (including non-profit organizations) in the Arts and Recreation sector; 2) Availability of commercial space to accommodate arts and culture activities at present and in the future.

Access to Housing: Downtown offers diverse housing options that support where people are in their lives without creating a cost burden.

Proposed Metrics: 1) Number of housing units by type, tenure and affordability level; 2) Percent of households by income level facing housing overpayment and other housing problems, as defined by HUD.

Access to Employment and Creating Businesses: Downtown is a center for businesses of all sizes that create financial opportunity and stability for entrepreneurs, owners and employees.

Proposed Metrics: 1) number of jobs and small businesses by economic sector; 2) small business creation by business and owner type; 3) jobs by race and ethnicity, Beyond these specific RET outcomes and related metrics, this report is grounded in the racial and socioeconomic equity goals and focus of the Downtown Regional Center Plan process.

Policy Recommendations

The findings contained in this report have various direct implications for planning and public policy including, but not limited to, the following:

Invest in basic infrastructure to support equitable growth and community development. The Draft One Seattle Comprehensive Plan targets the addition of 60,000 jobs and 13,500 new housing units to the relatively compact 1.5 square mile Downtown area between 2024 and 2044. New investments in Downtown’s public realm and basic physical and social infrastructure will be required to sustain this level of growth while also ensuring that existing communities enjoy the benefits of new planned development and economic activity.

Support community development programs and anti-displacement policies in Downtown’s socioeconomically vulnerable neighborhoods. While Downtown has on average comparatively high household incomes and rates of educational attainment, there is tremendous variation in socioeconomic conditions across Downtown

neighborhoods. The Regional Center Plan should build on existing efforts and community partnerships to identify policies and programs that support equitable development and anti-displacement in Downtown's most vulnerable communities like Pioneer Square and the CID.

Promote efforts to ensure a diversity of businesses by size and industry sector.

Downtown contains both an incredible diversity of small, locally-owned businesses as well as many larger public- and private-sector employers. Understanding that the percentage of employees reporting to work for a traditional five-day work week is unlikely to return to pre-COVID levels, efforts should continue to provide strategic marketing, workforce training, and other types of support to all types and sizes of businesses across Downtown's distinct neighborhoods.

Identify opportunities for diversifying Downtown's housing stock by type, tenure and income-levels served. Over 75% of Downtown's housing stock was added since 2020, and additional housing development over the next decades is expected to make Downtown the city's largest residential neighborhood. Affordable rental housing built using low-income housing credits comprises an important part of Downtown's supply, but there is still an insufficient supply of housing to serve the area's lowest-income residents, including individuals and families with special needs. As Downtown transitions to a more mixed-use area, every opportunity should be taken to identify opportunities for diversifying and growing the Regional Center's housing stock by type, tenure, and affordability.

Plan for retail and service uses strategically. With limited retail development in the pipeline and declining demand for traditional brick and mortar retail, future policies should focus on how to best utilize existing retail space and possibly reposition some of this space for other commercial users, like arts and culture as well as entertainment and recreation.

Identify strategic opportunities for the adaptive reuse of office uses. Despite significant demand for office space Downtown prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, more recent trends indicate declining demand for offices Downtown as well as the city and region. As return-to-work trends continue, there will likely be steady demand for the highest quality and best located office space while older and/or poorly positioned office space will struggle to compete for office users; opportunities for the adaptive reuse of office space should continue to be explored. Conversions of certain existing office space to residential uses should be considered as feasible as well as conversions to live-work and/or arts and culture uses in specific locations.

Leverage Downtown's role as the cultural, entertainment, and attractions hub of the city and region. As Downtown evolves economically, continue to support investments in commercial uses (e.g. lodging and food service) and visitor-serving infrastructure to make Downtown the entertainment hub of the Pacific Northwest region.

Introduction

Home to over 200,000 jobs and 47,000 residents, Downtown Seattle is the vibrant cultural and commercial heart of the Puget Sound region. Within a relatively compact area, Downtown comprises a rich diversity of neighborhoods, communities, businesses, and cultural/arts institutions, all of which face a variety of opportunities and challenges in the current rapidly changing economic environment. In this context, BAE Urban Economics (BAE) has prepared this Economic, Housing, and Real Estate Existing Conditions report profiling Downtown Seattle in support of the Regional Center Plan currently being prepared on behalf of the City by Agency Landscape + Planning and a team of consulting partners.

Following this introduction, the report provides an in-depth analysis of economic, housing, and real estate market characteristics and trends in the Downtown Area, including data regarding socioeconomic and racial equity, affordable housing needs, displacement and gentrification risks, and neighborhood small businesses development. In addition, this analysis includes information on capital infrastructure needs along with potential funding and financing strategies to support future economic development.

Information from this analysis will be leveraged to support subsequent phases of plan preparation, including the development of goals and strategies that are based in a thorough understanding of the area's economic, housing, and real estate conditions and trends.

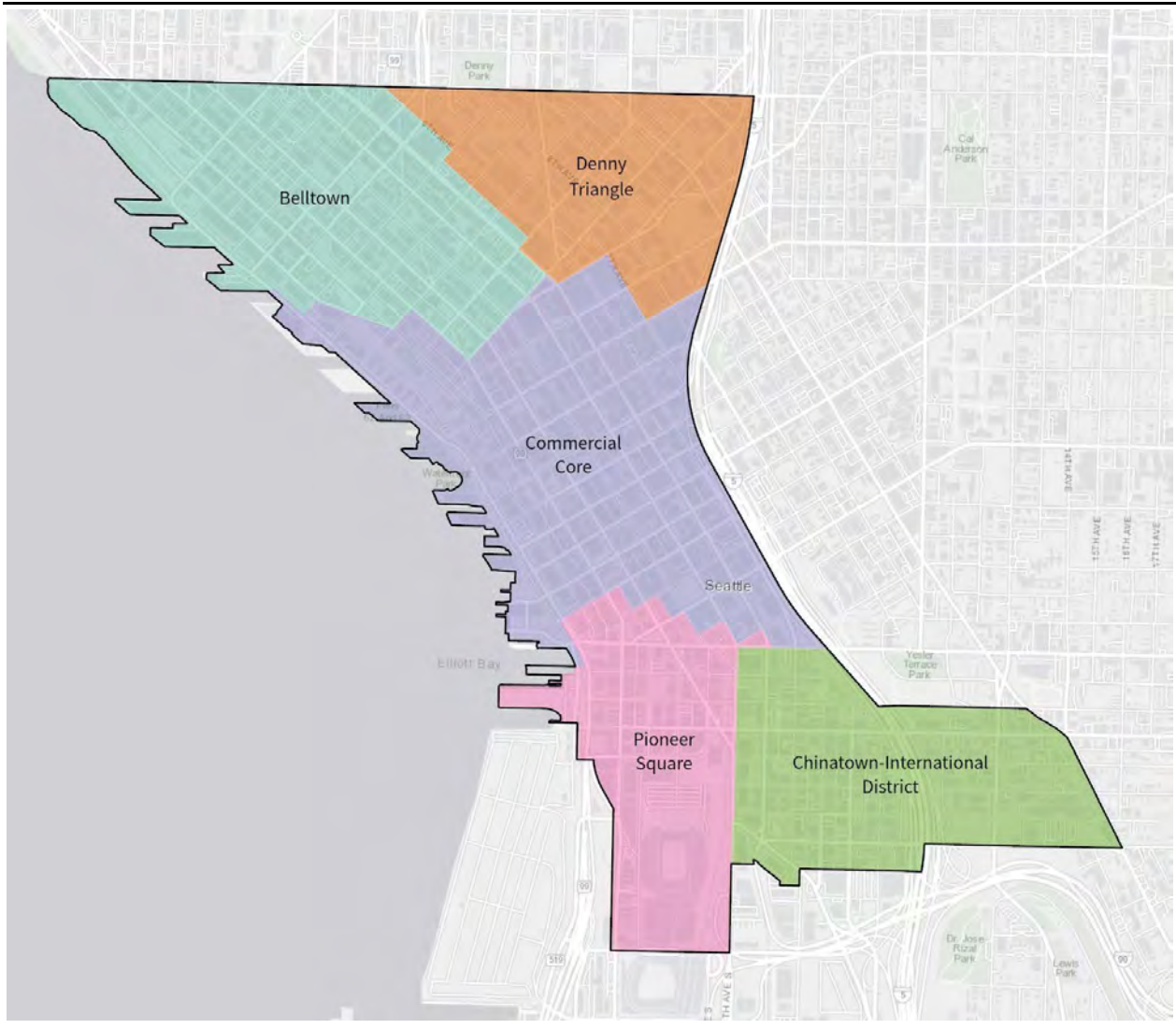
Area Overview

The Downtown Regional Center Plan area comprises approximately 1.5 square miles, or less than two percent of Seattle's total land area. Within this relatively compact area there are five distinct neighborhoods, each with its own set of unique economic characteristics. Displayed below in Figure 1, these neighborhoods include as follows:

- Denny Triangle
- Belltown
- Commercial Core
- Pioneer Square
- Chinatown- International District

As feasible, the following report will describe economic and real estate conditions in individual neighborhoods in comparison to the Plan Area as whole.

Figure 1: Downtown Regional Center Neighborhoods



Sources: City of Seattle; BAE, 2024.

Methodology and Data Sources

Economic and real estate market conditions in the Plan Area have been analyzed using the most current available secondary data from the City, the State of Washington, the US Census, and private data vendors. In addition, the analysis relies on primary research conducted by BAE on local economic and real estate market conditions.

Related Economic Development and Planning Efforts

In addition to the Regional Center Plan, the Downtown Plan Area is the focus of numerous community planning and economic development efforts, including through the Draft One Seattle Plan. Ongoing planning, economic development and housing initiatives with direct relevance to this report are referenced throughout this report including, but not limited to, the following key planning and economic development plans and activities:

[Downtown Activation Plan](#)

- [Downtown Seattle Association Programs and Services](#)
- [Downtown, Pioneer Square, Chinatown/ID and Tourism Improvement Area](#)
- [Waterfront Seattle](#)
- [Pioneer Square Alliance](#)
- [South Downtown Hub](#)

Select City of Seattle Programs:

- [Seattle ReStored](#) (Office of Economic Development)
- [Seattle Good Business Learning Labs](#) (Office of Economic Development)
- [Tenant Improvement Fund](#) (Office of Economic Development)
- [Storefront Repair Fund](#) (Office of Economic Development)
- [Equitable Development Initiative](#) and related [Equitable Development Zoning](#) (Office of Planning & Community Development)
- [Strategic Investment Fund](#) (Office of Planning & Community Development)

Estimated Job and Housing Growth, 2024- 2044

The City's Draft One Seattle Comprehensive Plan has provided growth targets for the City as whole and each of its Regional Centers. For Downtown, the total job growth estimate is 60,000 total jobs, or approximately one-third of all jobs in the City during the period from 2023 to 2044. In terms of housing units, the Comprehensive Plan estimates that Downtown Seattle will add 13,500 new homes, or approximately 17 percent of all estimated new housing units in Seattle as whole between 2024 and 2044 as Downtown becomes Seattle's largest residential neighborhood.

Demographic Overview

Other analyses being prepared for the Downtown Regional Center Plan will provide detailed demographic data and analysis. For the purpose of setting the context for subsequent sections of the report, the following section provides an overview of demographic variables with particular relevance to economic development. For the selected data, the Downtown Area is compared to the City of Seattle and the Puget Sound region.

Population and Household Trends

As of 2023, the Downtown Regional Center had a population of 47,859 according to estimates from the Washington Office of Financial Management, as summarized in Table 1. Downtown's population grew by approximately 76 percent between 2010 and 2023, significantly outpacing the growth in the City of Seattle and the Puget Sound Region as a whole. The Regional Center had an estimated household population of 44,489 residents and 29,940 households in 2023, for an average household size of 1.49 people. Downtown's 2023 average household size was smaller than that of the City of Seattle and the Puget Sound Region, at 2.02 and 2.51 respectively. The area has a sizable population living in group quarters, estimated at 3,370 residents in 2023, seven percent of the total subarea population.

Based on 2020 Census data, the group quarters population is overwhelmingly made up of approximately 2,260 persons the Census reports as being in "other noninstitutional facilities," a category that includes homeless individuals, both sheltered and unsheltered. The second largest group quarters population Downtown in 2020, at 849 persons, is in correctional facilities, due to the presence of the King County Correctional Facility. There are also approximately 250 people reported in student housing.

As also shown in Table 1, according to the American Community Survey the median age Downtown between 2018 and 2022 was 34.6 years old, which is close to the City of Seattle's median age of 35.4 years old and younger than the Puget Sound Region's median age of 37.5 years old. The median age in Downtown decreased by 3.6 years between 2010 and 2023, likely as a result of younger households moving into the new residential development in the Regional Center. over the same time period, the median age decreased by 1.0 years in the City and increased by 0.8 years in the Region.

Table 1: Population and Household Trends, 2010- 2023

	Downtown Subarea			City of Seattle			Puget Sound Region		
	2010	2023	% Change	2010	2023	% Change	2010	2023	% Change
Total Population	27,178	47,859	76.1%	608,174	779,200	28.1%	3,690,942	4,437,100	20.2%
Household Population	22,714	44,489	95.9%	583,631	750,201	28.5%	3,616,747	4,356,039	20.4%
Households (a)	16,791	29,940	78.3%	283,486	371,325	31.0%	1,455,406	1,736,122	19.3%
Avg. Household Size (b)	1.35	1.49	9.8%	2.06	2.02	-1.9%	2.49	2.51	1.0%
Group Quarters Population	4,512	3,370	-25.3%	24,699	28,999	17.4%	74,195	81,061	9.3%

	Downtown Subarea			City of Seattle			Puget Sound Region		
	2010	2022	% Change	2010	2022	% Change	2010	2022	% Change
Median Age	38.2	34.6	-9.3%	36.4	35.4	-2.8%	36.7	37.5	2.1%

Notes:

(a) Households represents the number of occupied housing units, per OFM data.

(b) Average household size is calculated by household population divided by occupied housing units, per OFM data.

Sources: City of Seattle, Washington Office of Financial Management, American Community Survey 5- Year Estimates, Agency; BAE, 2024.

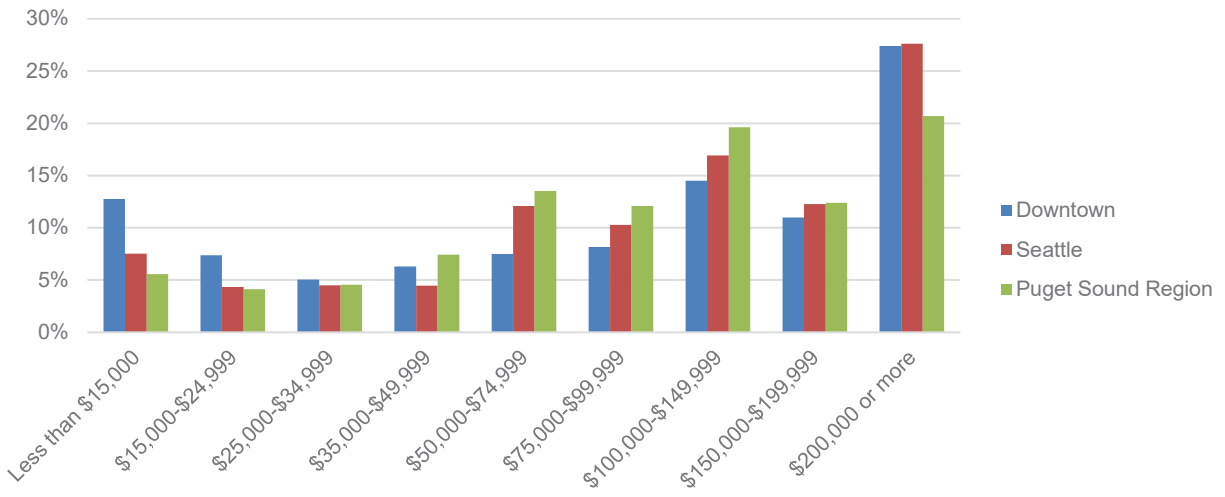
Subarea Geographies: Population numbers - UC Boundaries. Age - 2020 Census Block Groups.

Income

Between 2018 and 2022, the median household income in the Downtown Regional Center was approximately \$111,100, slightly below the City’s median household income of \$116,100 and slightly above the Region’s median household income of \$106,200, according to the American Community Survey. However, as shown in Figure 2, the per capita income in Downtown was well above the per capita income of Seattle and the Puget Sound Region, at approximately \$95,000 compared to \$77,600 and \$57,300, respectively. This finding is in line with the Regional Center’s smaller household size and younger demographic, as there are likely more young professional single- person or two- person households without children.

There are significant differences in income across Downtown neighborhoods. More than half of downtown households reported earning over \$100,000 per year and more than a quarter of households make over \$200,000 per year. The Regional Center, however, has a larger share of lower- income households than the City or Region, with approximately 30 percent of households making less than \$50,000 per year, compared to approximately 21 percent in Seattle and 22 percent in the Puget Sound Region. Almost 13 percent of the households in Downtown made less than \$15,000 per year, well above the comparable share in the City and Region.

Figure 2: Household and Per Capita Income, 2018-2022



	<u>Downtown Subarea</u>	<u>City of Seattle</u>	<u>Puget Sound Region</u>
Median HH Income (a)	\$111,065	\$116,068	\$106,174
Per Capita Income	\$94,948	\$77,616	\$57,332

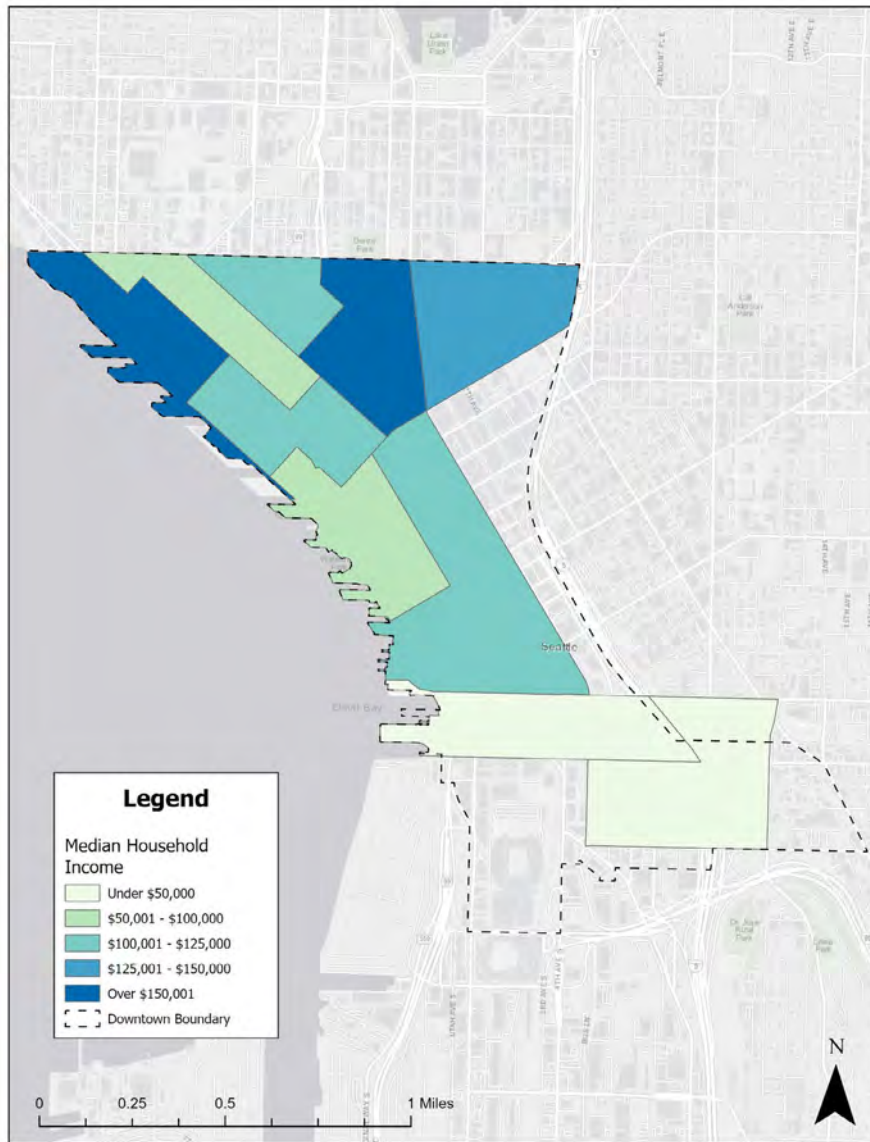
Notes:

(a) Median HH Income for Subarea calculated using a median income calculator.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey Tables B19001, B19013, and B19301; BAE, 2024. Subarea Geographies: 2020 Census Block Groups.

The median household income Downtown varies greatly by geography, as shown in Figure 3. The median household income was higher in the census tracts in the northern portion of the Regional Center (primarily Denny Triangle and parts of Belltown) than in the southern portion of the Regional Center (Pioneer Square and the Chinatown- International District). There is also a concentration of higher- income households in the northern portion of Downtown located near the growing technology hub in South Lake Union.

Figure 3: Median Household Income, 2018-2022



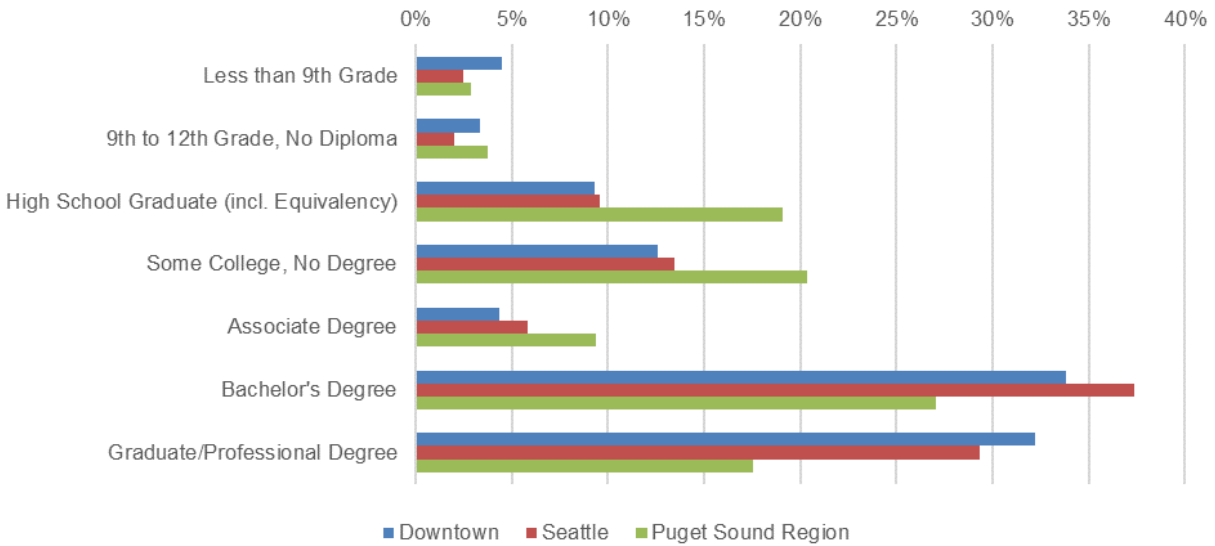
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey Table S1903; BAE, 2024.
Subarea Geography: 2020 Census Tracts.

Education

According to the US Census, between 2018 and 2022 Downtown residents had relatively high levels of educational attainment on average, on par with the Seattle residents overall with approximately 66 percent of residents over age 25 having a bachelor's degree or higher, and approximately 92 percent of residents over age 25 having a high school diploma or equivalency, as shown in Figure 4. Almost one third of Downtown residents over the age of 25 had a graduate or professional degree, slightly above the educational attainment rate in the City and well above the attainment rate in the

Region. Strikingly, there are no Seattle Public Schools within the Downtown Regional Center.

Figure 4: Educational Attainment, Population Age 25+, 2018- 2022



	<u>Downtown Subarea</u>	<u>City of Seattle</u>	<u>Puget Sound Region</u>
Population 25+ with Bachelor's Degree or Higher (%)	66.0%	66.7%	44.6%
Population 25+ High School Graduate (incl. Equivalency) or Higher (%)	92.2%	95.6%	93.4%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018- 2022 American Community Survey Tables S1501 and B15002; BAE, 2024.
Subarea Geographies: 2020 Census Block Groups.

Racial and Social Equity

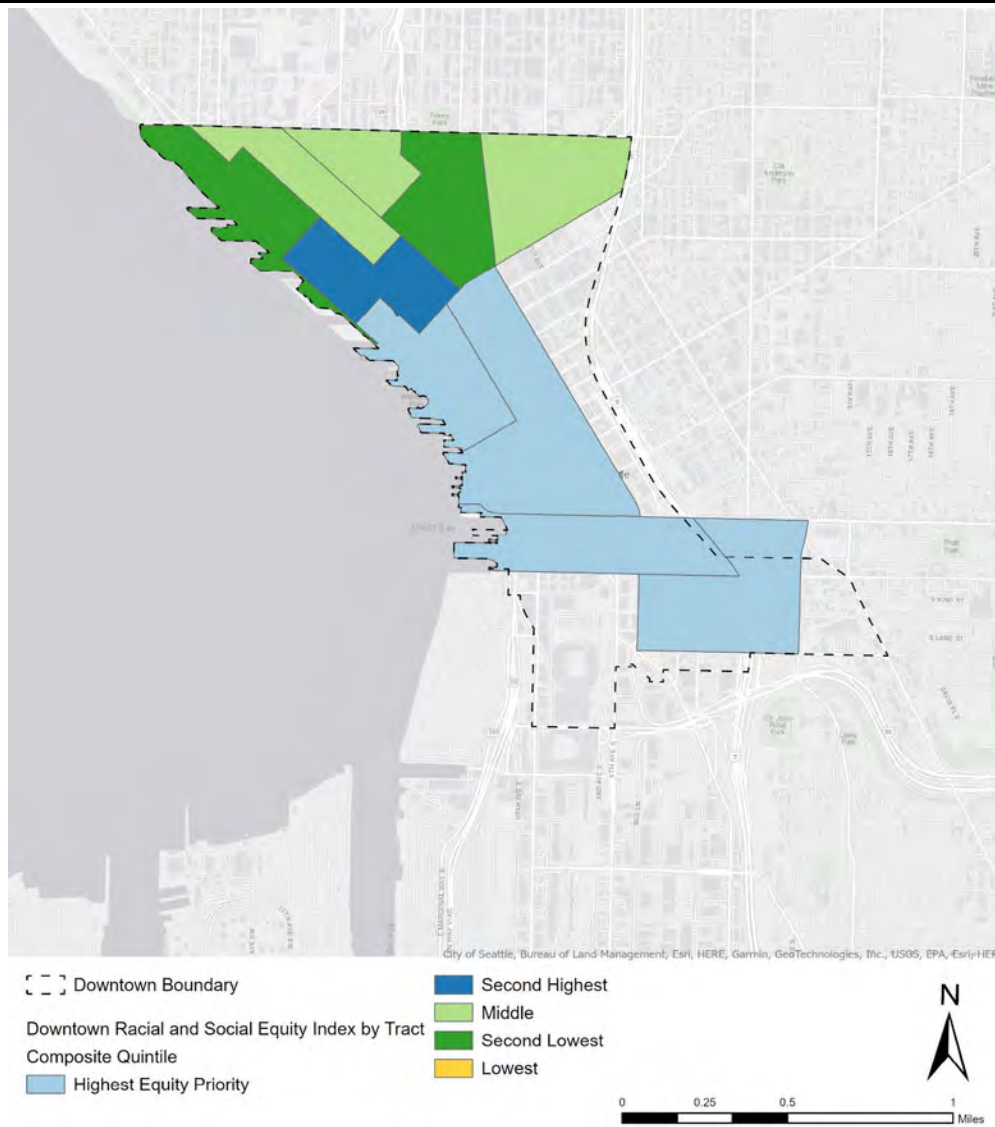
The City of Seattle has developed a composite racial and social equity index to *aid in the identification of City planning, program and investment priorities.*¹ This census tract tool was last updated in 2023 based on a variety of indicators, including metrics related to poverty, race and ethnicity, public health, disability status and other factors related to racial and socioeconomic equity as identified by the City. The three sub-indices that make up the composite index are:

- Race, English Language Learners & Origins Index (persons of color, English language learners, and foreign- born)
- Socioeconomic Disadvantage Index (poverty and education)
- Health Disadvantage Index (life expectancy, diabetes, obesity, poor mental health, asthma, and other disabilities)

¹ A full description of the data and methodology used to create this index is available at <https://data-seattlecitygis.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/3a6bcc7fa4c14c4daabdb1cd8f329758/explore>

As shown in Figure 5, the Downtown Regional Center Area includes both “highest equity priority” neighborhoods (e.g., Pioneer Square and Chinatown- International District, which have a highest equity priority for all three sub- indices) and neighborhoods with relatively low equity priority rankings (e.g. Belltown and Denny Triangle). These disparities are reflected in the income inequality noted above and have implications for economic, housing, and real estate conditions and trends as described in the following sections.

Figure 5: Racial and Social Equity Index: Equity Priority Ranking



Source: City of Seattle, 2023; BAE, 2024.
 Subarea Geography: 2020 Census Tracts.

Economic Conditions

As Seattle’s “preeminent” Regional Center,² Downtown has the city’s largest concentration of businesses and employment across economic sectors. Historically, Downtown Seattle has been an important driver of tax revenue for the City, including from sources like sales taxes, property taxes, and hotel taxes. These revenues are critical for the long- term provision of key services not just in and around Downtown, but citywide. The following section of the report profiles the Downtown economy with a focus on key sectors as identified by the City’s Office of Economic Development (OED³), the Downtown Activation Plan and the City’s Draft One Seattle Comprehensive Plan⁴.

Jobs by Industry Sector

Downtown saw a substantial increase in employment between 2010 and 2020, with overall employment increasing by 42 percent, or over 60,000 jobs, from 143,237 to 203,477 (see Table 2). Downtown is the largest employment node in Seattle, accounting for 29 percent of the city’s jobs as of 2020.

Making up two- thirds of total 2020 jobs Downtown and 54 percent citywide, employment is dominated by the Services sector. This sector is also responsible for most of the employment growth Downtown and citywide, adding over 53,000 jobs Downtown and over 105,000 jobs in Seattle between 2010 and 2020.

More detailed sectoral data from the U.S. Census Longitudinal Employer- Household Dynamics program indicates that these service jobs are largely in the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services sector and the Information sector, reflecting the strong high- tech economy of the Puget Sound Region.

The two other sectors with over 10 percent of total jobs Downtown are Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate (FIRE) and Government. Employment in these two sectors was stable over the 2010 to 2020 decade. Retail Trade and Wholesale Trade, Transportation, and Utilities (WTU) both showed job growth of nearly 40 percent over the 10- year period.

² www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/OPCD/OngoingInitiatives/SeattlesComprehensivePlan/CouncilAdopted2020_NeighborhoodPlanning.pdf

³ <https://www.seattle.gov/office-of-economic-development/industries-and-workforce#:~:text=OED%20strategically%20focuses%20on%20the,sciences%2C%20health%20services%20and%20construction>

⁴ <https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/OPCD/SeattlePlan/OneSeattlePlanDraftPlan2024.pdf>

Table 2: Jobs by Industry, 2010- 2020

Downtown Subarea						
Industry	2010		2020		Change, 2010-2020	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Construction/Resources	1,545	1.1%	3,449	1.7%	1,904	123.2%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate (FIRE)	20,323	14.2%	20,819	10.2%	496	2.4%
Manufacturing	2,482	1.7%	2,457	1.2%	-25	-1.0%
Retail	7,193	5.0%	10,010	4.9%	2,817	39.2%
Services	82,569	57.6%	135,787	66.7%	53,218	64.5%
Wholesale Trade, Transportation, Utilities (WTU)	5,124	3.6%	7,072	3.5%	1,948	38.0%
Government	23,891	16.7%	23,705	11.6%	-186	-0.8%
Education	110	0.1%	134	0.1%	24	21.8%
Total	143,237	100.0%	203,477	100.0%	60,240	42.1%

City of Seattle						
Industry	2010		2020		Change, 2010-2020	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Construction/Resources	20,108	3.9%	32,420	4.7%	12,312	61.2%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate (FIRE)	35,425	6.9%	38,427	5.6%	3,002	8.5%
Manufacturing	27,527	5.4%	25,978	3.8%	-1,549	-5.6%
Retail	39,095	7.6%	92,039	13.3%	52,944	135.4%
Services	267,479	52.1%	372,713	53.9%	105,234	39.3%
Wholesale Trade, Transportation, Utilities (WTU)	30,934	6.0%	36,285	5.2%	5,351	17.3%
Government	48,713	9.5%	50,694	7.3%	1,981	4.1%
Education	44,511	8.7%	37,581	5.4%	-6,930	-15.6%
Total	513,792	100.0%	691,359	100.0%	177,567	34.6%

Note: Totals may not match sums due to rounding.

Sources: City of Seattle, 2020; BAE, 2024.

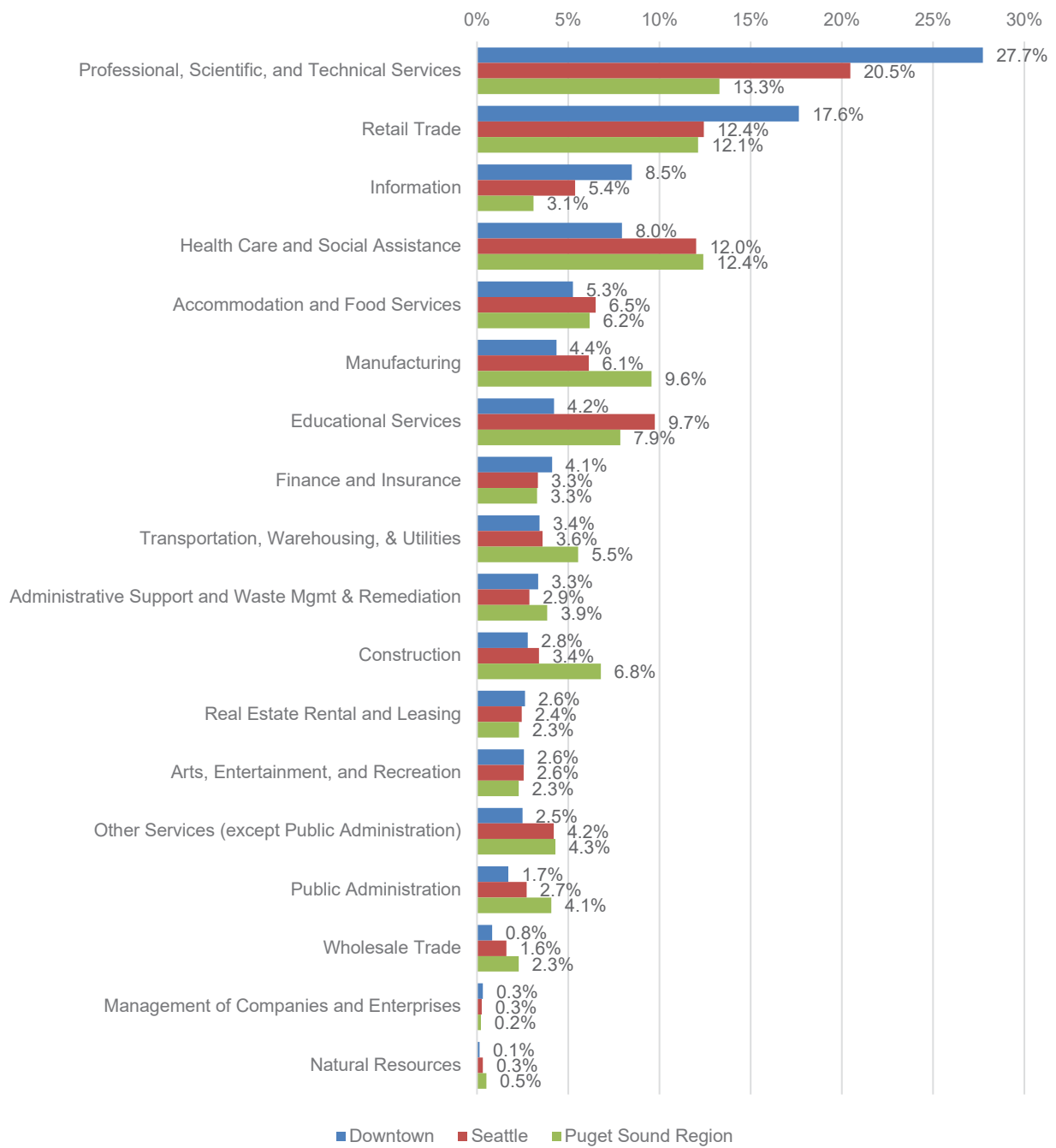
Subarea Geography: Regional Center Boundaries.

Major Employers located Downtown include private sector technology companies like Amazon, major retailers like Nordstrom and public- sector agencies such as the City of Seattle, King County, and the State of Washington. Despite the economic dislocation caused by the COVID- 19 pandemic, Downtown continues to attract businesses and long- time businesses such as Amazon continue to pursue expansion plans in and around the Downtown area.

Resident Employment by Industry and Occupation

According to the American Community Survey, the top three industry sectors for employed residents of the Downtown between 2018 and 2022 were Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services at 28 percent of employed residents; Retail Trade at 18 percent of employed residents; and Information at eight percent of employed residents. The distribution by sector indicates that residents' jobs reflect the office and retail-based orientation of Downtown's economy, two sectors greatly impacted by remote work. As shown in Figure 6 on the following page, while the distribution of employed Downtown residents by major industry sector was generally aligned with the citywide distribution, the top three sectors noted above made up greater proportions of employment Downtown than for the city overall. Downtown had smaller proportions of residents working in Health Care and Social Assistance, Manufacturing, and Educational Services. The unemployment rates for residents living Downtown, Seattle, and the Region are low, with Downtown's rate of 3.9 percent below that for the city or region.

Figure 6: Employed Residents by Industry, 2018- 2022



	Downtown Subarea	City of Seattle	Puget Sound Region
Unemployment Rate (a)	3.9%	4.2%	4.6%

Notes:

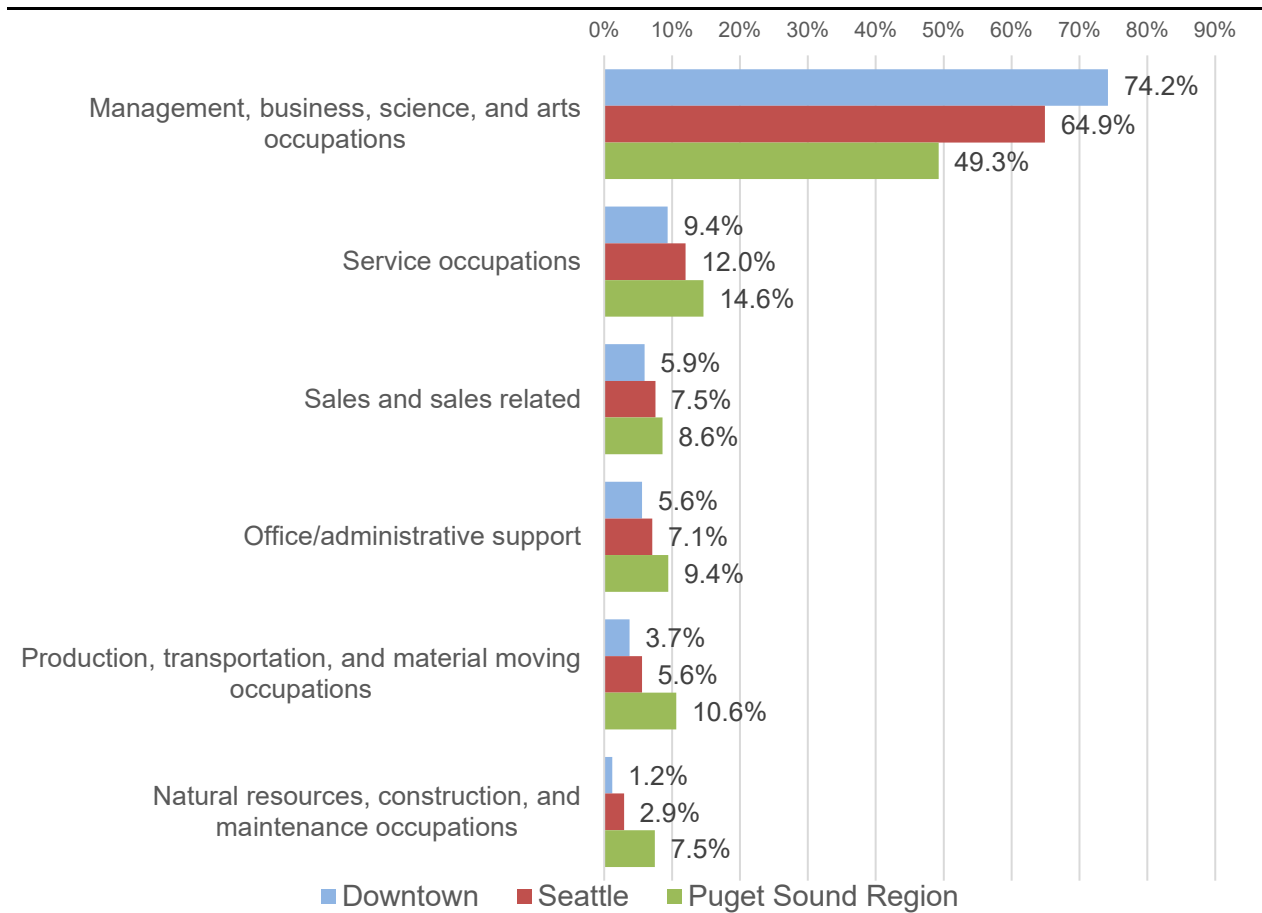
(a) Resident employment and unemployment rate for the population aged 16 years and over.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018- 2022 American Community Survey Tables S2403, S2301, B24030, and B23025; BAE, 2024.

Subarea Geography: 2020 Census Block Groups.

The labor force in Downtown Seattle is strongly oriented toward professional occupations; nearly three- fourths of Downtown’s working residents are in management, business, science, and arts occupations, compared to only 65 percent citywide and less than 50 percent regionally (see Figure 7). Downtown has comparatively small proportions of residents in service, sales, and office/administrative, and extremely small proportions in traditional “blue collar” occupations such as construction, maintenance, production, and transportation.

Figure 7: Employed Residents by Occupation, 2018- 2022



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018- 2022 American Community Survey Table C24010; BAE, 2024. Subarea Geography: 2020 Census Block Groups.

Downtown Workers by Race and Hispanic Origin

The race and Hispanic origin of workers employed Downtown reflect the overall mix for the workers living in the City or working in the City, with approximately 70 percent of primary jobs held by white residents, 18 percent held by Asian residents, six percent by Black residents, and the remainder across other groups (see Table 3). Between seven and eight percent of workers employed downtown are of Hispanic origin.

Downtown shows a higher proportion of Asian workers among those living there (who may be working anywhere, not just Downtown), and a lower proportion of working white residents. One-third of Downtown’s working residents are Asian, and 56 percent are white. The proportions of other resident race/ethnic groups are similar to that of those working Downtown or citywide and of employed residents of Seattle.

Table 3: Downtown Workers and Employed Residents by Race and Ethnicity, 2021

	Primary Jobs			
	Downtown Subarea		City of Seattle	
	Workers Living Downtown	Workers Employed Downtown	Workers Living in City	Workers Employed in City
Jobs by Worker Race				
White Alone	55.9%	70.8%	70.8%	69.5%
Black or African American Alone	6.6%	6.0%	6.0%	6.5%
American Indian or Alaska Native Alone	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%	0.8%
Asian Alone	33.0%	17.8%	18.0%	18.5%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Alone	0.3%	0.6%	0.4%	0.6%
Two or More Race Groups	3.5%	4.1%	4.1%	4.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Jobs by Worker Ethnicity				
Not Hispanic or Latino	92.0%	92.7%	92.5%	91.8%
Hispanic or Latino	8.0%	7.3%	7.5%	8.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note: Primary jobs only.

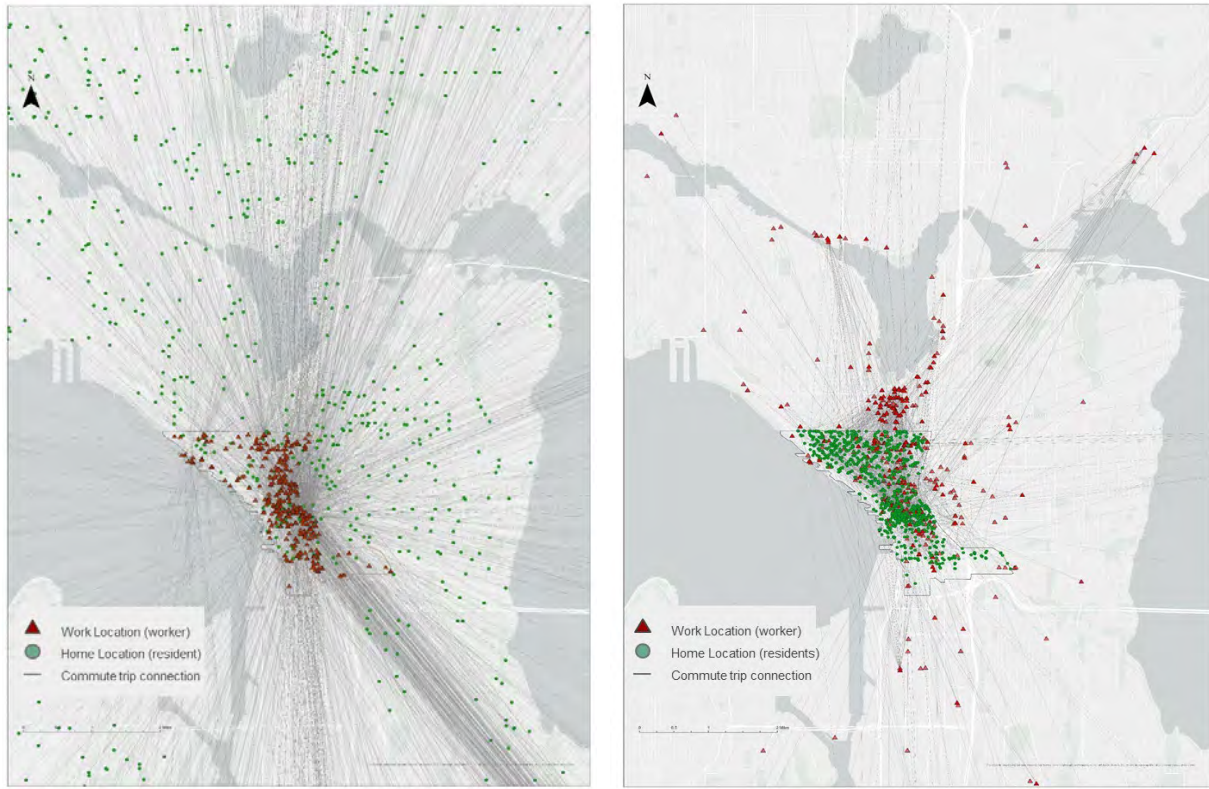
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2002- 2021); BAE, 2024.
Subarea Geography: Regional Center Boundaries.

Jobs/Employed Residents Balance and Commute Flows

Jobs far outnumber employed residents in the Downtown Subarea; there are over 200,000 jobs Downtown, and the ACS commute data shown in Table 4 below shows approximately 25,000 employed residents. As illustrated by the University of Washington Commute Survey data shown in Figure 8, Downtown residents also tend to work Downtown or nearby, especially in the adjacent South Lake Union neighborhood. Workers in- commute to Downtown from throughout Seattle and the region.

Downtown residents have an unusual mix of commute modes according to the ACS, as shown in Table 4 on the following page. Because of the tendency of Downtown residents to also work Downtown or nearby, a notably large proportion, 32 percent, usually walk to work, and only 20 percent drive or ride in a car, truck, or van. By comparison, the most common means of transportation to work citywide is in a car, truck, or van, and only nine percent of employed residents citywide walk to work. Nearly one- third of Downtown's employed residents work from home. It should be noted that this data spans the 2018 through 2022 period, during which commute patterns may have seen significant shifts due to the Covid- 19 pandemic. The University of Washington Commute Survey data shows generally similar patterns for respondents living Downtown, with some variation depending on weekday. The commute mode with the greatest variation by weekday was working from home, with almost half of respondents working from home on Mondays compared to one- third working from home on Thursdays.

Figure 8: Inbound and Outbound Commute Trips, Downtown, 2022



Note: The map on the left shows the inbound commute trips for worksites in the Downtown areas (N=4,668). The map on the right shows the outbound commute trips for Downtown residents (N=1,469). On both maps, the green dots represent the commuters home locations, the red triangle representing worksites and the gray lines represent the commute trip (connection) to show the volume of the trips and direction.

Sources: University of Washington, Seattle Commute Survey, 2022; BAE 2024.

Table 4: Means of Transportation to Work

Means of Transportation	Downtown Subarea		City of Seattle		Puget Sound Region	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Car, Truck, or Van	5,051	19.9%	194,885	43.9%	1,528,875	69.2%
Drove alone	4,551	18.0%	171,426	38.6%	1,340,026	60.7%
Carpooled	500	2.0%	23,459	5.3%	188,849	8.5%
Public Transportation (a)(b)	3,573	14.1%	69,441	15.6%	150,011	6.8%
Walked	8,082	31.9%	41,016	9.2%	80,193	3.6%
Other (c)	567	2.2%	18,798	4.2%	45,840	2.1%
Worked from home	8,059	31.8%	120,179	27.0%	404,483	18.3%
Total (d)	25,332	100.0%	444,319	100.0%	2,209,402	100.0%

Notes:

(a) Excludes taxicabs.

(b) Includes subways and elevated light railways.

(c) Includes taxicabs, motorcycles, bicycles, and other means.

(d) Totals may not match totals in other tables due to independent rounding.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2018- 2022 Table B08101; BAE, 2024.

Subarea Geography: 2020 Census Tracts.

Small Business Conditions

Seattle's *Downtown Activation Plan* views small businesses as being a key component of a thriving downtown, providing ownership opportunities for entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds and filling vacant retail, restaurant, and office spaces with thriving businesses serving Downtown's resident and worker population. Based on the data in Table 5, the average number of employees for private businesses located in the Downtown subarea is under 20 persons per business, indicating the presence of a large number of small firms. Many of the industry sectors have notably smaller average firm sizes; for example, Real Estate, Rental & Leasing businesses have an average of 10.1 employees per firm, and Administrative, Support & Waste Management Services businesses have an average of 10.4 employees per firm. Among the top sectors by number of total reported employees, Professional, Scientific & Tech Services businesses averaged 18.6 employees, Accommodation & Food Services averaged 22.9 employees, Retail Trade averaged 16.7 employees, and Other Services (except Public Administration) averaged 12.5 employees.

Table 5: Business Types Summary, Downtown Subarea, 2023

Business Type	NAICS Code	Businesses		Employees		Average Employees/ Business
		Number	% of Subarea Total	Number	% of Subarea Total	
Professional, Scientific & Tech Services	54	1,882	23.5%	35,047	22.9%	18.6
Accommodation & Food Services	72	723	9.0%	16,590	10.8%	22.9
Retail Trade	44-45	637	8.0%	10,643	6.9%	16.7
Other Services (except Public Administration)	81	604	7.5%	7,570	4.9%	12.5
Real Estate, Rental & Leasing	53	542	6.8%	5,483	3.6%	10.1
Finance & Insurance	52	531	6.6%	21,738	14.2%	40.9
Health Care & Social Assistance	62	440	5.5%	8,883	5.8%	20.2
Information	51	362	4.5%	8,965	5.8%	24.8
Public Administration	92	304	3.8%	14,154	9.2%	46.6
Administrative, Support & Waste Management Services	56	258	3.2%	2,694	1.8%	10.4
Construction	23	204	2.5%	2,718	1.8%	13.3
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	71	129	1.6%	3,354	2.2%	26.0
Manufacturing	33	127	1.6%	4,059	2.6%	32.0
Transportation & Warehousing	48-49	119	1.5%	4,427	2.9%	37.2
Wholesale Trade	42	117	1.5%	2,319	1.5%	19.8
Educational Services	61	107	1.3%	2,162	1.4%	20.2
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	11	17	0.2%	215	0.1%	12.6
Management of Companies & Enterprises	55	17	0.2%	1,169	0.8%	68.8
Mining	21	5	0.1%	44	0.0%	8.8
Utilities	22	2	0.0%	17	0.0%	8.5
Unclassified Establishments	99	879	11.0%	1,095	0.7%	1.2
Total		8,006	100.0%	153,346	100.0%	19.2

Notes: The table summarizes Esri Business Analyst's Business Summary, which utilizes 2023 Data Axle business information and 2020 Census block groups to allocate businesses to custom geographies. Learn more: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/0bcc5657bba04d8db928eab87232e124>

Sources: Esri Business Analyst, 2023; BAE, 2024
Subarea Geography: Regional Center Boundaries.

The retail and food services sector is home to many small businesses, with an average reported size of 16.0 employees per business for the Downtown subarea, as shown in Table 6. For the largest employers Downtown by retail subsector, Food Services & Drinking Places (which employs nearly half of the larger retail/food services sector’s workers) shows an average size of 15.3 employees per business, Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, & Music Stores shows only 5.9 employees on average per business, and Food & Beverage Stores shows 10.4 employees on average per business. Two subsectors, Clothing, Clothing Accessories, Shoe and Jewelry Stores, and General Merchandise Stores, appear to be dominated by larger employers.

Table 6: Retail Trade and Food Services Summary, Downtown, 2023

Business Type	NAICS Code	Businesses		Employees		Average Employees/Business
		Number	% of Subarea Total	Number	% of Subarea Total	
Food Services & Drinking Places	722	652	50.5%	9,991	48.4%	15.3
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, & Music Stores	451	185	14.3%	1,088	5.3%	5.9
Clothing, Clothing Accessories, Shoe and Jewelry S	448	139	10.8%	4,075	19.7%	29.3
Food & Beverage Stores	445	117	9.1%	1,211	5.9%	10.4
General Merchandise Stores	452	61	4.7%	2,697	13.1%	44.2
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	442	38	2.9%	403	2.0%	10.6
Building Material & Garden Equipment & Supplies I	444	33	2.6%	282	1.4%	8.5
Health & Personal Care Stores	446	32	2.5%	561	2.7%	17.5
Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers	441	16	1.2%	112	0.5%	7.0
Electronics & Appliance Stores	443	15	1.2%	205	1.0%	13.7
Gasoline Stations & Fuel Dealers	447	2	0.2%	9	0.0%	4.5
Total		1,290	100.0%	20,634	100.0%	16.0

Notes:

The table summarizes Esri Business Analyst's Business Summary, which utilizes 2023 Data Axle business information and 2020 Census block groups to allocate businesses to custom geographies. Learn more: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/0bcc5657bba04d8db928eab87232e124>

Sources: Esri Business Analyst, 2023; BAE, 2024.

Subarea Geography: Regional Center Boundaries.

The U.S. Census Business Patterns program provides additional insights into the number of small businesses in the Downtown subarea (see Table 7). As of 2021, Zip Code Business Patterns shows that over two-thirds of the approximately 6,300 business establishments in the Downtown Zip Codes have less than 10 employees. Sectors where 70 percent or more of the businesses had fewer than 10 employees included Wholesale Trade, Retail Trade, Real Estate Rental & Leasing, Administration & Support & Waste Management & Remediation Services, Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation, and Other Services (except Public Administration).

Table 7: Small Businesses in the Downtown Subarea

NAICS	Industry Name	Total Establishments	Establishments with <10 employees	
			Number (a)	Percent
23	Construction	82	50	61%
31	Manufacturing	76	50	66%
42	Wholesale Trade	184	134	73%
44	Retail Trade	444	350	79%
48	Transportation & Warehousing	54	34	63%
51	Information	362	179	49%
52	Finance & Insurance	517	337	65%
53	Real Estate Rental & Leasing	518	403	78%
54	Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	1,810	1,228	68%
55	Management of Companies & Enterprises	94	44	47%
56	Admin & Support & Waste Mngmnt & Remediation Services	282	203	72%
61	Educational Services	71	37	52%
62	Health Care & Social Assistance	494	330	67%
71	Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	91	67	74%
72	Accommodation & Food Services	726	464	64%
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	470	372	79%
Total		6,275	4,282	68%

Note:

Totals may differ from other sources. Excludes businesses with no wage or salary employee, e.g., sole proprietorships with no other staff.

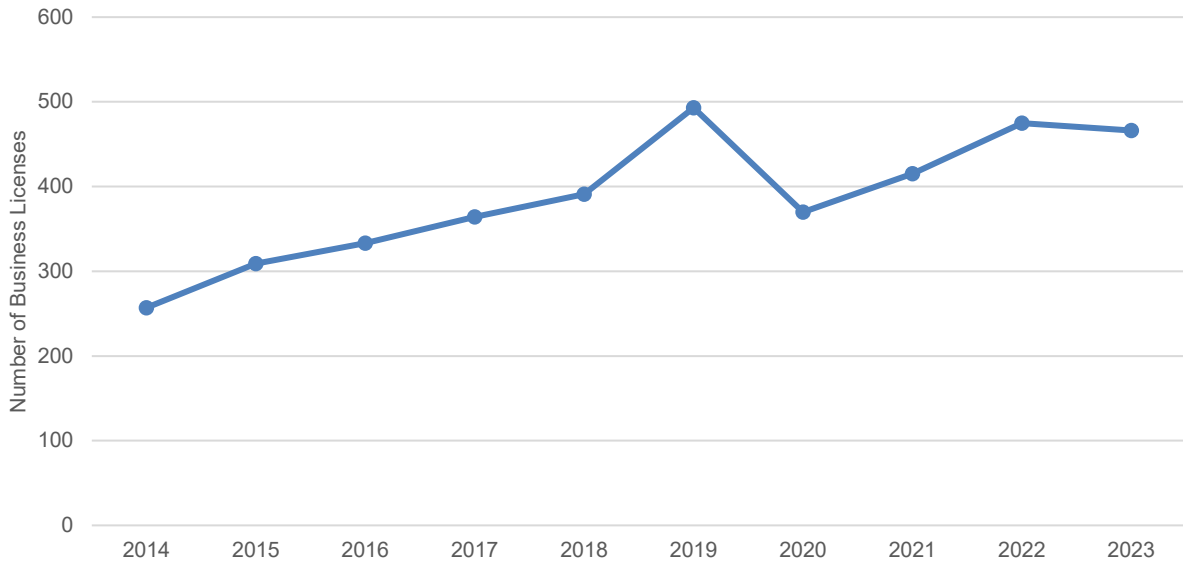
(a) May exclude a small number of establishments for some sectors due to confidentiality rules.

Sources: U.S. Census, Zip Code Business Patterns, 2021; BAE, 2024.

Subarea Geography: Zip Codes 98101, 98104, and 98121.

For a business to operate legally in Seattle, a city business license is required. As an indicator of the rate of business formation in Downtown Seattle, Figure 9 shows trends in the number of Seattle business licenses issued in recent years. The chart is limited to currently active businesses. It is likely that many of these businesses are small startup businesses. As shown, businesses continue to obtain business licenses at a relatively steady pace of over 400 applications annually, except for the pandemic year of 2020; however, even that year shows 370 business startups among still-active businesses. Of the approximately 3,900 active businesses that opened between 2014 and 2023, 55 percent have been in operation for at least five years. This indicates that Downtown businesses can achieve stability and longer-term success but does not account for the business that have opened and closed.

Figure 9: Business License Applications, 2014-2023, Downtown Subarea



Note: Only includes currently active business; for instance, applications for businesses that were made in 2014 where the business has since closed are not shown here.

Sources: City of Seattle Business License Database, June 2024; BAE, 2024.

Subarea Geography: Regional Center Boundaries.

Real Estate Market Conditions

As the region’s most important center for commercial activity, Downtown Seattle is also an important node for commercial real estate activity, as well as a growing hub for residential development. Beginning with an analysis of the Downtown housing market, the following section of the report profiles real estate market conditions and trends in Downtown compared to the City of Seattle.

Housing Market and Needs Assessment

Existing Housing Unit Characteristics

The Downtown Regional Center’s housing stock consists almost exclusively of multifamily housing units according to April 2024 data from the King County Assessor. By comparison, as shown in Table 8, multifamily units in the City of Seattle make up 62 percent of all housing units. The multifamily units Downtown are primarily apartments and condos/condos in apartment use. Approximately five percent of the housing units Downtown are congregate housing units, in line with the share of congregate units in the City.

Table 8: Housing Unit Characteristics, April 2024

Type of Residence	Downtown Subarea		City of Seattle	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Single Family	3	0.0%	133,580	32.0%
Apartment	21,375	59.3%	171,945	41.2%
Condo	8,672	24.0%	37,741	9.0%
Condo in Apt Use	4,107	11.4%	15,893	3.8%
Townhouse	-	0.0%	23,392	5.6%
Congregate	1,821	5.0%	21,466	5.1%
Res-2-4 Unit	4	0.0%	12,571	3.0%
Res/Comm	80	0.2%	880	0.2%
Total	36,062	100.0%	417,468	100.0%
Single Family Housing Units	3	0.0%	156,972	37.6%
Multifamily Housing Units	36,059	100.0%	260,496	62.4%
Average No. of Bedrooms	0.96		1.98	
Average Size (sf)	743		1,183	

Sources: King County Assessor; BAE, 2024.

Subarea Geography: Regional Center Boundaries.

Downtown’s housing stock is relatively new compared to Seattle as a whole, with a median year built of 2011 compared to 1999 for the City. According to the King County Assessor, as shown in Table 9, as of April 2024 more than 75 percent of the housing

units Downtown were built after 2000, with ten percent of units built since 2020. In the City of Seattle, 48 percent of units were built after 2000, and nine percent of units were built after 2020.

Table 9: Housing Units by Year Built, April 2024

Year Built	Downtown Subarea		City of Seattle	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
2020 or Later	3,497	9.7%	37,028	8.9%
2010-2019	15,361	42.6%	96,493	23.1%
2000-2009	8,292	23.0%	67,330	16.1%
1990-1999	4,778	13.2%	64,458	15.4%
1980-1989	2,941	8.2%	32,933	7.9%
1970-1979	671	1.9%	8,933	2.1%
1960-1969	450	1.2%	9,635	2.3%
1950-1959	58	0.2%	20,848	5.0%
1940-1949	10	0.0%	22,968	5.5%
1939 or Earlier	4	0.0%	56,842	13.6%
Total	36,062	100.0%	417,468	100.0%
Median Year Built (a)	2011		1999	

Sources: King County Assessor; BAE, 2024.

Subarea Geography: Regional Center Boundaries.

As shown in Table 10, Downtown’s households are primarily renters, with 81 percent of housing units being renter-occupied between 2018 and 2022, according to the American Community Survey. Downtown’s renter households represented a larger share of total households when compared to the City of Seattle and Puget Sound Region, with renter-occupied housing units making up 56 percent of the City’s total units, and just 39 percent of the Region’s total units. Between 2010 and 2022, the share of renter-occupied units shrank slightly in Downtown (by three percent) but grew in the City (by four percent) and Region (by two percent). These trends in Downtown Seattle are largely consistent with other growing central city neighborhoods in strong market cities in the United States such as, for example, Denver and San Diego.

Table 10: Occupied Housing Units by Tenure, 2006- 2010 to 2018- 2022

	2010		2022		% Change 2010-2022
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Downtown Subarea					
Owner-Occupied	2,734	16.1%	4,633	19.2%	69.5%
Renter-Occupied	14,297	83.9%	19,543	80.8%	36.7%
Total	17,031	100.0%	24,176	100.0%	42.0%
	2010		2022		% Change 2010-2022
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
City of Seattle					
Owner-Occupied	137,085	48.9%	153,477	44.5%	12.0%
Renter-Occupied	143,368	51.1%	191,769	55.5%	33.8%
Total	280,453	100.0%	345,246	100.0%	23.1%
	2010		2022		% Change 2010-2022
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Puget Sound Region					
Owner-Occupied	900,971	62.7%	1,020,582	61.0%	13.3%
Renter-Occupied	536,249	37.3%	651,145	39.0%	21.4%
Total	1,437,220	100.0%	1,671,727	100.0%	16.3%

Sources: 2006- 2010 and 2018- 2022 American Community Survey Table DP04; BAE, 2024.
Subarea Geography: 2020 and 2010 Census Tracts.

Between 2018 and 2022, Downtown had a residential vacancy rate of 13.4 percent, above the City’s and Region’s vacancy rates of 7.3 and 5.6 percent, respectively. As shown in Table 11, of Downtown’s vacant units, 37 percent were available for rent, in line with the overall for rent vacancy rate in Seattle and above the for- rent vacancy rate for the Puget Sound Region. More than a quarter of the vacant units Downtown were reported as vacant for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use, compared to just 13 percent of units in Seattle and 18 percent of units in the Puget Sound Region. Downtown had a larger share of housing units that are rented but not occupied than the City or Region, at 17 percent compared to 13 percent and eight percent, respectively.

Table 11: Housing Vacancy by Type of Vacancy, 2018- 2022

Downtown Subarea	Number	Percent
For rent	1,497	37.3%
Rented, not occupied	693	17.2%
For sale only	175	4.4%
Sold, not occupied	120	3.0%
For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	1,071	26.7%
For migrant workers	-	0.0%
Other vacant (a)	462	11.5%
Total Vacant Housing Units	4,018	100.0%
Vacancy Rate	13.3%	
City of Seattle	Number	Percent
For rent	10,067	37.0%
Rented, not occupied	3,404	12.5%
For sale only	1,883	6.9%
Sold, not occupied	1,089	4.0%
For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	4,051	14.9%
For migrant workers	53	0.2%
Other vacant (a)	6,643	24.4%
Total Vacant Housing Units	27,190	100.0%
Vacancy Rate	7.3%	
Puget Sound Region	Number	Percent
For rent	29,639	29.9%
Rented, not occupied	8,177	8.2%
For sale only	7,521	7.6%
Sold, not occupied	5,670	5.7%
For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	18,056	18.2%
For migrant workers	170	0.2%
Other vacant (a)	30,045	30.3%
Total Vacant Housing Units	99,278	100.0%
Vacancy Rate	5.6%	

Notes:

(a) Includes units vacant for other reasons, such as personal reasons of the owner, use by a caretaker or janitor, and boarded- up units not available for occupancy.

Sources: 2018- 2022 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau Table B25004; BAE, 2024.
Subarea Geography: 2020 Census Block Groups.

Rental Housing Market Overview

The Downtown Regional Center has been a hub for multifamily residential development, with a large share of the City’s units and significant growth over the last ten years. As of the fourth quarter of 2023, Downtown had approximately 22,900 multifamily rental units representing 13 percent of Seattle’s total multifamily rental units, according to CoStar data summarized in Table 12. The multifamily rental vacancy rate Downtown was 6.8 percent, comparable to the rates in the City (7.3 percent) and the Region (6.7 percent). The average asking rent for rental apartments in Downtown was \$2,389 in the fourth quarter of 2023, an increase of 1.7 percent from the previous year and several hundred dollars above the average asking rent in Seattle and the Puget Sound Region. In the ten-year period between the first quarter of 2014 and the fourth quarter of 2023, approximately 8,700 units were built in Downtown, representing 14 percent of all new deliveries in the City and 7 percent of all new deliveries in the Region. As of the end of 2023, there were approximately 2,400 multifamily rental units under construction Downtown, according to CoStar, representing 16 percent of Seattle’s under construction multifamily rental units and 8 percent of the Puget Sound Region’s under construction units.

Table 12: Multifamily Residential Market Summary, All Unit Sizes, Q4 2023

Multifamily Residential, All Unit Sizes	Downtown Subarea	City of Seattle	Puget Sound Region
Inventory (units), Q4 2023	22,880	172,211	520,178
Occupied Units	21,303	159,288	477,033
Vacant Units	1,559	12,540	34,903
Vacancy Rate	6.8%	7.3%	6.7%
Avg. Asking Rents, Q4 2022 - Q4 2023			
Avg. Asking Rent, Q4 2022	\$2,350	\$1,925	\$1,863
Avg. Asking Rent, Q4 2023	\$2,389	\$1,939	\$1,885
% Change Q4 2022 - Q4 2023	1.7%	0.7%	1.2%
New Deliveries (units), Q1 2014 - Q4 2023	8,712	61,880	132,392
Under Construction (units), Q4 2023	2,354	15,126	29,828

Source: CoStar; BAE 2024.

Subarea Geography: Regional Center Boundaries.

For- Sale Housing Market Overview

Between March of 2023 and March of 2024, the median sale price of downtown residential units was approximately \$615,000 per unit. The large majority of these units were condominium units in higher- density buildings. The average size of residential units sold in Downtown was 895 square feet. Nearly two- thirds of these units contained just one bedroom , with two- bedroom units accounting for the majority of the remaining sales, indicating that 97.5 percent of all units sold in the downtown area had two bedrooms or less. Roughly one- fourth of units sold in downtown sold for less than \$450,000, while the largest share of units (31 percent) sold for between \$450,000 and \$650,000 per unit. On a price per square foot basis, the average price per square foot was just above \$900 per square foot.

Table 13: Home Sale Price Distribution, Downtown Subarea, March 2023- March 2024

Sale Price Range	1 BR	2 BR	3 BR	4+ BR	Total	Percent of
						Total
Less than \$450,000	98	2	0	0	100	23.0%
\$450,000-\$649,999	119	16	0	0	135	31.0%
\$650,000-\$849,999	43	31	0	0	74	17.0%
\$850,000-\$1,499,999	10	72	6	0	88	20.2%
\$1,500,000 or more	5	28	5	0	38	8.7%
Total Units Sold	275	149	11	0	435	100%
Percent of Total	77.9%	42.2%	3.1%	0.0%	123.2%	
Median Sale Price	\$495,000	\$983,000	\$1,450,000	n/a	\$615,000	
Average Sale Price	\$561,495	\$1,130,152	\$1,853,545	n/a	\$788,949	
Average Unit Size (SF)	657	1,275	1,718	n/a	895	
Median Price per SF	\$803	\$727	\$893	n/a	\$683	
Average Price per SF	\$977	\$876	\$1,026	n/a	\$913	

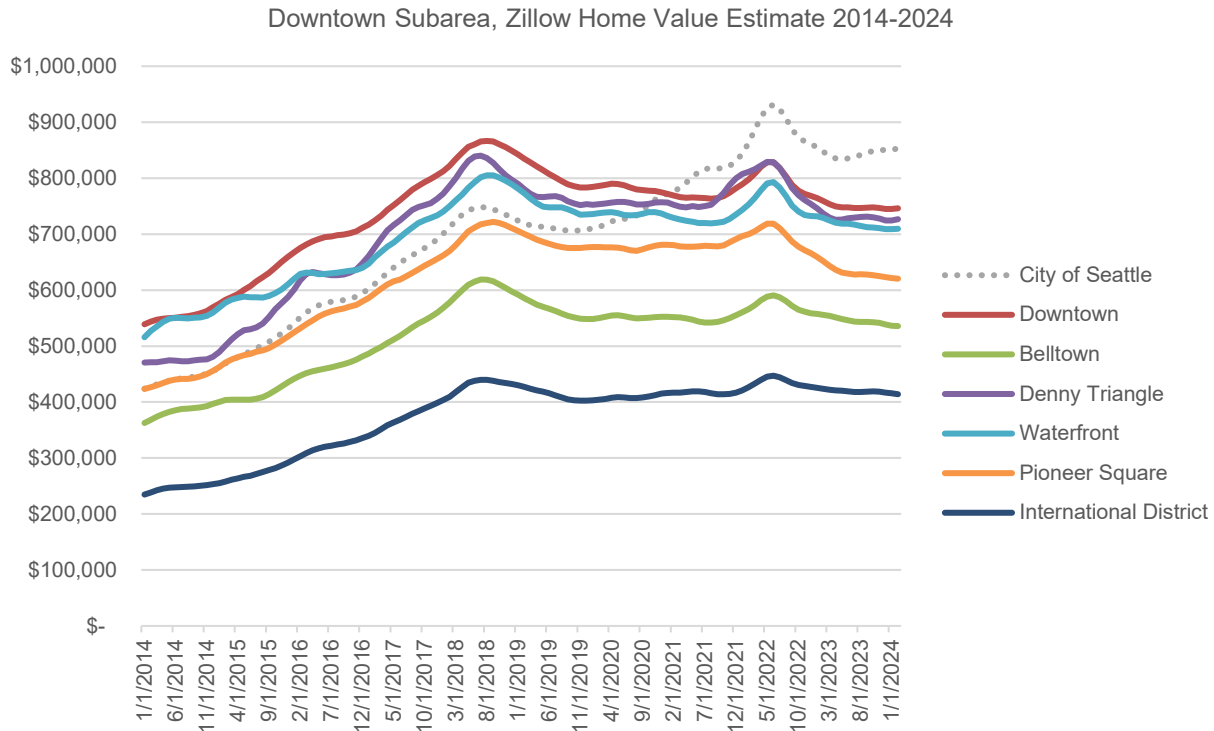
Note: Data reflect full and verified sales between March 18, 2023 to March 18, 2024.

Sources: ListSource, 2024; BAE, 2024.

Subarea Geography: Regional Center Boundaries.

According to Zillow, the estimated home value in Downtown neighborhoods have fallen since 2018, contrary to Citywide trends. As seen below in Figure 10, home values in all six neighborhoods that comprise the Downtown Regional Center area peaked in 2018, followed by significant declines until 2022 when there was a slight increase in home values throughout the downtown neighborhoods. Since 2022, however, the Zillow data indicate stable or declining home values. However, estimated home values in the City of Seattle have steadily increased over the last decade, reaching a peak in 2022. Despite a decrease in home value in 2023, potentially driven by increased interest rates, Seattle home values have increased steadily over the past four quarters.

Figure 10: Home Value Trends, 2014-2024



Note: The Zillow Home Value Index is a measure of the typical home value and market changes across a given region and housing type. It reflects the typical value for homes in the 35th to 65th percentile range. Learn more: <https://www.zillow.com/research/methodology-neural-zhvi-32128/>

Sources: Zillow; BAE 2024.

According to the City’s residential development pipeline, there are approximately 4,025 residential units under construction. Aside from a limited number of units, all of the units are located in multifamily developments, whether that be rental apartments or for-sale condominiums. As Table 14 also demonstrates, the downtown area had nearly 6,600 new residential units delivered between 2018 and 2024, which represented a significant expansion of the housing inventory in downtown Seattle. Based on the geographic location of these projects, shown in Figure 11 below, it is evident that the majority of the new developments are located in the northern portion of the downtown area, including Belltown and the Denny Triangle neighborhoods. Denny Triangle was particularly ripe for residential development, as historically it was primarily for light industrial uses. It is unlikely that the Commercial Core and other office-focused areas will be able to accommodate the same density of residential development in the near future.

Table 14: Residential Development Pipeline, Downtown Subarea, March 2024

	Downtown Subarea			
	Completed Since 2018 (a)		Under Construction (a)	
	Projects	Units	Buildings	Units
Multifamily	34	6,557	17	4,016
Townhouses/Rowhouses	-	-	-	-
Other (b)	3	12	2	9
Total	37	6,569	19	4,025

Notes:

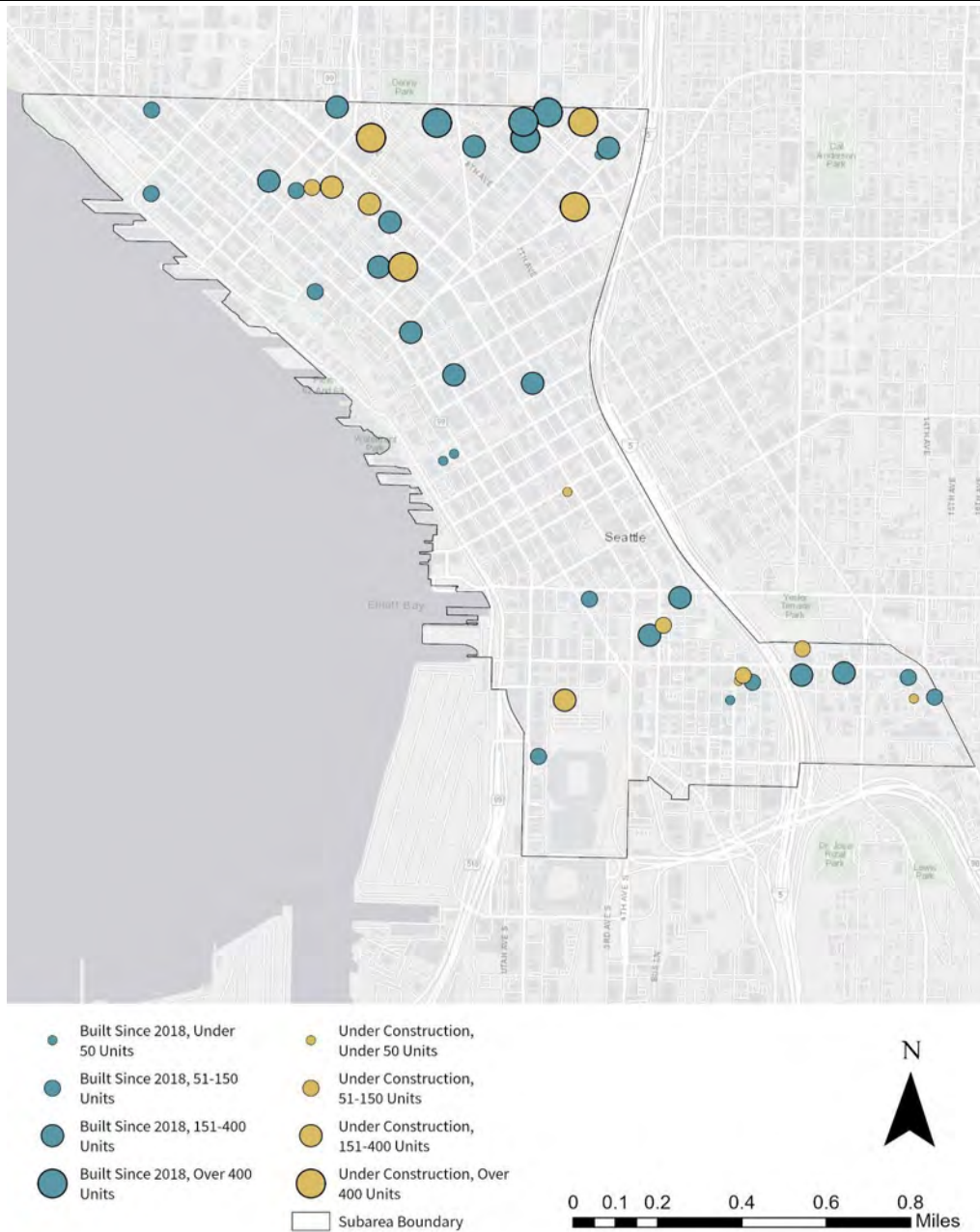
(a) The number of projects/units completed since 2018 is calculated using the "Year Finaled" column of the Building Permits data, summing all projects/units within a year of 2018 or later. Projects/units with no listed "Year Finaled" are counted as Under Construction.

(b) "Other" includes Accessory Live/Work units and other uncommon development types.

(c) This Development Pipeline only includes multi-family housing projects/units. Only permits for construction of two or more new units are included in the analysis to exclude projects where a single unit is split into two from the Development Pipeline.

Sources: City of Seattle Residential Building Permits Issued and Final since 1990; BAE, 2024.
Subarea Geography: Regional Center Boundaries.

Figure 11: Residential Development Pipeline Map, 2018 Onwards



Notes:

(a) The number of projects/units completed since 2018 is calculated using the "Year Finaled" column of the Building Permits data, summing all projects/units with a year of 2018 or later. Projects/units with no listed "Year Finaled" are counted as Under Construction.

(b) This Development Pipeline only includes multi-family housing projects/units. Only permits for construction of two or more new units are included in the analysis to exclude projects where a single unit is split into two from the Development Pipeline.

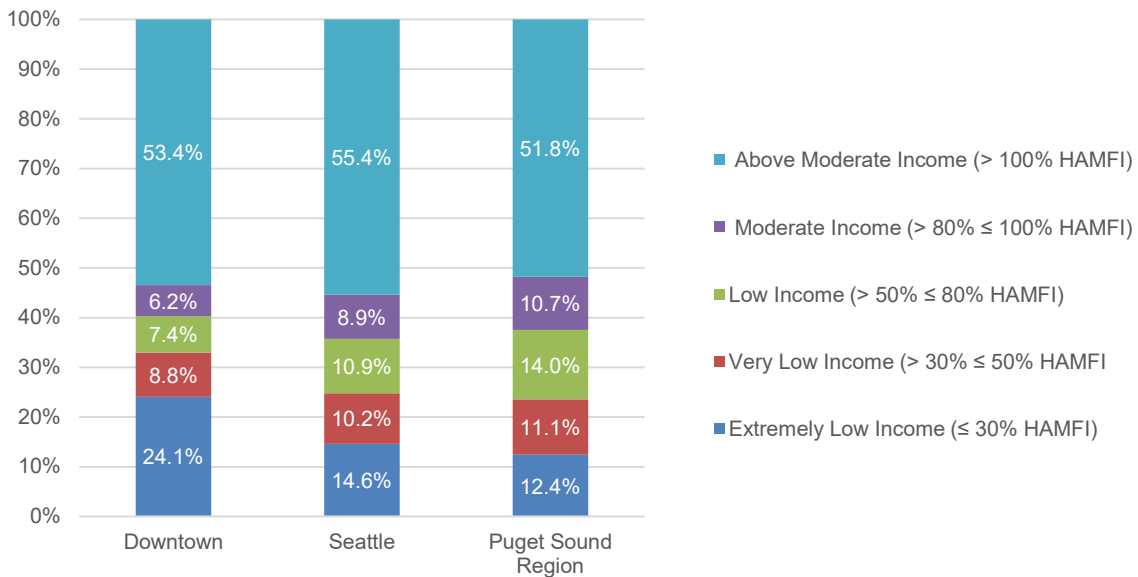
Sources: City of Seattle Residential Building Permits Issued and Final since 1990; BAE, 2024.

Subarea Geography: Regional Center Boundaries.

Housing Needs Assessment

Based on CHAS data, the Downtown Regional Center contains nearly double the share of extremely low-income households relative to the City of Seattle and Puget Sound Region. As seen below in Figure 12, approximately 24 percent of downtown residents have extremely low incomes, defined as 30 percent or less of the HUD Area Median Family Income (HAMFI). These households only account for 14.6 percent and 12.4 percent in the City of Seattle and Puget Sound Region, respectively. By contrast, the downtown area contains a similar proportion of above moderate-income households, or those households with incomes above 100 percent of the HAMFI, relative to the City and Region, all with between 50 and 56 percent of existing households. As a result, downtown contains significantly fewer households with incomes between 30 percent and 100 percent of the area median income, or those considered Very Low-, Low-, and Moderate-income according to HUD.

Figure 12: Households by Income Level, 2016-2020

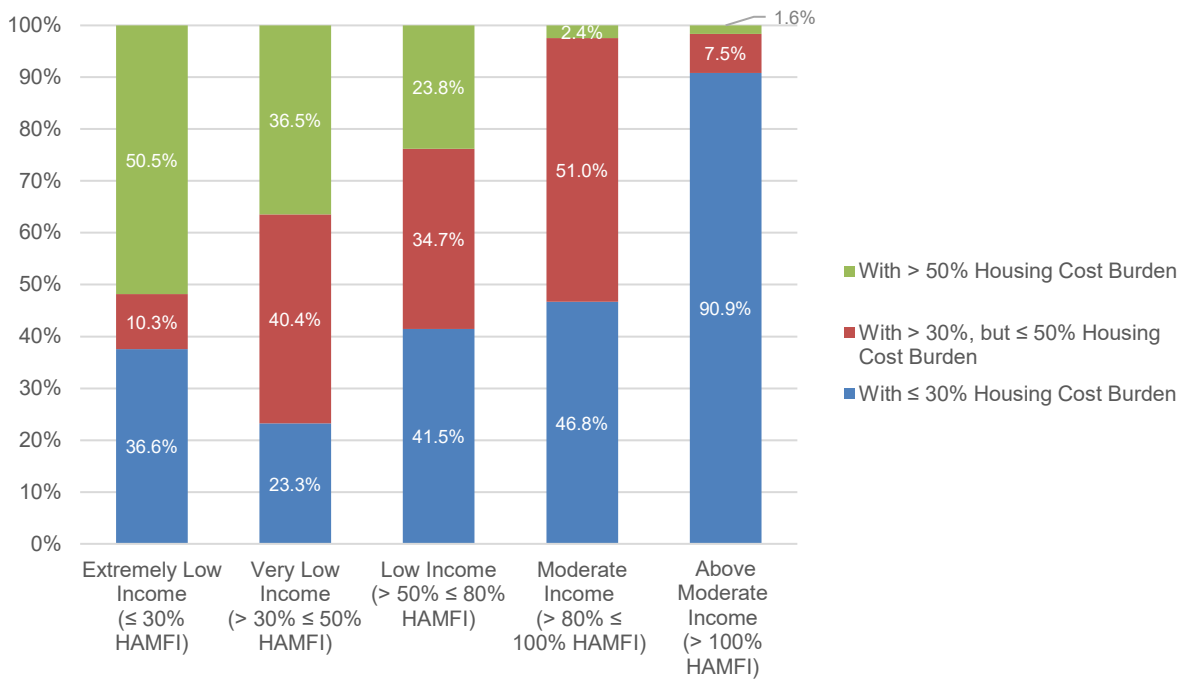


Sources: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2016-2020 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data; BAE, 2024.
Subarea Geography: 2020 Census Tracts.

Downtown households with lower incomes experience higher levels of housing cost burden, defined as paying more than 30 percent of household income on housing expenses, including rent or mortgage payments. As seen below in Figure 13, over half of extremely-low income households in downtown are extremely cost burdened, or pay more than 50 percent of their income on housing expenses, while another 10

percent experience modest cost burden by spending between 30 and 50 percent of their income on housing expenses. Interestingly, very low- income households, with incomes between 30 and 50 percent of the area median income, experience a greater degree of cost burden, with nearly 77 percent of these households paying more than 30 percent of income toward housing costs, nearly half of which pay more than 50 percent of income on housing costs. This highlights a potential need to support downtown households with incomes between 30 and 50 percent of the area median income in addition to those making under 30 percent of the area median income. Low- Income households, or those with incomes between 50 and 80 percent of the area median income, experience less cost burden relative to households with lower incomes, but still nearly 60 percent of low- income households experience some cost burden, with a decent share paying more than 50 percent of income on housing costs. Moderate income households, or those between 80 and 100 percent of the area median income, experience slightly lower rates of cost burden, however over 50 percent of these households pay more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs, with only a small share of those paying more than 50 percent of income on housing costs. Lastly, above moderate- households, or those with household incomes above 100 percent of the area median income, experience a very limited amount of cost burden, with only nine percent of households paying more than 30 percent on housing costs.

Figure 13: Housing Cost Burden by Income Category, Downtown, 2016- 2020

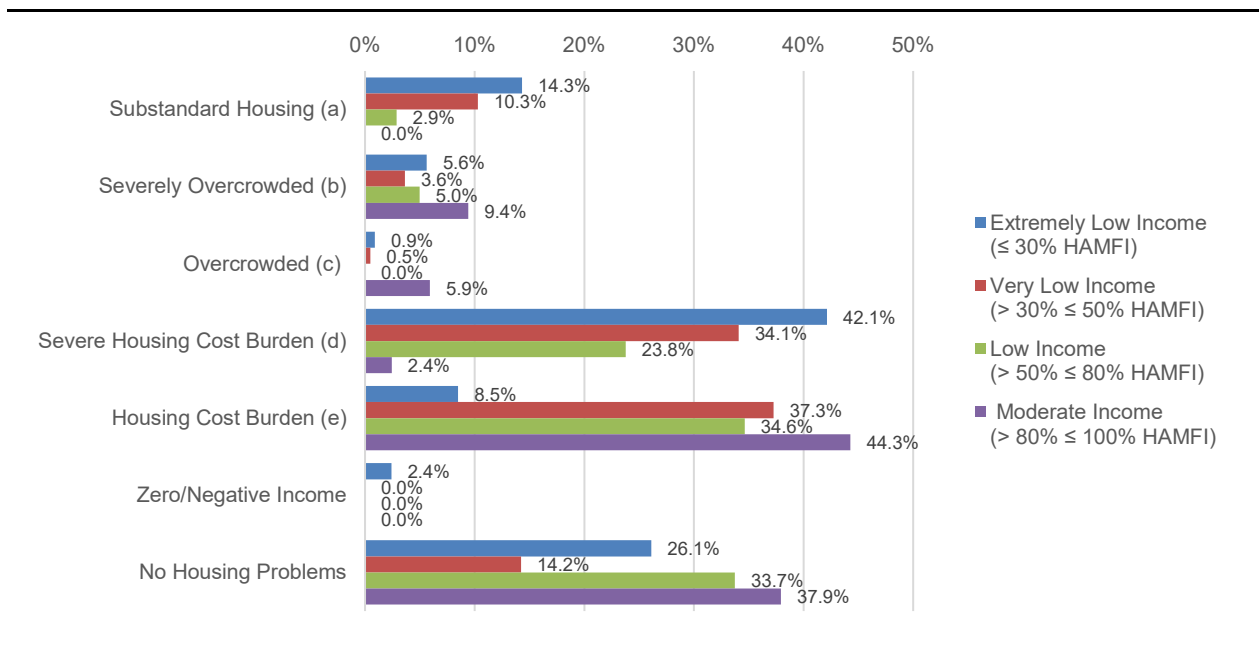


Sources: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2016- 2020 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data; BAE, 2024.

Subarea Geography: 2020 Census Tracts.

Based on a more detailed analysis of the CHAS data, shown below in Figure 14, it is evident that the housing cost burden challenges summarized above are the most significant housing problem faced by downtown households. Of the other housing problems, as defined by HUD, substandard housing accounts for the second most significant problem in downtown, with nearly 15 percent of extremely low-income households and ten percent of very low-income households living in substandard housing, defined as housing that lacks complete plumbing or kitchen facilities. Overcrowding, or households living with 1.0 persons per room or more, is also a housing problem facing some downtown households. As seen below, moderate-income households actually face the highest rate of overcrowding, at over 15 percent of all households, the largest share of which are severely overcrowded. This may highlight the need for housing affordable to moderate-income households, an income level typically unable to afford market-rate housing but with limited public resources to support units restricted for these income levels.

Figure 14: Housing Problems by Income Level, Downtown, 2016-2020



Notes:
Housing problems are listed from most severe to least severe, as ordered by HUD. Households may have multiple housing problems, but, for the purposes of this table, they are counted under their most severe housing problem.
(a) Lacking complete plumbing or kitchen facilities.
(b) Greater than 1.5 persons per room.
(c) 1.01 to 1.5 persons per room.
(d) Housing costs greater than 50% of gross income.
(e) Housing costs greater than 30% but less than 50% of gross income.
Sources: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2016-2020 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data; BAE, 2024.
Subarea Geography: 2020 Census Tracts.

Unhoused Population

According to the King County 2024 Point-in-Time (PIT) count, there were approximately 16,385 residents experiencing homelessness throughout the County. This represents a 23 percent increase over the previous PIT count conducted in 2022. Of the unhoused residents, approximately 60 percent were unsheltered, or roughly 10,000 residents. The other 40 percent were in shelters. Based on the demographics of the unhoused population, it is evident that African Americans experience the most significant disparity of homelessness with roughly 19 percent of all homeless residents falling into that racial category. By contrast, African Americans only represent six percent of the King County population, indicating a disproportionate share of African American residents are experiencing homelessness throughout the County. The King County Regional Homelessness Authority is currently analyzing the detailed summary results and will release a report with more geographic detail in July. Pending these more detailed results, the most recently reported point-in-time estimate of homelessness for the City of Seattle was in 2020, when out of a total of 11,751 persons counted in King County, 8,166, or 69 percent, were found in the City; slightly more than half of these city residents were sheltered rather than on the street.

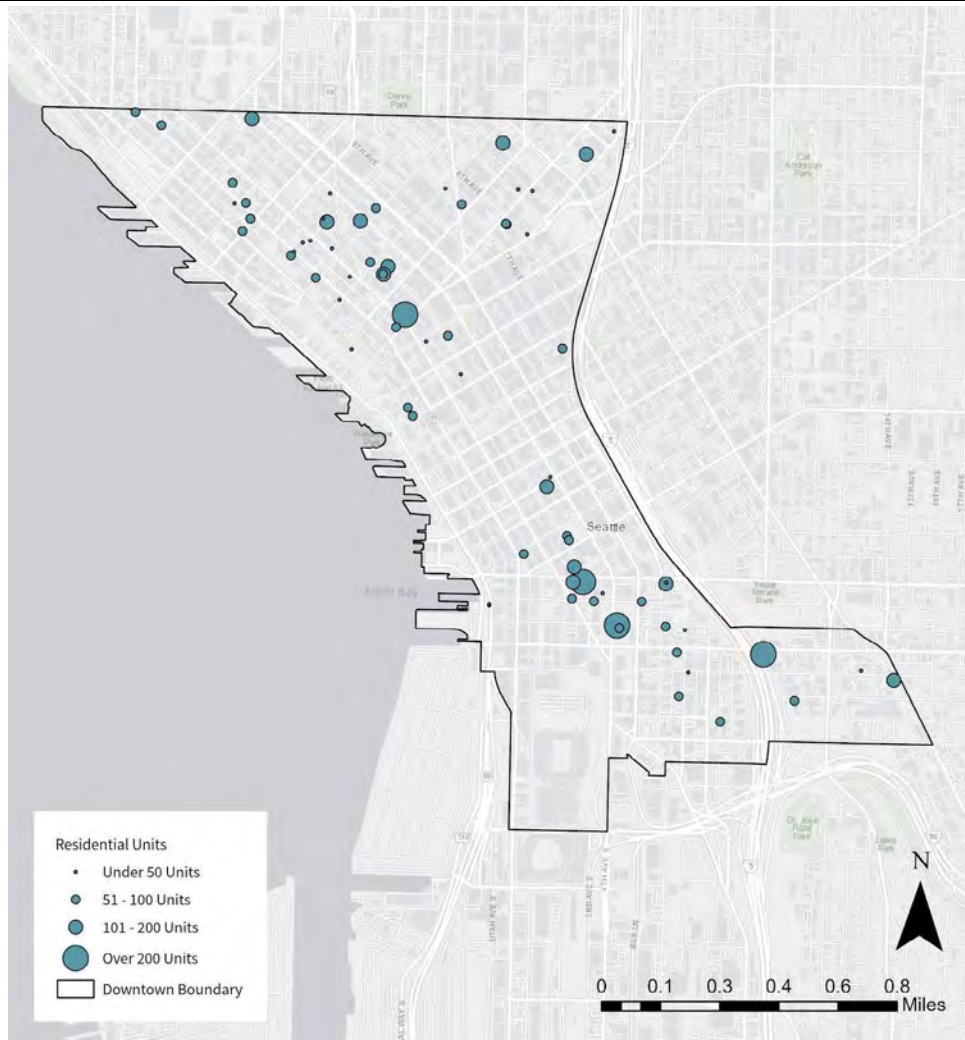
The 2020 Decennial U.S. Census also attempted to count the number of homeless people in shelters and encampments, and placed them in a group quarters category, “other noninstitutional group quarters.” This group quarters by type data is available down to the Census Block level in the PL94-171 file, and thus is available per the same area definition used for the overall population data from the Office of Financial Management. The 2020 Census enumerated 8,483 persons citywide in the other noninstitutional group quarters category, somewhat lower than the 2020 point-in-time count of homeless persons, thus indicating a more conservative count, but with a likelihood that many if not most persons in this other noninstitutional category are homeless. As noted above in the general population discussion, approximately 2,260 individuals were found in this category in the Downtown subarea, suggesting a substantial presence of unhoused persons Downtown. The economic costs of serving the homeless population in Downtown Seattle are significant, and over the long-term resources would be more efficiently directed towards service-enriched supportive housing.

Affordable Housing and Special Needs Housing Supply

Downtown Seattle has a substantial existing inventory of affordable residential properties. According to HUD's available LIHTC data, there are 76 projects within the Downtown Regional Center that received tax credits. As shown in Figure 15 below, the projects are primarily concentrated in Belltown, Pioneer Square, and the Chinatown-International District. The 76 LIHTC projects include a total of 6,163 total units, 94 percent of which are affordable, as summarized in Table 15. Of these buildings, 43 were new construction projects and 29 were acquisition/rehabilitation projects, many of which were hotel conversions.

Nationally, LIHTC projects are typically subject to a 30-year rent restriction after being placed in service, guaranteeing affordability for those 30 years. However, expired rent restrictions do not necessarily imply that the property is no longer affordable, just that the project is no longer monitored by HUD. Of the 76 projects Downtown, 15 have expired rent restrictions, with another ten projects' rent restrictions expiring in the next five years.

Figure 15: LIHTC Unit Map, Downtown Seattle



Notes: The number of units in each project on the map represents total units in each building, not just LIHTC units, as the number of low-income units was unavailable for three projects. However, for the majority of included projects, the units are 100% affordable.

Sources: United States Department of Housing and Urban Development LIHTC Database; BAE, 2024.
Subarea Geography: Regional Center Boundaries.

Table 15: LIHTC Project Summary, Downtown Subarea

No. of LIHTC Projects	76
New Construction	43
Acquisition and Rehabilitation	29
Other (a)	4
Total Units	6,163
Affordable Units	5,789
Percent Affordable Units	93.9%
Median Year Placed in Service	2003
No. of Projects with 30-Year Rent Restriction Expired	15
No. of Projects with 30-Year Rent Restriction Expiring in Next 5 Years	10

Notes:

(a) Includes a combination of acquisition/rehabilitation and new construction, or existing buildings reapplying for tax credits.

Sources: United States Department of Housing and Urban Development LIHTC Database; BAE, 2024.
Subarea Geography: Regional Center Boundaries.

According to the Downtown Activation Plan, as of the summer of 2023 the Seattle Office of Housing had 59 funded properties Downtown, many of which likely overlap with the LIHTC projects summarized in Table 15 above. These 59 projects included a total of 4,289 income and rent restricted units. There were an additional 3 properties including 244 new affordable units in the pipeline that will come to Downtown in the next several years, with more expected to be added.

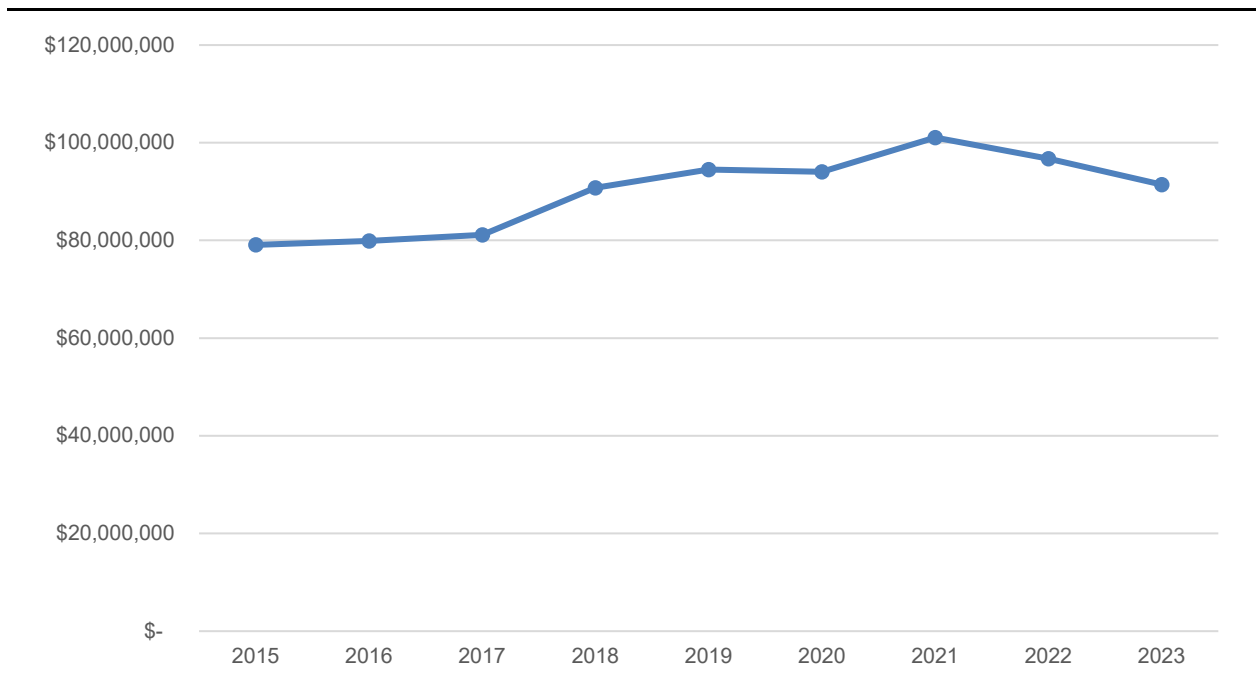
The City of Seattle’s Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) requirements for development will also aid in expanding the affordable housing inventory Downtown and throughout the city. New commercial and multifamily residential development in Seattle must either include affordable units in the development (performance option) or contribute to the Office of Housing’s affordable housing development fund (payment option). However, the funding raised by MHA requirements is incredibly sensitive to the broader development landscape. In 2023 the program brought in \$67 million, 15 percent below the \$75 million in 2022, due to a private development slowdown in the face of increasing construction costs and high interest rates.

Commercial Real Estate Market Overview

Retail & Food Service

In 2023 the retail sales in the City of Seattle generated approximately \$91,445,000 in sales tax revenue, as shown in Figure 16. Retail sales tax revenue grew between 2015 and 2021, reaching a peak of approximately \$101,062,000 in 2021 before declining in 2022 and 2023. In 2023, retail sales generated approximately 30 percent of total sales tax revenue in the City (\$311,693,704). This restructuring of the retail and food service sector is consistent with trends observe in other cities nationally; over the long- term sales tax revenues generated by traditional “brick and mortar” retail and food service businesses will likely continue to shrink relative to online and omni-channel businesses.

Figure 16: Retail Sales Tax Revenue, City of Seattle, 2015- 2023



Note: Adjusted to 2023 dollars using the Bureau of Labor Statistics Seattle- Tacoma- Bellevue Consumer Price Indexes for All Urban Consumers (CPI- U).

Source: City of Seattle; BAE, 2024.

Of the \$91,445,000 in retail sales tax revenue generated in the City of Seattle in 2023, 29 percent falls into the Sporting Goods, Hobby, Musical Instrument, Book, and Miscellaneous Retailers sales category, as shown in Table 16. This sales category is a catch-all for retailers that do not fall under one of the more specific categories, and includes online businesses like Amazon and Wayfair, as well as used goods, tobacco products, and pet supplies. The other top retail sales tax categories are: Motor Vehicles and Parts Dealers, generating 16 percent of revenue; Furniture, Home Furnishings, Electronics, and Appliance Retailers, generating 14 percent of revenue; and General Merchandise Retailers, generating 13 percent of revenue.

Table 16: Retail Sales Tax Revenue by Sales Category, 2023

Sales Category	2023 Total
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	\$ 14,488,786
Building Material and Garden Equipment and Supplies Dealers	\$ 5,833,661
Food and Beverage Retailers	\$ 5,767,835
Furniture, Home Furnishings, Electronics, and Appliance Retailers	\$ 12,604,672
General Merchandise Retailers	\$ 12,121,909
Health and Personal Care Retailers	\$ 4,784,329
Gasoline Stations and Fuel Dealers	\$ 1,540,434
Clothing, Clothing Accessories, Shoe, and Jewelry Retailers	\$ 7,467,285
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Musical Instrument, Book, and Miscellaneous Retailers	\$ 26,835,587
Total	\$91,444,497

Source: City of Seattle; BAE, 2024.

According to available CoStar data, as of the end of 2023 Downtown had just under 6.4 million square feet of retail space comprising 19 percent of Seattle’s total retail inventory. The retail vacancy rate in the Downtown Regional Center was above that of the City and Region, at 9.4 percent compared to 4.0 percent and 3.0 percent, respectively. Downtown saw negative net absorption of 630,300 square feet of retail space between Q1 2014 and Q4 2023, more than the total negative net absorption in the City of Seattle. Over the same time period, the Puget Sound Region experienced positive net absorption of over 6 million square feet of retail space. As of the end of 2023, CoStar reports that there was no new retail under construction within the City of Seattle.

Table 17: Retail Market Summary, Q4 2023

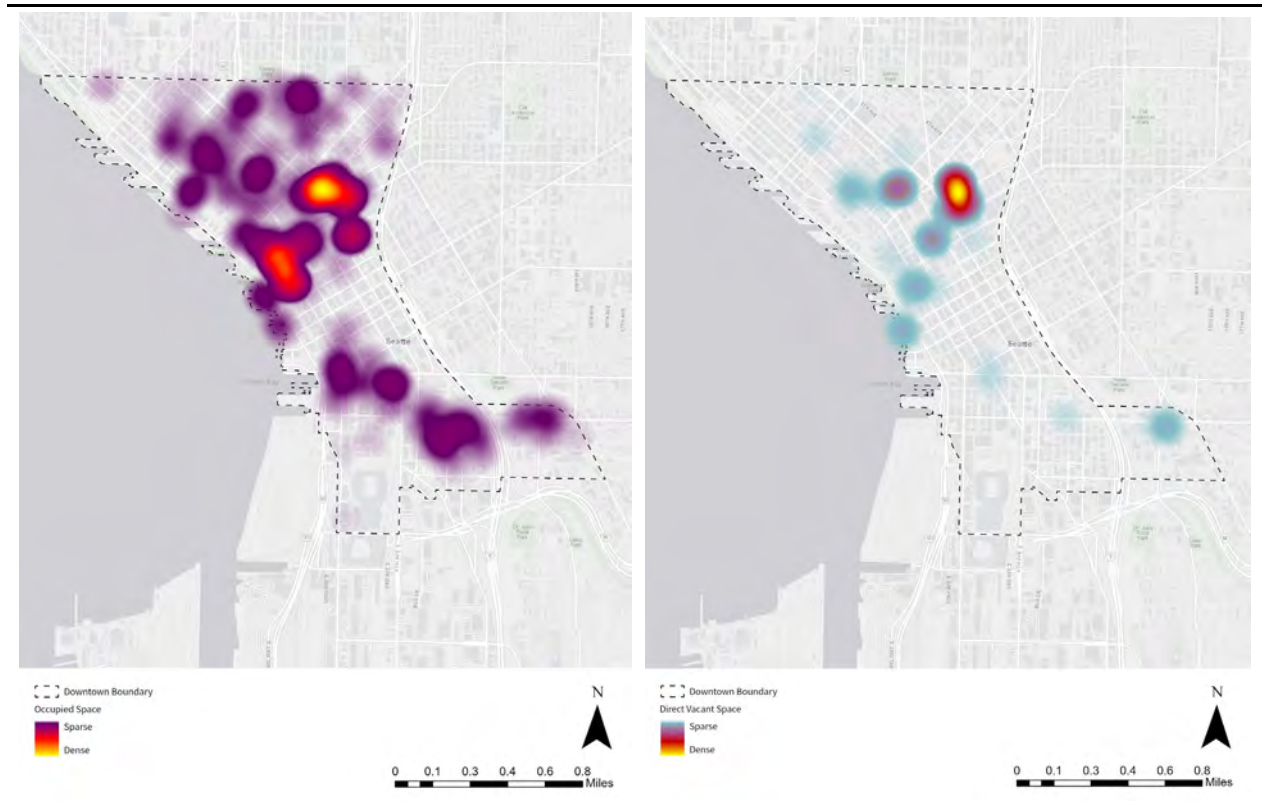
Retail	Downtown Subarea	City of Seattle	Puget Sound Region
Inventory (sf), Q4 2023	6,372,612	34,118,394	196,381,517
Inventory (% of City)	18.7%	100.0%	-
Inventory (% of Region)	3.2%	17.4%	100.0%
Occupied Stock (sf)	5,773,007	32,754,714	190,420,282
Vacant Stock (sf)	599,605	1,363,680	5,961,235
Vacancy Rate	9.4%	4.0%	3.0%
Avg. Asking NNN Rents			
Avg. Asking Retail Rent (psf), Q4 2022	\$2.01	\$2.27	\$1.93
Avg. Asking Retail Rent (psf), Q4 2023	\$2.09	\$2.25	\$1.95
% Change Q4 2022 - Q4 2023	4.0%	-0.9%	1.0%
Net Absorption			
Net Absorption (sf), Q1 2014 - Q4 2023	(630,269)	(612,386)	6,451,438
Net Absorption (sf), Q1 2023 - Q4 2023	(26,596)	(126,050)	(456,552)
New Deliveries (sf) Q1 2014 - Q4 2023	101,100	2,162,631	8,253,470
Under Construction (sf), Q4 2023	-	-	502,144

Sources: CoStar; BAE, 2024.

Subarea Geography: Regional Center Boundaries.

As of March 2024, the occupied retail inventory Downtown was dispersed across the Regional Center, with high concentrations near Pike Place Market and on the Pine Street commercial corridor, as shown in Figure 17 below. Vacant retail space however was concentrated on and around Pine Street, with a large amount of vacancy at Pacific Place and surrounding retail properties. It is worth noting that while a retail space may be leased or occupied, the space is not necessarily operational and could contribute to the perception of retail vacancy Downtown.

Figure 17: Retail Occupancy and Vacancy Heatmaps, March 2024



Sources: CoStar; BAE, 2024.

Subarea Geography: Regional Center Boundaries.

Neighborhood Retail Market Potential

Brokers and developers contacted for this report commented that demand for new retail space is constrained both by market conditions and by ongoing concerns about cleanliness and safety in the Downtown core. At the same time, as more residents and jobs are added to the Downtown area over the next twenty years, stakeholders do see opportunities for adding new local and visitor-serving retail, particularly in the food service and fitness/health and wellness categories.

Office

The Downtown Regional Center is the office core for the City of Seattle, with significant growth over the last ten years. As of the end of 2023, according to CoStar, Downtown had almost 60 million square feet of office space comprising 56 percent of Seattle’s total office inventory and 25 percent of the Puget Sound Region’s inventory. As shown in Table 18, the office vacancy rate Downtown was higher than in the City of Seattle or Puget Sound Region, at 21 percent compared to 17 percent and 14 percent, respectively. Over the last ten years Seattle had positive net absorption of over 11 million square feet, 33 percent of which was within the Downtown area. However, in 2023 Seattle experienced overall negative net absorption of 4.0 million square feet, 63 percent of which was in the Downtown Regional Center. Between the first quarter of 2014 and the fourth quarter of 2023 there was 11.7 million square feet of new office space built Downtown, with another 928,700 square feet of office space under construction as of the end of 2023.

Table 18: Office Market Summary, Q4 2023

Office	Downtown Subarea	City of Seattle	Puget Sound Region
Inventory (sf), Q4 2023	59,988,557	107,998,688	238,147,699
Inventory (% of City)	55.5%	100.0%	-
Inventory (% of Region)	25.2%	45.3%	100.0%
Occupied Stock (sf)	47,107,091	89,804,592	205,509,608
Vacant Stock (sf)	12,881,466	18,194,096	32,638,091
Vacancy Rate	21.5%	16.8%	13.7%
Avg. Asking Office Gross Rents			
Avg. Asking Office Rent (psf), Q4 2022	\$3.12	\$3.04	\$2.83
Avg. Asking Office Rent (psf), Q4 2023	\$3.10	\$3.02	\$2.87
% Change Q4 2022 - Q4 2023	-0.6%	-0.7%	1.4%
Net Absorption			
Net Absorption (sf), Q1 2014 - Q4 2023	3,733,315	11,039,087	18,971,524
Net Absorption (sf), Q1 2023 - Q4 2023	(2,524,717)	(4,011,326)	(3,805,969)
New Deliveries (sf) Q1 2014 - Q4 2023	11,679,455	22,776,335	35,663,959
Under Construction (sf), Q4 2023	928,647	2,820,371	9,534,358

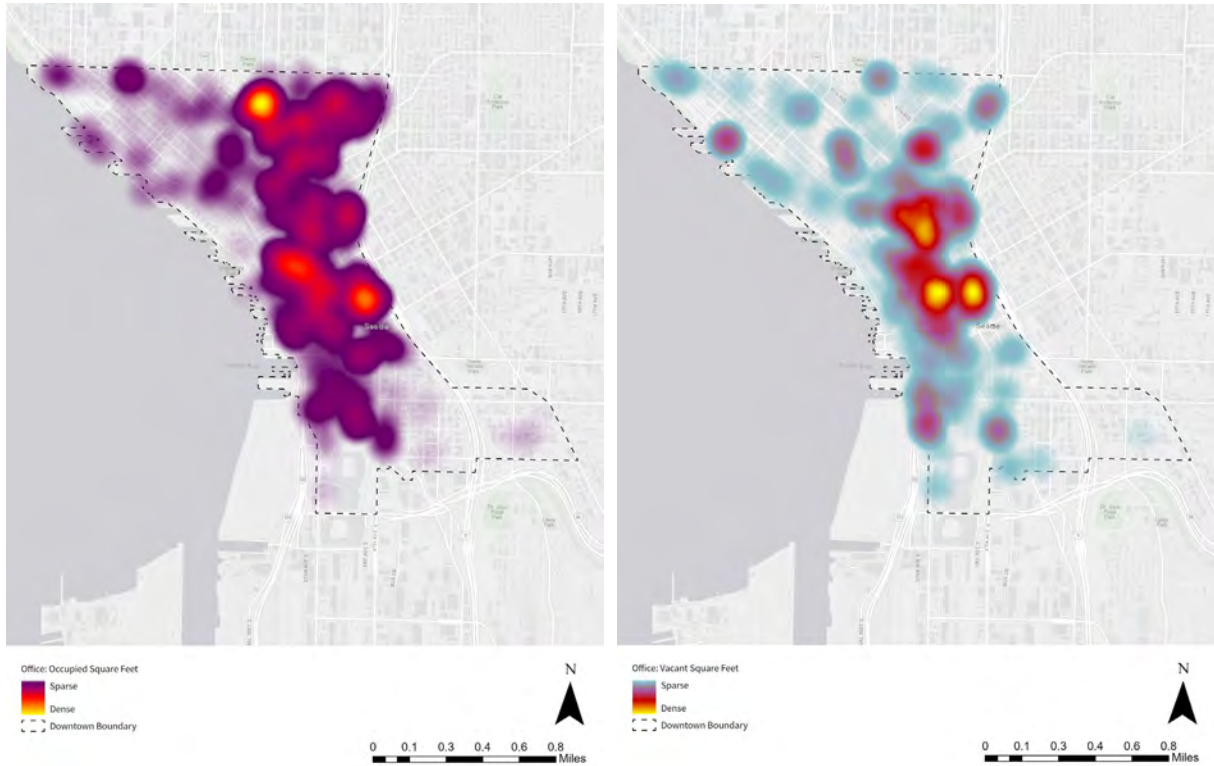
Sources: CoStar; BAE, 2024.

Subarea Geography: Regional Center Boundaries.

Within the Downtown Regional Center, the majority of the existing and occupied office space is concentrated in the Commercial Core and Denny Triangle, as shown in the heatmap (left) in Figure 18 below. However, for vacant office space, the highest concentration is primarily in the Commercial Core. A large share of the office buildings in Denny Triangle are occupied by tech companies, including an Amazon

corporate campus. While many tech companies have shifted to hybrid and remote work policies, these office spaces are not considered vacant even if they are underutilized as the properties are often owned outright by the firms.

Figure 18: Office Occupancy and Vacancy Heatmaps, March 2024

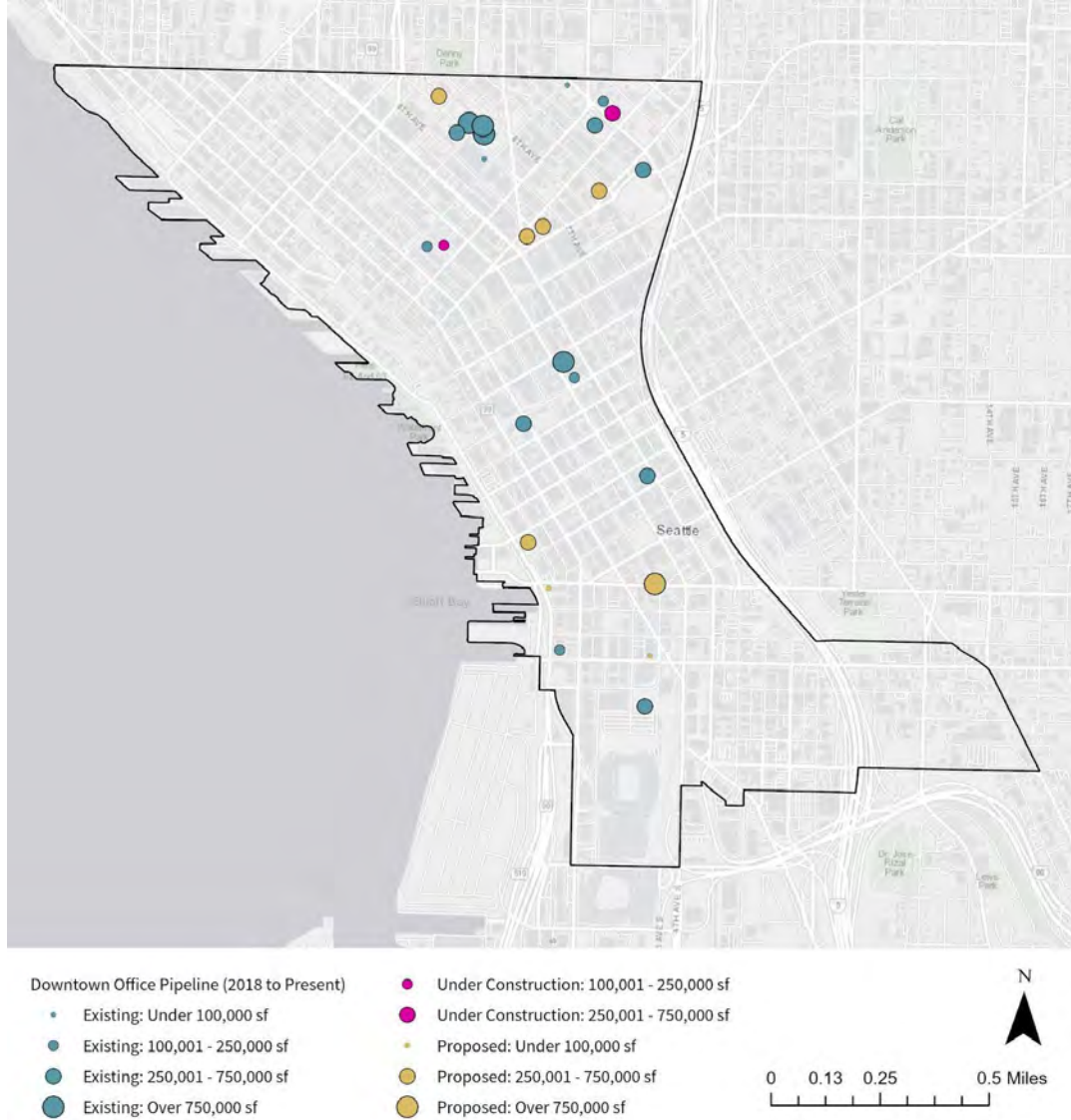


Sources: CoStar; BAE, 2024.

Subarea Geography: Regional Center Boundaries.

As shown in Figure 19 below, the Downtown Regional Center has seen significant office development activity since 2018, primarily concentrated in Denny Triangle and to a lesser extent the Commercial Core. Sixteen office properties were completed between January 2018 and March 2024 totaling just under 8 million square feet, including four Amazon campus buildings (2.6 million square feet), re:invent Building 1 (928,100 square feet), and Rainier Square (801,000 square feet). There are eleven office properties that are currently under construction or planned/proposed, with notable projects including The Net (807,600 square feet) and the mixed-use development at 800 Alaskan Way (504,00 total square feet). These properties were primarily build-to-suit developments rather than speculative developments with no pre-signed leases.

Figure 19: Office Development Pipeline, January 2018 to March 2024

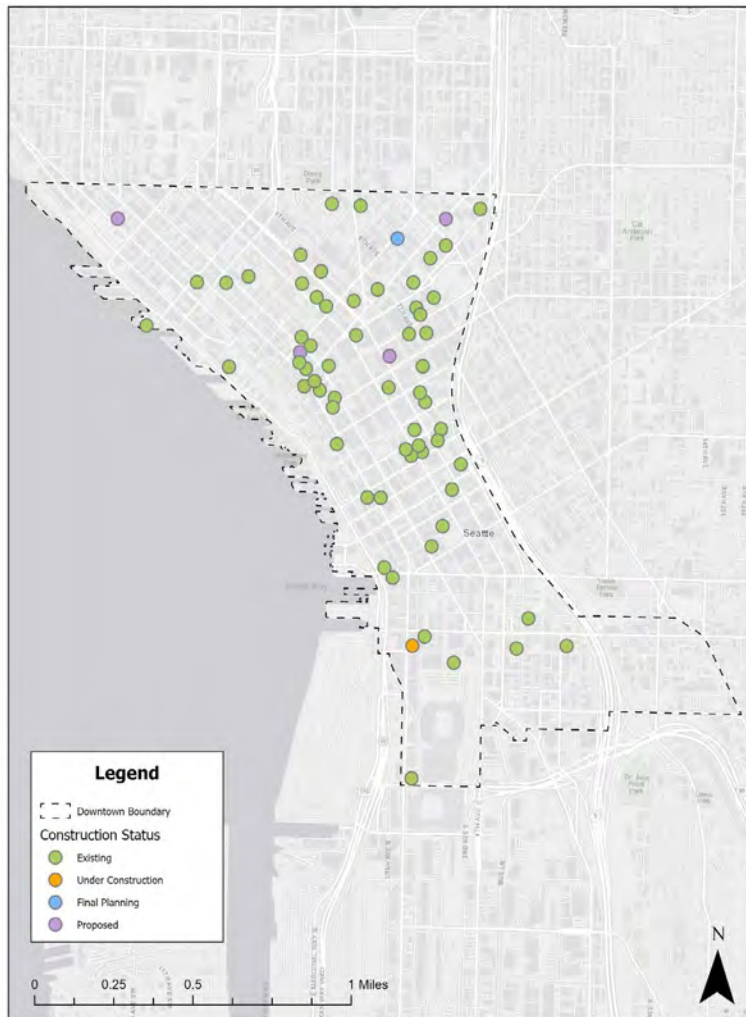


Sources: CoStar; BAE, 2024.
 Subarea Geography: Regional Center Boundaries.

Lodging

As both a tourism and business hub for the City, Downtown Seattle has a considerable number of hotels at a range of price points. While there are hotels throughout Downtown, the majority of hotels are concentrated in the Pike- Market, Denny Triangle, and Commercial Core neighborhoods, as shown in Figure 20 below. There are six additional hotels in various stages of the proposed development pipeline. Currently, the Regional Center is home to 60 hotels, the majority of which are Upscale (28 hotels) or Independent (21 hotels), as shown in Table 19. The hotel building stock is generally older, with a median age of 55 years old across all hotel classes. Combined, the hotels have a total of 13,515 rooms with an average of 225 rooms per property.

Figure 20: Downtown Hospitality, Existing and Development Pipeline, June 2024



Sources: CoStar; BAE, 2024.

Subarea Geography: Regional Center Boundaries.

Table 19: Downtown Hospitality Summary

Hotel Class	Number of Hotels	Median Year Built	Average No. Rooms	Total No. Rooms
Luxury	8	2006	262	2,092
Upscale	28	1979	321	9,000
Midscale	3	1916	89	267
Independent	21	1927	103	2,156
Total	60	1969	225	13,515

Source: CoStar; BAE 2024.

Subarea Geography: Regional Center Boundaries.

Attractions and Entertainment

Downtown Seattle is an entertainment center for tourists and locals alike, with attractions from Pike Place Market and the Seattle Art Museum to Lumen Field. While tourism has not fully recovered to pre-pandemic levels, according to a tourism report from the Downtown Seattle Association the neighborhood⁵ saw a post-pandemic high of almost 3.5 million unique out-of-town visitors in the summer of 2023. Many Downtown destinations, including the Seattle Aquarium, surpassed the 2019 levels of out-of-town visitor foot traffic in 2023.

The Downtown Regional Center is also a hub for special events, including music events, parades, and protests. According to special event permit data, in 2023 the City issued permits for 37 special events for a total of 572,000 attendees. However, the number of special events within the Regional Center has decreased dramatically since before the pandemic - in 2019, the City issued permits for 95 special events within the Regional Center for a total of over one million attendees.

Planned and Proposed Commercial Projects

As of March 2024, according to available CoStar data there were 17 projects in the commercial development pipeline, including 11 office properties and six hotel properties, discussed above and also shown in Table 20 below. Of the 11 office projects, two are currently under construction totaling just under 400,000 square feet of office space,⁶ with the remaining nine planned or proposed projects totaling 3.1 million square feet of office space. If all 11 office projects (3.5 million square feet) are approved and completed as proposed, the total office inventory Downtown will grow by six percent. Of the six hotel projects in the development pipeline, one is under

⁵ The geographic extent of “Downtown” used by the Downtown Seattle Association does not exactly match the Downtown Regional Center extent, but is used as a proxy.

⁶ The under construction office square footage in Table 19 differs from the Office Market Summary in Table 17 (397,481 vs. 928,647). This is due to a property (Washington 1000) being completed between the end of the fourth quarter of 2023 and when the pipeline data was accessed in March 2024.

construction and the remaining five are planned or proposed. If all six hotel projects are approved and completed as proposed, the total hotel room inventory will grow by eight percent (1,040 rooms). According to CoStar, there are no retail, industrial, or flex properties in the development pipeline Downtown.

Table 20: Commercial Development Pipeline, March 2024

Project Name	Office		Hospitality	
	Acres	Sq. Ft.	Acres	Sq. Ft.
Planned and Proposed				
The Langham, Seattle	-	-	0.4	140,250
Tempo by Hilton Seattle Downtown	-	-	0.2	225,000
1520 5th Ave Hotel	-	-	0.3	154,691
Tru by Hilton Seattle Downtown	-	-	0.2	89,500
Western & Eagle	-	-	0.2	6,000
The Net	0.7	807,580	-	-
US Rubber Building	0.3	70,472	-	-
800 Alaskan Way	0.8	504,000	-	-
901 Lenora St	0.5	220,000	-	-
1815 Sixth	0.5	565,000	-	-
Lloyd Building Preservation + Office Tower	0.6	325,000	-	-
Denny Park South	1.6	616,000	-	-
900 Virginia St	0.3	14,400	-	-
One Yesler Building Expansion	N/A	7,500	-	-
Subtotal, Planned and Proposed	5.2	3,129,952	1.3	615,441
Under Construction				
Hotel Westland	-	-	0.3	73,260
First Light	0.4	114,740	-	-
1916 Boren Ave	0.6	282,741	-	-
Subtotal, Under Construction	1.0	397,481	0.3	73,260
Total, All Projects	6.2	3,527,433	1.7	688,701

Source: CoStar; BAE 2024.

Subarea Geographies: Regional Center Boundaries.

Notable Proposed Developments

Civic Campus Plan

[Project Overview](#)

King County is reimagining its civic campus in Downtown Seattle, which covers eight acres and eight buildings (totaling 2.3 million square feet of building space) across ten sites, but is currently underutilized. The County is looking to redevelop the campus to better deploy County services and integrate with the surrounding urban environment. According to the master plan, under current zoning the properties could allow for a total of 4.3 million square feet of non-residential development capacity. If used for residential purposes, the properties could allow for more than 2,500 housing units.

Waterfront Seattle

[Project Overview](#)

After the tunneling of the Alaskan Way Viaduct, Waterfront Seattle has been working to reconnect the waterfront to the rest of Downtown. This includes a new waterfront park promenade, the surface street along Alaskan Way, rebuilding piers, improved east- west crossings between the Downtown and Elliott Bay, and more. The \$806 million project has been underway for several years, and is expected to be completed in 2025. The project is funded by the Local Improvement District (\$160 million), through City (\$320 million) and State (\$216 million) sources, as well as through philanthropy (\$110 million).

The Net

[Project Overview](#)

The Net, at 875 Third Avenue, is the largest proposed commercial project in the neighborhood's development pipeline. Described as an "anti- high rise high rise," the 36- story, 807,600- square- foot office tower is slated to be completed in the first quarter of 2027 and will be zero- carbon.

Denny Park South

[Project Overview](#)

The Denny Park South project, at 2300 Seventh Avenue and 2301 Eighth Avenue, is the second largest proposed commercial property in the neighborhood's development pipeline. The 616,000- square- foot life science campus is proposed across two buildings and will include a public open space. According to CoStar, the project is slated to be completed in 2026.

Economic Development Challenges and Opportunities

The following report section provides additional data and analysis on specific economic development challenges and opportunities in the Downtown Plan Area, including issues related to workforce development, small business needs, infrastructure investments, and gentrification and displacement. In some cases, additional stakeholder outreach will be needed to complete the report sections; these will be noted below.

Education and Workforce Training

Although unemployment across Downtown as a whole is very low, and job growth is projected to be robust, some Downtown community members face ongoing challenges entering the labor market and finding pathways to living wage jobs and careers. In addition to programs operated by community-based organizations and business improvement districts, Worksource Seattle King-County⁷ provides the following list of key service providers in Downtown Seattle that provide education and workforce training:

- Seattle Central College
- Uplift Northwest
- Downtown Seattle Metropolitan Improvement District
- Pioneer Human Services, Aspen Terrace

Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development

As detailed above, small businesses are a critical component of Downtown's current and future economic health. The City's Office of Economic Development (OED) supports small business and entrepreneurship through its small business advocate program as well as through support for one the four Downtown Business Improvement Areas.⁸ In addition, community-based organizations and nonprofits.

⁷ <https://www.worksourceskc.org/locations>

⁸ <https://www.seattle.gov/office-of-economic-development/small-business>

Capital/Infrastructure Investment Needs

Largely funded through a LID managed by Waterfront Seattle, the Downtown Plan Area currently has numerous capital improvement projects underway or recently completed. One example of these projects is the recently completed Habitat Beach between Colman Dock and Pier 48. Open to the public in July 2023, this innovative project provides access to the waterfront near Pioneer Square while also supporting the waterfront ecosystem, including enhancing the salmon corridor by adding rocks and nearshore vegetation.

The Downtown Activation Plan also identifies the following key infrastructure investment needs:

- Improve street and sidewalk lighting across Downtown with an initial focus on the Chinatown- International District, Third Avenue from Yesler Way to Stewart Street, and areas with concentrated crime and street disorder.
- Pilot a green and healthy street by closing Pike Street between First and Second Avenues for pedestrians only. The new street will feature activations, music buskers, café- like seating areas for people- watching, and pop- up vendors.
- Reopen City Hall Park with activations to help keep the park vibrant, including concerts, food trucks, fitness classes, art programs, movie and sports viewing, and a satellite farmers market.
- Finish improvements to Downtown parks, including new electrical and lighting systems, utilities, and storm- water infrastructure.

Beyond these key infrastructure needs, it is important to note that there is an overarching need for expanded public safety initiatives to address cleanliness and safety problems that are negatively impacting visitors, residents and businesses. As part of this overarching effort to improve the quality of public spaces Downtown, consistent activation and programming efforts are needed.

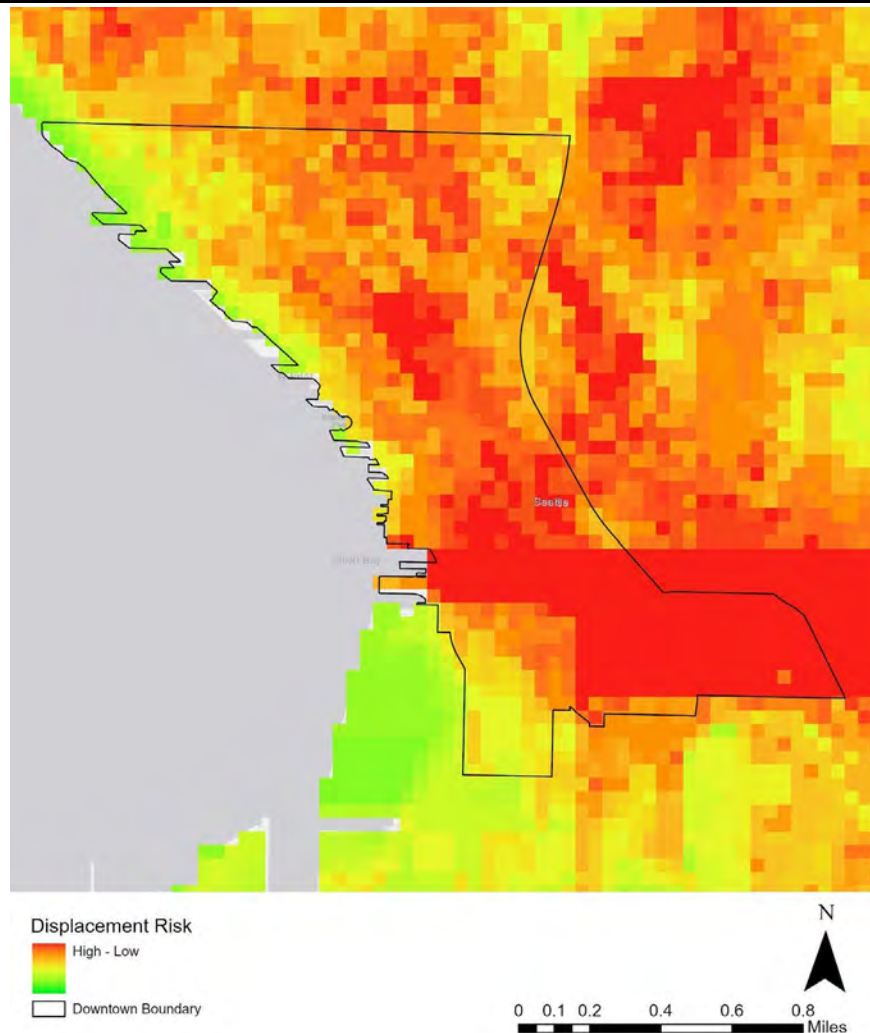
Gentrification and Displacement Risks

In support of the One Seattle plan, the City of Seattle created a displacement risk index that provides a long- term view of displacement risk based on neighborhood characteristics including the presence of vulnerable populations and amenities that tend to increase real estate demand. Leveraging this data, Figure 21 below shows displacement risk across the Downtown Area. Displacement risks are highest for both residents and businesses in the southern portion of the Plan Area, including Pioneer

Square and the Chinatown- International District. Indeed, examining the City as a whole, the Southern portion of the Plan Area has some of the highest displacement risks in the entire city of Seattle as of 2022.

In addition to analyzing gentrification and displacement risk data, BAE will continue to research and document risks through ongoing key stakeholder outreach efforts.

Figure 21: Displacement Risk Index, 2022



Sources: City of Seattle; BAE, 2024.

Funding and Financing Sources for Economic and Community Development

Funding and financing sources for economic and community development fall broadly into two major categories: 1) funding sources for capital improvement and

in infrastructure investments; and 2) funding sources for individual business development and business district development.

Infrast ructure Funding Tools

The City of Seattle plans for and funds public infrastructure improvements primarily through the Capital Improvement Program. The current plan is for Fiscal Years 2022 through 2027 and contemplates a total of \$7B in capital expenditures, including significant capital expenditures along the Waterfront. In addition to debt financing, (general fund, revenue and voter-approved bonds), the City relies on public utility funding and real estate excise tax funding, in addition to other municipal financing tools to support infrastructure investments⁹.

Additional key infrastructure financing tools with potential to support capital investments in Downtown Seattle include Local Improvements Programs (such as the LIP already in place for the Waterfront)¹⁰, as well the newly enabled Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts which can be created in designated areas to support public improvements and community revitalization¹¹.

Small Business and Business District Funding

The Office of Economic Development provides a detailed list of funding resources for community economic development, including through community-based organizations like the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) as well through City-funded organizations and Business Improvement Areas (BIAs)¹². These and other resources will be further explored through key stakeholder outreach to be conducted by BAE in collaboration with the City and Agency.

⁹ <https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/FinanceDepartment/2227adoptedcip/Overview.pdf>

¹⁰ [https://mrsc.org/explore-topics/facilities/districts/local-improvement-districts#:~:text=Local%20Improvement%20Districts%20\(LIDs\)%20are,self%2Dgoverning%20special%20purpose%20districts.](https://mrsc.org/explore-topics/facilities/districts/local-improvement-districts#:~:text=Local%20Improvement%20Districts%20(LIDs)%20are,self%2Dgoverning%20special%20purpose%20districts.)

¹¹ <https://mrsc.org/explore-topics/finance/revenues/tax-increment-financing>

¹² <https://www.seattle.gov/office-of-economic-development/business-districts/tools-and-funding#businesssupportattraction>

Education Innovations Report

Date: December 19, 2025

Prepared for: Seattle Downtown Regional
Center Plan

Prepared by: BAE Urban Economics

Memorandum

To: Erica Bush, Urban Planner/Urban Designer

From: Lauren Beduhn, Associate
Paul Peninger, Principal

Date: June 22, 2025

Re: Innovative Strategies For Expanding K-12 Educational Facilities in Downtown Seattle

Introduction

Planning for the development or expansion of K through 12 public schools presents a complex set of challenges. School districts must balance high costs and long construction timelines with the uncertainty of future enrollment and neighborhood growth. Furthermore, funding for capital projects is often limited and requires voter approval. These challenges are especially pronounced in Downtown Seattle, which currently has no public schools located in its neighborhoods but is projected to undergo significant residential growth in the coming decades. If the City of Seattle intends to support an increase in family households and school-age children in this area, it will need to proactively explore opportunities for expanding educational infrastructure. Building on findings from the Public Facilities and Services Analysis prepared for the Downtown Seattle Regional Center Plan, this memo 1) highlights policy goals related to K-12 schools, 2) outlines the Seattle Public Schools' (SPS) current facilities planning process, and 3) *explores innovative strategies employed in other school districts to deliver new schools.*

Planning Goals Related to K-12 Education

Multiple planning efforts have set goals related to K-12 public education opportunities in the City of Seattle and Downtown Seattle specifically. The following section of this analysis highlights relevant goals from the Draft Downtown Goals and Policy Directions, the One Seattle Plan, and the One Seattle Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The Draft Downtown Goals and Policy Directions emphasize the importance of promoting housing growth in Downtown Seattle, with a particular focus on neighborhood design that supports family households. Goal 1.3 of the Draft Downtown Goals and Policy Directions is to “Evolve Downtown neighborhoods to better meet the diverse needs of all residents and families,” and Policy 1.3.2 is to “Expand family-focused services and experiences, particularly around housing and transit.” Given that proximity to quality K–12 education is typically highly valued by family households and considering the current absence of public schools in

Downtown, these goals could be advanced through investment in K-12 educational opportunities in the area.

The One Seattle Plan highlights the need for ongoing coordination with SPS to accurately project the size and distribution of future student populations and to effectively address the evolving demand for K-12 education over the next 20 years. Additionally, it provides the recommendations below to improve and expand educational opportunities for K-12 students:

- CF 6.2 - Explore opportunities to reduce the costs of developing new schools, such as identifying surplus properties that could be available for school sites.
- CF 6.3 - Facilitate zoning and permitting processes that support the development of new or renovated schools, and where providing non-educational community benefits, the adaptive reuse of any surplus schools.
- CF 6.4 - Collaborate with SPS and the community to explore if underutilized or surplus school buildings and properties can be redeveloped for other purposes, such as affordable housing, childcare, workforce development opportunities or enhancements for public safety.
- CF 6.5 - Expand opportunities for joint use by the City and SPS of buildings, playing fields, and other facilities.
- CF 6.6 - Coordinate pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure to make it easy and safe for students and families to walk, bike, and roll to school.
- CF 6.7 - Encourage more walking, biking, and transit ridership for students, teachers, and staff.
- CF 6.8 - Support efforts to transition SPS buildings, operations, and transportation from fossil fuels towards 100% zero-carbon electricity.

Of the One Seattle Plan goals related to K-12 education, this analysis specifically addresses CF 6.2 by presenting innovative school delivery models that have been successful in other school districts.

The One Seattle EIS addresses the impacts of the One Seattle Plan on the city's education facilities and provides recommendations to mitigate any negative impacts. The One Seattle EIS acknowledges that although SPS student enrollment has declined over the last five years, population growth through 2044 has the potential to increase student enrollment in various areas throughout the City. It further states that if enrollment projections illustrate exceedance of school capacity, then SPS would respond as they have in the past by adjusting school boundaries, adding or removing portables, adding/renovating buildings, reopening closed buildings or schools, and/or pursuing future capital programs. In addition to these actions, the One Seattle EIS suggests the following mitigation measures:

- The City could implement a school impact fee to help pay for the development of new classrooms if they are needed in the future.

- The City could help identify interim uses for existing underutilized classrooms so that the school district can hold onto them in case they are needed in the future.
- The City could incentivize provision of public schools in centers in vertical formats, where new schools are needed.
- The City could also allow for greater heights at existing school locations where demand increases. Goals would be to protect recreation and tree canopy while allowing for more student classroom capacity.
- The City could update development standards and review processes for new schools in order to make it easier to add classrooms or build new schools if they are needed in the future.
- As part of development standards for new place types such as neighborhood centers and corridors, the City could enhance street crossing including walking routes to schools in areas with added housing.
- The City could identify specific objectives to assist Seattle Public Schools in acquiring and developing new schools if needed.

Although SPS leads public school planning and development, these policy goals suggest a need for new K–12 education opportunities and identify ways the City of Seattle can facilitate the creation of new K-12 schools. The following section addresses SPS’s facility planning process and funding process for school capital improvements, as well as its relevance to K-12 education opportunities in Downtown Seattle.

Seattle Public Schools Facility Planning

SPS manages the capital planning process for public schools in the City of Seattle. SPS receives funding from the state, federal government, property taxes, City of Seattle programs, and individual donors. All capital improvements - building expansion, replacement, and upgrades – as well as technology advancements are funded outside of SPS’s annual operating budget primarily through property tax levies, referred to as the Building Excellence (BEX) Capital Levy and the Buildings, Technology, and Academics/Athletics (BTA) Capital Levy. These levies are contingent on approval from the Seattle School Board and Seattle voters. SPS levies are typically collected over a six-year period and each levy is placed on the ballot on an alternating three-year schedule.¹

In February 2025, Seattle voters approved the most recent levy, Building Excellence VI Capital Levy (BEX VI). This levy will finance almost \$1.4 billion in capital improvements and \$415 million in technology advancements across public schools in the City of Seattle. This funding can only go towards projects specified in the levy work plan. With respect to the eight public schools that serve Downtown, there is one planned project that will improve school capacity, the addition and modernization of Lowell Elementary School. Other projects for schools that

¹ <https://www.seattleschools.org/about/levy/capital-levies/>

serve Downtown include technology upgrades, clean energy projects, athletic field improvements, and cafeteria updates.²

SPS's ten-year Facilities Master Plan informs which projects are included in BEX and BTA. This plan recommends facility improvements based on a variety of factors, such as policy directives, program needs, building conditions, and enrollment projections. Of these factors, enrollment projections are crucial for determining the future capacity of SPS's facilities and whether schools can accommodate new growth. At the time of the most recent Facilities Master Plan update in 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic caused enrollment declines and created uncertainty about future enrollment trends. Thus, SPS did not publish projections for this plan update.³

Since the 2021 Facilities Master Plan update, SPS released updated enrollment projections. The SPS Enrollment Planning Department develops enrollment projections annually, which include 10-year projection of total students residing and enrolled in the district and one- and five-year projections per each school. The projections are based on historical enrollment, birth rates, housing information, major employers, city planning projects, and other factors. The most recent projections available on SPS's website illustrate declining total district enrollment between the 2023 to 2024 and 2033 to 2034 school years. Between the 2023 to 2024 and 2028 to 2029 school years, SPS estimates that five out of the eight schools serving Downtown will decline in enrollment. Edmond S. Meany Middle School is projected to experience the largest enrollment decline at 15 percent, while Bailey Gatzert Elementary is expected to see the greatest growth, with a 21 percent increase.

If the City of Seattle aims to create K–12 public schools in Downtown Seattle, this need would first need to be identified through a future facilities master planning process. Enrollment projections would likely need to demonstrate significant student growth in the Downtown area to justify investment. Additionally, funding for any Downtown school projects would require approval by the Seattle School Board and Seattle voters through the capital levies process, with the next levy anticipated to go before voters in 2031.

In recent years, declining student enrollment, among other factors, has prompted SPS to propose school closures and consolidations. In this context, proactively planning for K–12 school expansion in Downtown may require pursuing innovative funding strategies beyond SPS's facilities planning and capital levy process.

² <https://www.seattleschools.org/about/levy/bex-vi-capital-levy-planning/>

³ chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.seattleschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/2021_Facilities_Master_Plan_Update.pdf

Case Studies : New York City Education Construction Fund and Prince George's County P3 Strategies

School districts and other public agencies have adopted innovative approaches to deliver new high-quality schools while managing financial constraints and limited land availability. This section discusses two of these approaches: 1) leveraging public-private partnerships (P3) to deliver new schools and 2) collaborating with community agencies to share school space and resources.

Various school districts have leveraged P3 delivery models to develop and construct school facilities. The structure of these partnerships can vary greatly but generally involve a private developer constructing or renovating a facility and leasing it to the school district over a long period of time.⁴ P3 models can offer development and construction cost savings, as well as streamlined project schedules. However, they also involve complex legal and financial arrangements and must be tailored to meet the unique needs and characteristics of each school district.⁵ Notable P3 models include the work of the Education Construction Fund in New York City beginning in the 1960s and the more recent P3 arrangement in Prince George's County Public Schools beginning in 2020.

New York City has a long history of collaborating with the private sector to build new school facilities through the Education Construction Fund (ECF), a public benefit corporation formed in 1966. The goal of the ECF is to provide new school buildings and other public benefits by utilizing P3 to pair new schools with housing or commercial developments. By doing so, the ECF aims to expand education opportunities without tapping into the city's capital budget.

In the ECF's P3 structure, the corporation leases its unused development rights to a private developer, who is then responsible for constructing both a new school and accompanying residential or commercial space, typically located above or adjacent to the school. The ECF, which operates outside of the city's debt limit, issues bonds to finance the school's construction and pays off the bonds over time through rental income and tax equivalency payments from the developer.

According to ECF's website, the corporation has delivered over 18,000 school seats, 4,500 housing units, and 1.2 million square feet of office space in the City of New York. However, Schindler, notes that the ECF's P3 model has limitations.⁶ More specifically, this model is only successful in areas with high land values that can generate sufficient rent incomes. To provide new schools in areas with low land values or to provide schools paired with affordable housing, additional financing may be required.

⁴ Education Evolving, Facilities Financing: New Models for Districts that are Creating Schools New, 2004.

⁵ Bonvechio, Can Public-Private Partnerships Work in K-12?, 2021.

⁶ The Private Lives of Public Schools, 2019.

In contrast to ECF's school development process, Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) utilized P3 to construct six new schools without incorporating a mixed-use development component. In 2020, in response to aging school facilities and growing education needs, PGCPS entered into an agreement with a private development team to deliver the schools under a design-build-finance-maintain (DBFM) alternative financing model.⁷ According to a press release from PGCPS, the private partners completed construction of all six schools in 2023.

Upon school occupancy, PGCPS began making availability payments, funded through its capital budget and with additional contributions from the County.⁸ While PGCPS retains ownership of the schools, its private partners are responsible for maintenance throughout the duration of the contract. This innovative partnership saved PGCPS approximately \$383 million in design and construction costs, eliminated deferred maintenance expenses, and reduced the school delivery timeline by half.

A P3 school delivery model could be adopted to facilitate the development of new schools in Downtown Seattle. Pursuing mixed-use projects similar to those executed by the ECF, specifically projects that pair housing with new schools, could address housing demand and support projected residential growth in Downtown. Furthermore, Downtown Seattle's high land values may generate the required revenue to sustain these types of projects. Leveraging a DBFM P3 structure like that of PGCPS has the potential to reduce the project management burden on public administrators, reduce upfront costs, and respond more quickly to demand for new school facilities.

Despite these advantages, Bonvechio, in his review of the PGCPS P3 model, cautions that P3 deal structures are highly complex and involve significant risk-sharing, with successful outcomes relying on long-term partnerships and high levels of collaboration.⁹ To ensure a successful P3 school delivery model, Bonvechio recommends that these partnerships should have the following characteristics:

- A clear definition of expected outcomes from the parties involved.
- Sufficient development time for a district to negotiate the structure and required legal agreements of the project.
- A true partnership where both parties have mutual respect and consideration for each other, and are invested in each other's success.
- Honesty, as nothing can cause a P3 to implode faster than a lack of trust among the parties.

⁷ Bonvechio, *Can Public-Private Partnerships Work in K-12?*, 2021.

⁸ *A Guide to K-12 Public-Private-Partnerships*, Brailsford and Dunlavey.

⁹ Bonvechio, *Can Public-Private Partnerships Work in K-12?*, 2021.

- A fair and equitable contract/management agreement where expectations are clearly spelled out, allowing both parties to know exactly what is expected and how success will be measured.
- A close working relationship, because the private sector partner must have support from and access to district leaders.
- Realistic and clearly defined milestones that allow for the multi-layered review and approval process that many districts and school systems have.
- An intentionally designed project, defined by the school district.
- Flexibility, as the district should carefully define its needs and in responding to those needs, the private sector partner should have latitude to shop for the most cost-effective solutions available.

In addition to utilizing P3, school districts can address funding challenges by co-locating schools with other facilities, such as community organizations, higher education, and local businesses.¹⁰ Space-sharing education models can spread facility operations and maintenance costs across multiple agencies. When these models also employ adaptive reuse of community space – such as churches, community centers, and colleges campus – school districts can substantially reduce facility development and construction costs.

In addition to cost-savings, space sharing models can offer public benefits that transcend student education. Pairing schools with organizations that offer community services can repair fragmented service delivery, improving access to resources for families. Additionally, schools developed from community-based organizations can be more responsive to local needs and create a sense of belonging for students historically “othered” by public education.

El Puente, a community-based organization located in Brooklyn, New York, successfully implemented a space sharing education model by partnering with the New York City Department of Education in the 1990s. El Puente was founded in 1982 to promote community activism and empowerment for the Southside Williamsburg Latino community. It was founded by Luis Garden Acosta and other community members in response to rising crime in the community following the loss of industry and disruptive urban renewal programs.¹¹

After operating a successful after-school program for 10 years, El Puente opened a high school in 1993, the El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice, in a renovated church which also served as a community headquarters. El Puente also transformed and led the operations of

¹⁰ Education Evolving, Facilities Financing: New Models for Districts that are Creating Schools New, 2004.

¹¹ Ancess & Rogers, Social emotional learning and social justice learning at El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice, 2015.

Middle School 50 starting in 2015. Since these schools' inception, El Puente has accelerated student performance and attendance and is consistently an A-rated NYC school.¹²

The success of El Puente's model is largely attributed to its responsiveness to community needs and deviation from "one size fits all" education. The Academy and MS50's curriculum celebrates local culture and language, cultivating a sense of belonging for students. The small school size and involvement of teachers, staff, and parents in the decision-making process fosters higher levels of student engagement in learning. El Puente also offers counseling and support services for students and families and has a long history of leading social activist movements relevant to the local community's values.¹³

El Puente's innovative education model and other similar space sharing initiatives could be well-suited for the needs of Downtown Seattle. Co-locating a public school within an existing community building could offer the potential to create or expand education spaces without relying entirely on the capital levy process. Furthermore, given that no public schools currently exist within Downtown's boundaries, a tailored model like this could provide a much-needed resource for families living in the area. Finally, as noted in the Public Facilities and Services Analysis, previous studies have noted the issue of fragmented service delivery for under resourced communities in Downtown. Shared space education models can improve resource access and collaboration among multiple providers by responding to multiple community needs in a single facility.

¹² Lopez, *Belonging in Schools Building a school where all students belong in New York City's Williamsburg*, 2023.

Environment & Climate Change Technical Report

Date: December 19, 2025

Prepared for: Seattle Downtown Regional
Center Plan

Prepared by: Agency Landscape + Planning

Environment and Climate Change Technical Report

DOWNTOWN REGIONAL CENTER PLAN | DRAFT
FEBRUARY 20, 2025

Historic Context and Trends

Downtown in Context



Figure 1 Downtown Districts and Landmarks

Land, Industry, and Culture Shaped by Water

The Downtown Regional Center study area (throughout this document referred to as Downtown, or Downtown Seattle) is located in central Seattle. It is bound by the Elliott Bay shoreline to the west while Interstate-5 comprises most of the eastern boundary but intersects the Chinatown-International District neighborhood. Denny Way is the northernmost border while The Duwamish Industrial Center lies to the south.

For millions of years, water has sculpted the lands, people, and environment of what is now Downtown Seattle. From the ancient glacial movements of the Vashon Glaciation to the

relentless coastal erosion by the Pacific Ocean and Puget Sound to indigenous peoples' stewardship of the Salish Seas, water has been the constant force shaping this region. The maritime endeavors of the 19th and 20th centuries further intertwined the city's relationship with water, leading to the ongoing transformation of the Downtown waterfront into a vibrant cultural destination. Downtown Seattle has always been, and continues to be, a product of its profound relationship with water.¹

¹ Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture, "Waterlines Project"
<https://www.burkemuseum.org/static/waterlines/maps.html> ² The Encyclopedia of Puget Sound, "The Puget Lowland Ecoregion"



Figure 2 Historic relationship to water

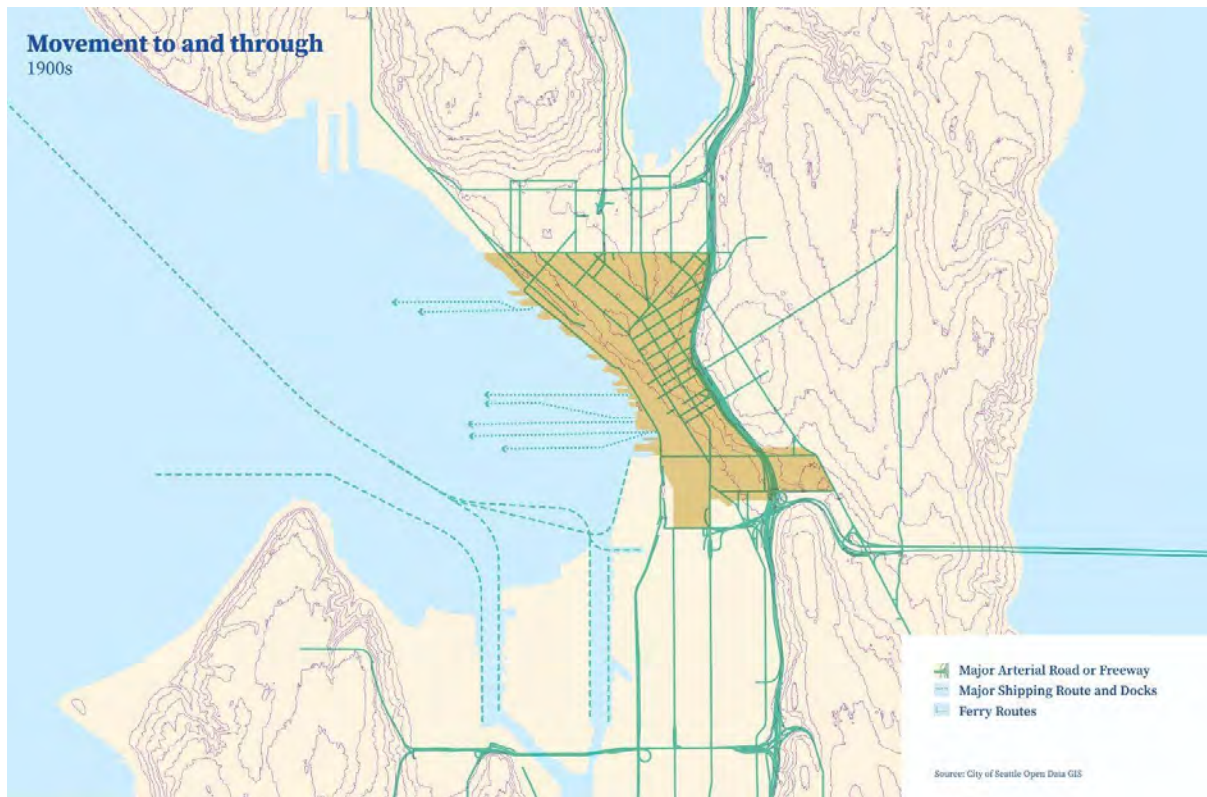


Figure 3 Map showing movement to and through Downtown Seattle

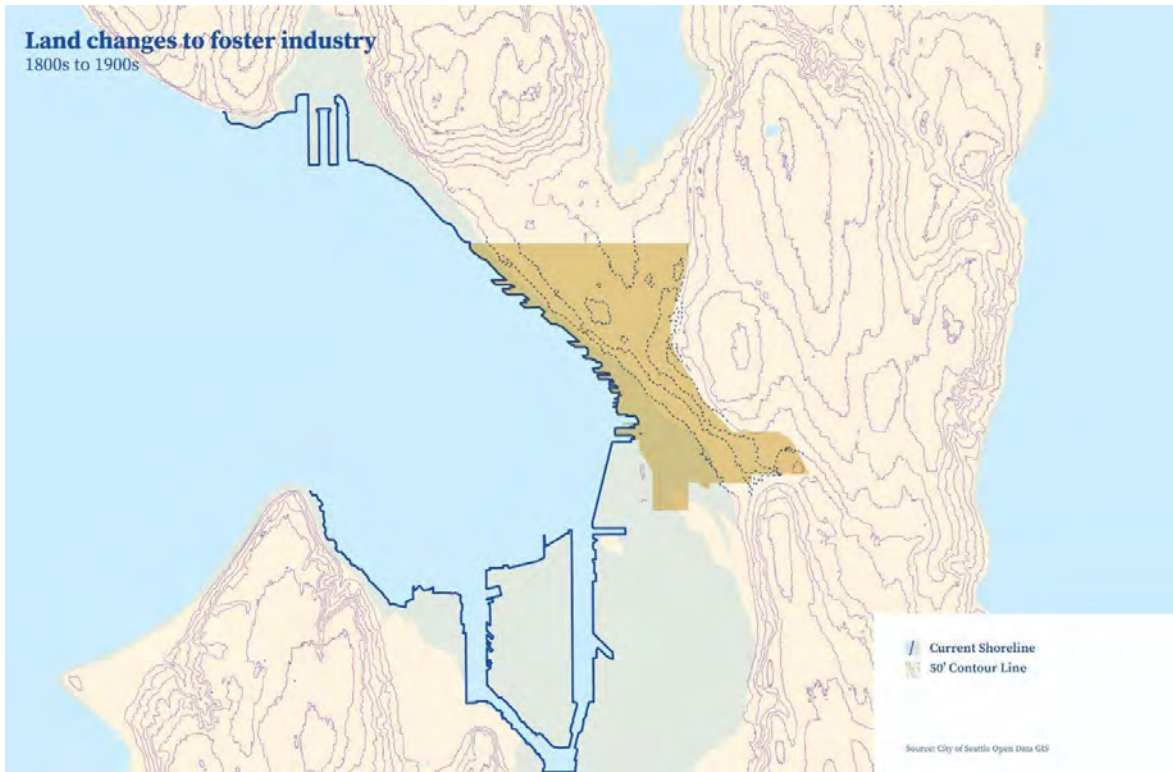


Figure 4 Land contours from 1800s to 1900s

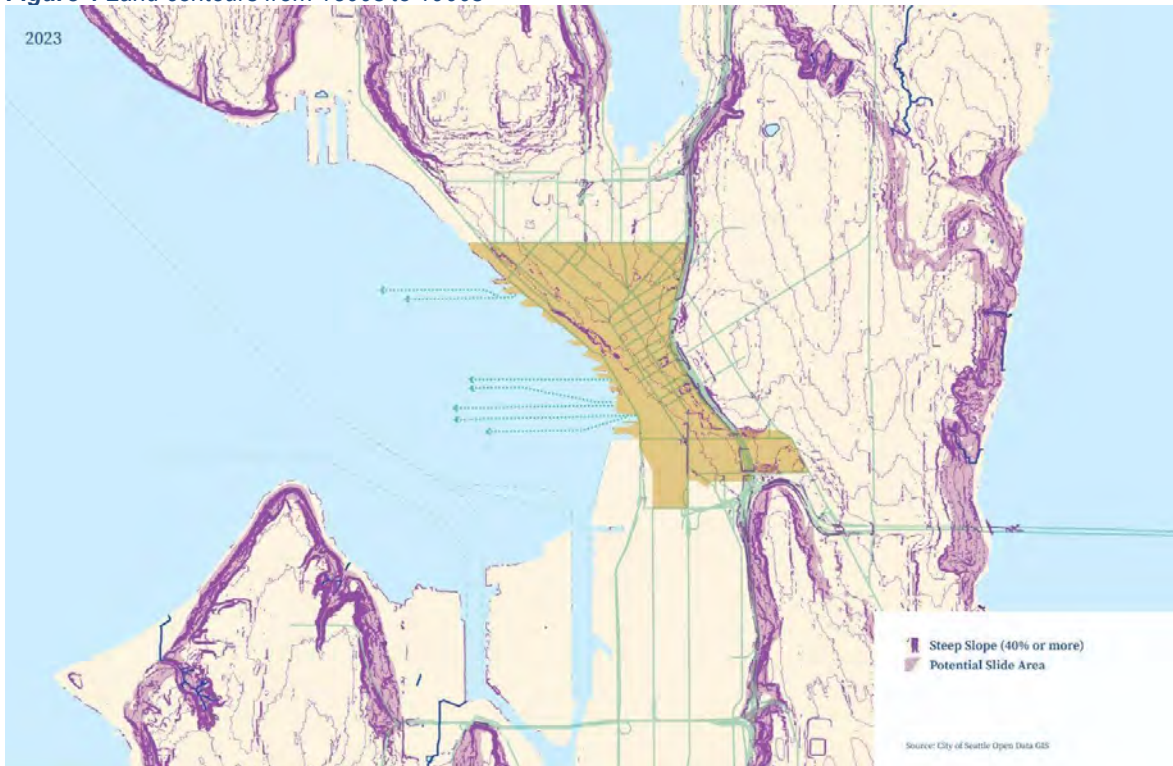


Figure 5 Land in 2023

Geological History

The lands that are now known as Seattle were created by over 2.4 million years of geological change caused by glaciers, volcanoes, earthquakes, landslides, coastal deposition, and erosion. Those changes created a narrow strip of geologically complex land that resides between the salt waters of Puget Sound and the fresh waters of Lake Washington, also known as an isthmus.

While these complex geological formations make ground conditions in Seattle complex and unpredictable, the rich topsoil deposited hundreds of thousands of years ago paired with a mild marine climate, created a healthy and ecological condition for a range of natural resources to thrive. Before European settlement, the area of what became known as Seattle was once continuous forests of Western hemlock, Western Red Cedar, and Douglas-fir.² Creeks and wetlands flowed through this landscape and together with the forests created a landscape that buffered the extremes of wet winters and dry summers.

Indigenous Stewards (pre-1800s and ongoing)

Downtown is built on Indigenous land, the traditional territory of Coast Salish peoples, specifically the Suquamish and Duwamish Tribes. The tribes lived in the region for thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans or white settlers. They stewarded a deep relationship with the land and water of present-day Puget Sound. The tribes also used Puget Sound for hunting and trade, and there were Coast Salish villages and water-related places along Downtown Seattle's original shorelines, of what is now Alaskan Way.

The Regrade: Land Changes to Foster Industry (1800s-1900s)

Engineers in the 19th and 20th century saw an opportunity in Seattle's rich, porous soils for its ease of removal and regrading. Eight significant human-engineered projects to redefine Seattle's landscape in support of economic development occurred between 1890 and 1930, and four of those projects, spanning over thirty years, were in Downtown Seattle.³

While these projects were envisioned to support an economic boon, they also had lasting effects on the natural function of the regraded lands and movement of waterways to the Sound, making future construction projects more difficult and significant wastewater infrastructure necessary to divert or channel water away from the developed landscape.

² The Encyclopedia of Puget Sound, "The Puget Lowland Ecoregion"

³ David B Williams, "Denny Regrade (Seattle)" History Link.org, <https://historylink.org/File/21204> ⁴ Eric Pryne, "Amazon to make giant move to South Lake Union," The Seattle Times, (Dec 2007) ⁵ Waterfront Seattle, "Program Overview", <https://waterfrontseattle.org/about/program-overview> ⁶ Seattle Public Utilities, "The Power of Water", <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/2be3ad7299c44445b4bbb213a039bf8b> ⁷ Sound Transit, East Link Project Boring Locations, https://www.soundtransit.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/projects/eastlink/deis/appendix_f4.11_geologic_unit_summaries_and_hazard_areas.pdf



Figure 6 and Figure 7 Photos of Regrade in 1907 (Rare Historical Photos)

Building Booms

Several building booms took place after the 1930s, in the decades following Seattle's significant regrading projects. While not all of these investments directly occurred due to the economic development visions of the engineers who led the major regrade projects, they all followed the shape of the new landscape. An increase in automobile use after World War II brought thoroughfares, expressways, and other car infrastructure that greatly impacted Seattle's urban form. A more formulaic zoning ordinance adopted in the late 1950s brought modern high rise curtain wall buildings. By the late 1960s, much of Downtown was shaped by high rise commercial buildings and plazas. By the 1970s, preservation and restoration efforts began to target historic and architecturally significant properties, many of which are Downtown.

In the early 2000s, after the City loosened building height restrictions, many projects were constructed in the Downtown's commercial core. Also, in the 2010's, many successful technology start-ups, including Amazon, expanded operations Downtown. These companies made significant investments not only in individual buildings, but in campuses and public spaces close to their facilities.⁴ Another major structural change came after the Alaskan Way Viaduct suffered damage after the 2001 earthquake, when it was replaced with an underground highway that paved the way for a renewed connection between Downtown and the waterfront.

⁴ Eric Pryne, "Amazon to make giant move to South Lake Union," The Seattle Times, (Dec 2007)⁵ Waterfront Seattle, "Program Overview", <https://waterfrontseattle.org/about/program-overview> ⁶ Seattle Public Utilities, "The Power of Water", <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/2be3ad7299c44445b4bbb213a039bf8b> ⁷ Sound Transit, East Link Project Boring Locations, https://www.soundtransit.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/projects/eastlink/deis/appendix_f4.11_geologic_unit_summaries_and_hazard_areas.pdf



Figure 8 Aerial view of the Alaskan Way Viaduct in Seattle in 2018 (Flickr Photo / WSDOT)

The Unique Role of Open Space in Downtown

Initiative 42

Publicly owned parks and recreational facilities throughout Seattle are protected by Initiative 42, which was passed by the City of Seattle in 1997. Initiative 42 preserves access to parks and recreation by preventing the transfer, sale, or change of parks and recreation land and facilities to other uses unless deemed absolutely necessary. In the case of transfer, sale, or change of use, this initiative also requires the city to replace any parks and recreation facilities with equivalent or better facilities that serve the same community and geographic area.

Spaces for Expression and Exchange

Downtown Seattle's major civic open spaces function as places of expression and exchange. Many of them frequently support activities from surrounding businesses and cultural and civic institutions. Major civic open spaces Downtown include Occidental Square, and City Hall Park. These spaces support events large and small and often serve as a regional draw, attracting visitors from across Downtown, the city, and beyond. Public spaces represent and are often host to democratic expression and dialogue, essentials of civic discourse. A full inventory of Downtown parks and open spaces can be found on page 38.

Reconnecting Downtown to its Waterfront

Once primarily an active shipping channel and gateway to surrounding Washington communities, the waterfront has significantly transformed since the early 2000s. Seattle's Downtown Waterfront has been redesigned into a vibrant, connected destination that balances its role as a jobs, tourism, and transportation center alongside improved public access.

Reflecting the longstanding importance of connections to water for Seattle, the City is also actively working to reinvest in water quality and ecological health, with the collaborative stewardship and advocacy of Indigenous tribes. Removal of the Alaskan Way Viaduct and investments in the Pioneer Square Habitat Beach, the Puget Sound, and stormwater infrastructure outflows into the harbor are recent examples of efforts to improve waterfront health and access for the benefit of all.⁵

Downtown's Back Yards

Downtown Seattle includes some of the highest density development in the City, which also often means that many residences do not have access to private yards. Walkable, public spaces that offer a variety of experiences - recreational, social, wellness-related - are essential for the many people who call Downtown home. Parks enable residents to physically engage with and connect to the natural environment. They also provide a range of health, economic development, and environmental benefits. Trees alone help to cool the Downtown on hot days, improve air quality, and increase property values.

Tourism Hub

Downtown Seattle continues to be a major destination for visitors culturally, offering unique destinations and experiences, and logistically, as a key transit gateway into Seattle for travelers to and through the city. Downtown open spaces provide everyday opportunities for tourists to rest and enjoy the city, and events-based destination opportunities. Places like Pike Place Market are major tourist attractions. Pike Place Market alone supports 600 businesses with sales of over \$100 million and millions of visitors worldwide.

Environmental Threats

This technical report examines the current state and future challenges of Downtown Seattle's open spaces, public realm, and waterfront. While these areas contribute to a healthy city for residents, workers, and visitors, they face significant environmental and climate change threats. These include vulnerabilities to flooding from natural disasters and sea level rise, reduced air quality, increased urban heat island effects from hot days, heat waves, droughts, and wildfires, as well as the impacts of earthquakes on the built environment and landfill. These modern-day threats, exacerbated by human engineering and consumption, necessitate comprehensive planning and mitigation strategies to ensure a sustainable and resilient future for Downtown Seattle.

⁵ Waterfront Seattle, "Program Overview", <https://waterfrontseattle.org/about/program-overview> ⁶ Seattle Public Utilities, "The Power of Water", <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/2be3ad7299c44445b4bbb213a039bf8b> ⁷ Sound Transit, East Link Project Boring Locations, https://www.soundtransit.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/projects/eastlink/deis/appendix_f4.11_geologic_unit_su_maries_and_hazard_areas.pdf

Environmentally Critical Areas

Seattle's Environmentally Critical Areas (ECA) Code governs areas of the City that provide critical environmental functions, like wetlands and habitat conservation areas, or areas with natural conditions that pose risks for development, like areas prone to floods, landslides, liquefaction, peat-settlement, or seismic hazards. Several ECAs exist within the Downtown Regional Center, including Liquefaction Prone Areas, Steep Slopes (40% average), Flood Prone Areas, Known Slide initiation points, and Peat Settlement Prone Areas. Along Downtown's shoreline is a Shoreline Habitat Buffer. The ECA Code outlines regulations like site plan requirements, standards for trees and vegetation management and restoration, and development standards for different ECAs.

Previous and Ongoing Planning Efforts and Projects

The Downtown Urban Center plan should build on recent studies and resources that provide a strong foundation for climate projections, open space needs, and environmental opportunities. The following is a summary of key reports:

City Wide Plans

Environmental Impact Statement- One Seattle Comprehensive Plan, OPCD

The Seattle Comprehensive Plan is the guide for how the city grows and makes investments. The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) evaluates five alternatives for providing more housing and improving the jobs/housing balance in Seattle. Each alternative has been reviewed for likely environmental impacts. The purpose of evaluating alternatives is to understand the impacts of different approaches to accommodating housing and jobs. The final plan and implementing legislation would likely implement a combination of changes analyzed in different alternatives. Downtown Seattle is within analysis zone 4 in the Draft EIS.

Seattle Climate Vulnerability Assessment, OPCD (2023)

The City of Seattle's Climate Vulnerability Assessment (CVA) is a detailed assessment of how climate change is already affecting and will continue to affect the community wellbeing, economy, health, infrastructure, and natural systems of the city.

Seattle Climate Action Plan, City of Seattle (2013)

[Link](#)

The first climate action plan was adopted in 2006. The 2006 CAP laid out a strategy to meet the Kyoto target and identified short-term actions the City should take to achieve that goal. To date, fifteen of the eighteen areas of action identified in the 2006 CAP have been implemented or are in the process of implementation.

Green New Deal Executive Order, Climate Impact Actions, Office of Sustainability (2021)

[Link](#)

The Green New Deal Executive Order calls for OSE to convene a Green New Deal City Team, comprised of relevant City departments, such as Seattle Department of Transportation, Seattle City Light, Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections, the Office of Economic Development, and Office of Planning and Community Development, that would engage and collaborate with community-based organizations and residents to develop a brief report identifying the top 10 actions the City could take in order to achieve expeditious reductions in GHG emissions.

Community Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory, Office of Sustainability (2024)

[Link](#)

Tracking greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions across the buildings, transportation, industrial, and waste sectors helps the City develop effective programs and policies designed to reduce climate impacts. This GHG emissions inventory reports on the sources and magnitude of Seattle's core GHG emissions and provides short- and long-term trends so the City of Seattle and its residents are better able to take informed actions to combat the climate crisis.

Parks and Open Space Plan, Seattle Parks and Rec (SPR) (2024)

[Link](#)

The 2024 Parks and Open Space Plan is a 6-year plan that documents and describes SPR's facilities and lands, looks at Seattle's changing demographics, and lays out a vision for the future. The 2024 Parks and Open Space Plan is required by the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) to maintain the City of Seattle's eligibility for state grants and funding programs that will help realize outdoor recreation development and open space acquisition projects.

Outside Citywide, City of Seattle (2023)

[Link](#)

Outside Citywide is a collaborative initiative to create a flourishing, equitable, well-connected network of public green spaces across Seattle. Through partnerships and innovation, Outside Citywide identifies priority areas and key strategies to improve public space at the city scale, while also testing and improving these strategies by implementing projects at the neighborhood scale.

Indigenous Inclusivity Guide (2023)

The Indigenous Inclusivity Guide was created to help city planners ensure equitable representation of Indigenous groups throughout Seattle. As planners contribute to the City's development, this guide serves as a resource for prioritizing Indigenous representation and increasing awareness of the priorities of Indigenous peoples who live on and have connections to the land within the city's boundaries.

Downtown Specific Plans

Downtown Activation Plan (2023)

[Link](#)

Mayor Bruce Harrell unveiled the Downtown Activation Plan, the City of Seattle's proposal to revitalize Downtown Seattle. This plan outlines goals and actions aimed at stabilizing and transforming Downtown into an attractive destination for residents, workers, and visitors. It includes near-term recommendations and measurable outcomes.

Little Saigon Action Plan (2022)

[Link](#)

The Little Saigon 2030 Action Plan was developed by Little Saigon community members together with the Friends of Little Sài Gòn to establish a vision and actions to support neighborhood change and growth.

Seattle CID 2020 Health Community Action Plan (2020) and Chinatown International District Neighborhood Strategic Plan (2022)

[Link](#), [Link](#)

Home to small, independent businesses, and predominantly Asian-American and API immigrants, seniors, and children, the CID faces unique health, social, and economic opportunities and challenges. The Seattle Chinatown-International District 2020 Healthy Community Action Plan addresses these issues, highlighting poorer health outcomes and shorter lifespans for CID residents. The two plans outline strategies to enhance health, safety, and livability by investing in public spaces, stabilizing communities, and influencing policy, aiming to ensure the CID's prosperity alongside Seattle's growth, while also focusing on actionable recommendations to make these plans a reality.

Envisioning an Indigenous Downtown Seattle (2023)

The report, written by Tahoma Peak Solutions, a Native woman-owned firm, summarizes interviews with Indigenous leaders on the question, "What does an Indigenous Seattle look like for all?" The findings highlight key areas such as reclaiming space, reshaping narratives, forming partnerships, planning for the future, and addressing current challenges in Downtown Seattle.

Pike Place Market Master Plan (2024)

[Link](#)

This Master Plan serves as a guiding framework and vision for the next fifty years, preserving the objectives outlined in the City Charter. The Plan's three goals and four corresponding strategies aim to capitalize on opportunities and ensure that the Market remains a supportive, diverse community, as well as a thriving hub for Pacific Northwest food, commerce, and culture for generations to come.

Imagine Greater Downtown (2019)

[Link](#)

The Imagine Greater Downtown plan developed an inclusive vision for Downtown in 2035. With the removal of the Alaskan Way Viaduct and new access to the Waterfront, this plan identifies priorities and guidance for creating vibrant public life in the heart of the city.

Waterfront Seattle

[Concept Design](#)

[Framework Plan](#)

[Strategic Plan](#)

The Waterfront Seattle plans reimaged the previously inaccessible waterfront. Projects like the Elliott Bay seawall reconstruction and cultivation of the public realm at the Waterfront allow Seattleites and visitors to connect to the city's unique geography along the Elliott Bay. The Waterfront Park will bring beautiful vegetation, views of Elliott Bay, and free events. Both the park and seawall will integrate environmentally friendly features designed for biodiversity, stormwater resilience, and healthy salmon migration.

Elliott Bay Seawall Project

The newly reconstructed Elliott Bay Seawall replaced the former seawall that had been in place for more than 70 years. The new seawall meets seismic standards and supports the natural ecological functions of the Elliott Bay shoreline. Spaces for vegetation to grow and hiding spots for marine life support juvenile salmon migration.

Existing Policies

The following existing policies and incentives are pertinent to the environment and open spaces Downtown. They offer a range of tools to help achieve the City's goals for carbon reduction, improved air quality, and the creation of more resilient and healthy communities. These serve as a foundation for future recommendations.

Building Practices

- Building Emissions Performance Standard
 - The City's Building Emissions Performance Standard (BEPS) Policy, was adopted in December 2023. Building performance standards are energy or emissions targets that existing multifamily and commercial buildings over 20,000 square feet must meet over time to improve energy efficiency and reduce climate impacts. The standard should reduce building emissions by 27% by 2050. This policy complements the state policy for buildings greater than 50,000 square feet commencing in 2026.
- Clean Buildings Accelerator
 - Offers technical support for owners and managers of buildings 20,000 SF and larger to understand the State of WA Clean Buildings law, reduce emissions aligned with the Seattle Building Emissions Performance Standard (BEPS), and comply with City and State legislation.
- [Priority Green Expedited](#)
 - Offers faster building permit review and processing for projects that meet green building requirements with a focus on clean energy, resource conservation,

indoor air quality, and lead hazard reduction. Priority Green Expedited is available for all new construction projects.

- [Green Building Standard](#)
 - Grants projects additional development capacity in specific zones in exchange for meeting green building requirements.
- [Living Building Pilot Program](#)
 - Offers additional height, floor area ratio (FAR), and Design Review departure requests for projects that meet aggressive energy and water requirements and Living Building Petal Certification.
- [2030 Challenge](#)
 - Offers additional height, FAR, and Design Review departure requests for projects that meet the 2030 Challenge which targets energy, water, and transportation for new construction and major renovations.
- [Landmark Districts](#)
 - Sites in Landmark Districts are prioritized for preservation, including reuse, repair, and upgrade, to maintain existing built forms. Three of Seattle's eight Landmark Districts are in the Downtown: Pike Place Market, Pioneer Square, and the International Special Review District.
- [Environmentally Critical Areas](#)
 - The Environmentally Critical Areas (ECA) Code regulates areas in Seattle that serve vital environmental functions. These regulations are detailed in Chapter 25.09 of the Seattle Municipal Code. For the Downtown area, the most significant ECA sections pertain to seismic hazard areas, along steep slopes of over 40%, in liquefaction prone areas, peat settlement areas, and in historical landfills

Waste and Emissions

- [Commute Trip Reduction Program](#)
 - In 1991, the State of Washington adopted its Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) law. The law is focused on reducing traffic congestion and air pollution by shifting drive-alone commutes to other modes.
- [EV Charging Ordinance](#)
 - This Washington State Law sets forth requirements and minimums for EV charging stations, EV-ready parking spaces, and EV capable parking spaces according to building occupancy type.
- [Fossil Fuel Free Fleet](#)
 - Under Executive Order 2018-02, Seattle aims to have a fossil fuel free fleet by 2030.
- [Oil Conversions Fund](#) and Clean Heat Program
 - The newly passed 2023-2024 City of Seattle budget will fund oil conversions using Payroll Expense Tax revenues.
- [Plastic Bag Ban](#)
 - The Washington State Law prohibits single-use plastic carryout bags for food, retail, and grocery businesses, festivals, and markets and imposes a charge for all large paper bags and thick reusable plastic bags.

- Development on Historical Landfills
 - Seattle Municipal Code 25.09.220 (Environmentally Critical Areas Code) indicates that development on historical landfills is subject to Seattle-King County Health Department requirements. The code also specifies methane barriers or appropriate ventilation per Title 22, Subtitle I, Building Code, and the Seattle King County Health Department regulations.
 - Title 10 King County Board of Health Solid Waste Regulation governs construction standards and methane controls on historical landfills. Authority is established under RCW Chapter 70.05 and Washington State Administrative Code WAC 173-304, Minimal Functional Standards for Solid Waste Handling, and WAC 173-351, Criteria for Municipal Solid Waste Landfills.

Streets

- [Stay Healthy Streets](#)
 - An initiative created by SDOT in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Closed residential streets to pass through auto traffic to open them up to people walking, rolling, and biking.
- [Street Vacation](#)
 - Street Vacations allow property owners to petition the Seattle City Council to acquire a public right-of-way next to their property from the City. Street vacations “vacate” the public’s right to use a street and return it to private property. Street vacations are only applicable when there is an adjacent development project planned.

Parks and Open Space

- [Privately Owned Public Space program](#)
 - Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS) are open to the public, and include plazas, arcades, atriums, hill climbs, and green streets. These spaces are allowed or required by rules in the Seattle Land Use Code that have been in place for several decades, and are generally located in Seattle’s Center City.
- [P-Patch Community Garden Program](#)
 - The P-Patch Community Garden Program, established in 1973, consists of publicly owned gardens managed by community members and operated by the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods. In the larger Northgate area, there are three P-Patches located outside the Urban Center boundary.
- [Seattle Conservation Corps](#)
 - Established in 1986, the Seattle Conservation Corps is a unique Parks and Recreation program that provides employment for people experiencing homelessness. This program offers adults the chance to train and work in a structured environment, equipping them with job skills while completing projects that benefit the community and the environment. It operates year-round with an annual budget of approximately \$4 million.
- [Incentive Zoning Program](#)

- The Incentive Zoning (IZ) program is a voluntary program in which developers provide amenities, including neighborhood open space, green street improvements, contribution to forest preservation, in exchange for extra floor area or height beyond the base amount allowed for their building by the Land Use Code. Amenities should comply with the City of Seattle’s [‘Downtown Amenities Standards’](#) such as minimum dimensions, access, landscaping and coverage guidelines.
- [Downtown Seattle Association Public Operations Team](#)
 - The team ensures Downtown parks are clean, well-maintained and welcoming.
- [Seattle Municipal Code Park Code of Conduct](#)
 - The Seattle Municipal Code prohibits activities that disrupt others’ use of parks or impacts the quality of public spaces, including smoking, camping, and littering.
- Seattle Center
 - The Seattle Center has partnered with Friends of Waterfront Seattle to manage operations of the Waterfront Park, including maintenance and public safety services.

Stormwater

- [Rainwise](#)
 - This rebate program, a partnership between the City of Seattle and King County, assists private property owners in managing stormwater by installing cisterns and rain gardens.
- [RainCity Partnership Program](#)
 - Through Seattle Public Utilities, this program partners with eligible multi-family, commercial, and industrial property owners to voluntarily build green infrastructure projects and restore riparian areas, aiming to improve water quality and habitats.
- Beyond Code Partnerships
 - This program supports developer projects, such as those in Downtown, that meet the minimum stormwater code requirements but could benefit from a more comprehensive approach to stormwater management. This approach aims to achieve greater impact and benefits beyond what the code mandates.

Public Safety

- [Community Assisted Response and Engagement \(CARE\) Department](#)
 - The CARE Department responds to non-emergency and 9-1-1 calls involving low-risk behavioral health issues. The CARE team provides behavioral health-informed crisis responses alongside traditional first responders. This department has served Downtown since 2023, and is set to expand its services through university partnerships

Upcoming policies

- [Low Pollution Neighborhoods](#)

- Low-pollution neighborhoods are designated areas or streets where the City can deploy a variety of pilot, policy, program, and physical improvements to address climate goals. The vision and toolkit for the policy is currently in development. The City aims to implement at least three low-pollution neighborhoods by 2028.

Existing Conditions

Environment - Built and Natural

Downtown Seattle's built and natural environment reflects a complex interaction between its historical development and modern efforts to improve sustainability, connectivity, and urban livability. Initially covered by dense forests, creeks, and wetlands, the landscape underwent significant changes due to logging, industrialization, and major engineering projects like the Denny Regrade and tidal flat fillings. These historical modifications established the foundation for today's urban landscape but also brought substantial environmental challenges.

Currently, various strategies are being employed to address these past impacts and enhance the urban ecosystem. Previously, Downtown was a more focused employment center that prioritized commerce over open space, making it less welcoming to residents. Key initiatives such as the Waterfront Seattle Program and the proposed I-5 lid project aim to balance the city's historical legacy with future urban resilience and sustainability. However, many environmental challenges persist in the Downtown area. Issues such as pollution, tree canopy loss, and water quality degradation continue to impact the urban environment.

Land

A Changed Landscape

In the mid-1800s, before Euro-American settlement, the area that became known as Seattle was characterized by dense forests, creeks, and wetlands. This landscape provided stability for both human communities and the ecosystems they relied upon.⁶

The arrival of European settlers brought substantial changes to the landscape. The logging industry quickly exploited the dense forests, and the natural waterways were altered to support urban development. After that a series of large regrading projects reshaped the physical landscape and laid the foundation for Seattle's modern street grid and infrastructure, facilitating Downtown's growth and development.

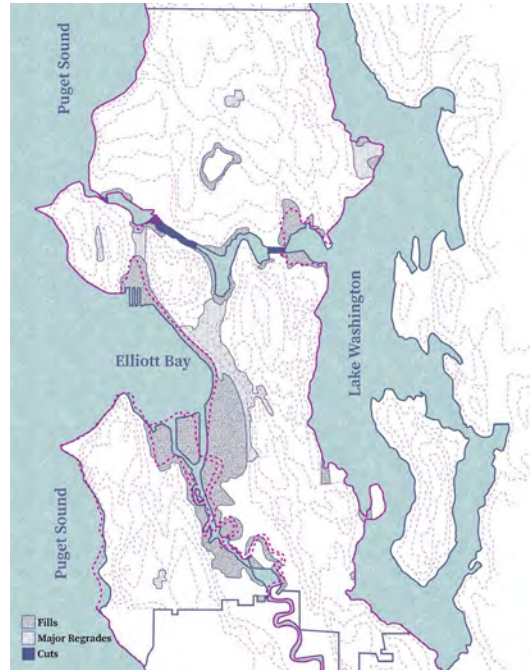


Figure 9 Changes to Seattle Land

Major Regrading Projects:

1898-1903: First Avenue Regrade (Pine to Denny) - The purpose of this first regrade was to increase accessibility between First and Capitol Hills to Downtown and increase economic vitality for Downtown.

1909: Dearborn Street Regrade - to support increased maritime industry, distribution, and water transportation needs, the City filled much of the low-lying coastal areas along the Puget Sound with landfill.

1910: Jackson Hill Regrade - the removal of much of Jackson Hill into what is now the CID is still visible along South Main Street along Kobe Terrace.

1911 and 1930: Denny Hill Regrade (occurred in two phases) - this was a major regrade of the Downtown between the waterfront and the Capitol Hill and First Hill neighborhoods to the east.

Beyond the regrade, other significant projects included the filling of tidal flats to create more land for development, such as the creation of Port of Seattle. These engineering projects

⁶ Seattle Public Utilities, "The Power of Water", <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/2be3ad7299c44445b4bbb213a039bf8b> ⁷ Sound Transit, East Link Project Boring Locations, https://www.soundtransit.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/projects/eastlink/deis/appendix_f4.11_geologic_unit_summaries_and_hazard_areas.pdf

drastically altered the Downtown landscape, addressing the immediate needs of a growing population and economy, but also introducing substantial environmental challenges.

Geology and Ecology

The Downtown area is characterized by a diverse geological and ecological landscape, shaped significantly by its glacial history, coastal deposition and erosion, and human activities. This has left a complex mix of glacial deposits from multiple glaciation periods. The coastal area, known as artificial fill, is primarily covered by tidal flat deposits. The geological deposits in Downtown vary widely in composition, stability, and permeability. For instance, dense glacial till offers a stable foundation and typically has low infiltration rates, leading to surface runoff and potential flooding during heavy rainfall. Conversely, outwash deposits have high filtration rates but are susceptible to erosion.⁷ These natural and human-induced changes result in numerous geological layers. Consequently, construction projects become more complex, and the risk of damage from natural disasters increases.

Ecologically, the Downtown area was historically covered by dense temperate rainforests. These forests provided critical habitat for a wide range of wildlife, like numerous bird species. Today, much of this natural vegetation has been replaced by urban development, but pockets of green spaces, such as the Seattle Waterfront and numerous parks, continue to support local biodiversity. Thriving, highly vegetated open spaces like Danny Woo Garden and Growing Vine Street illustrate the success of community-led initiatives for promoting biodiversity. The regional environment of Downtown is mainly influenced by its proximity to the major water body, Elliott Bay. It plays a crucial role in moderating the local climate, contributing to the mild, maritime conditions that characterize the area.

Earthquake Risk and Impacts

Tree Health

Tree Canopy Loss

From 2016 to 2021, Downtown Seattle 's urban environment saw significant changes in its tree canopy due to both new plantings and removal. In 2021, the city enhanced its urban greenery by planting approximately 26 acres of new tree canopies.⁸ These efforts were concentrated in designated green spaces and along revitalized streetscapes, such as neighborhoods around Olympic Sculpture Park and Pike Place Market, and more.

⁷ Sound Transit, East Link Project Boring Locations, https://www.soundtransit.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/projects/eastlink/deis/appendix_f4.11_geologic_unit_summaries_and_hazard_areas.pdf

⁸ City of Seattle, "Trees for Seattle" <https://seattlecitygis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=a7072ffa326c4ef39a0f031961ebace6>⁹
Seattle City Council Resolutions, Resolution 30297, <https://clerk.seattle.gov/search/resolutions/30297>

These efforts are part of projects like the Waterfront Seattle Program and the Green Streets initiative, aiming to make the city more livable and improve environmental health. Conversely, 32 acres of canopy losses occurred mostly in areas undergoing redevelopment and increased construction activities, such as Rainier Square, Wells Fargo Center, and major thoroughfares like 1st Avenue, 2nd Avenue, and 3rd Avenue. This dynamic resulted in a net reduction in overall tree canopy coverage from 10% in 2016 to 9.3% in 2021. The reduction in tree cover can be attributed to several factors, including urban development, infrastructure projects, and insufficient maintenance resources.

The city's limited resources allocated for tree maintenance, including pruning and pest control, have also played a role in tree canopy loss. Without regular maintenance, trees suffer from urban stress and become unhealthy, making it harder to maintain a robust tree canopy in the city.

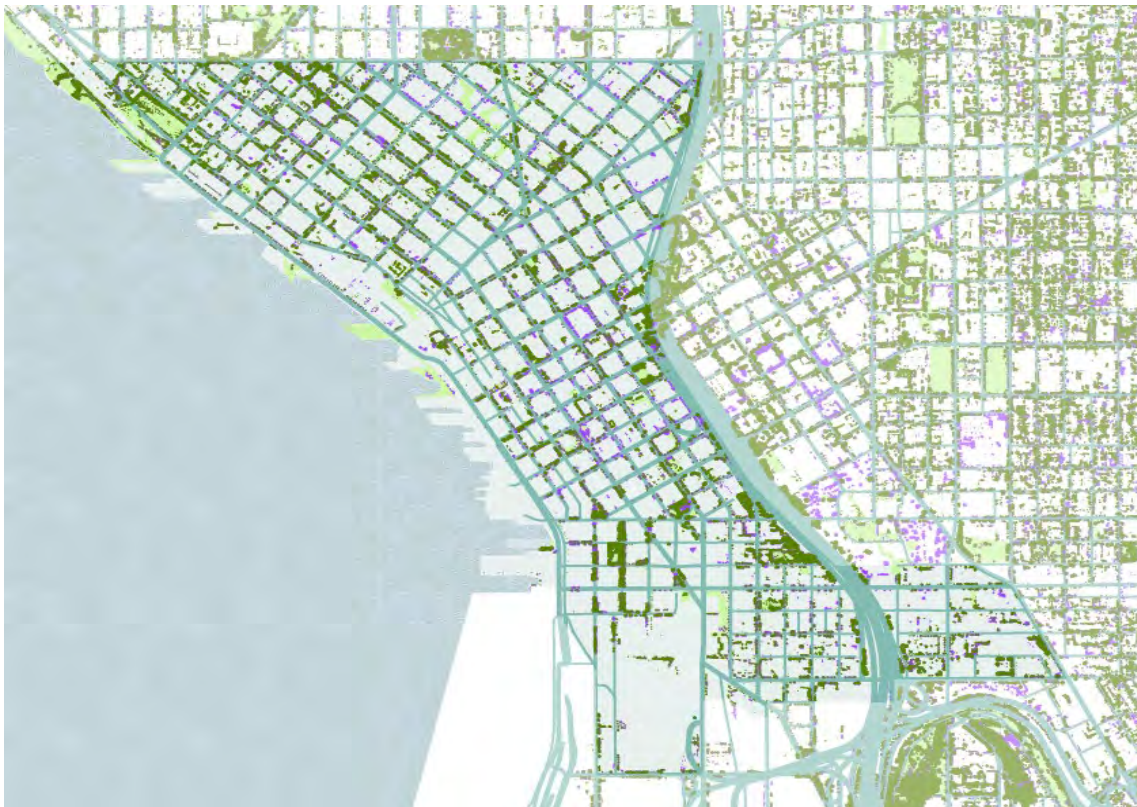


Figure 10 Tree Canopy Loss

Tree Ownership

A significant portion of Downtown street trees, 48%, are located on private property, while a smaller percentage are found situated in public spaces, such as sidewalks and rights-of-way (ROW). Trees maintained by the SDOT, primarily along streets and public ROWs, make up a notable portion of the public tree population.

Street vacations, where public streets are repurposed for private use, often by large corporations like Amazon, also affect tree distribution and management. These street vacations

can lead to the removal of public trees or transfer their maintenance responsibility to private entities, impacting control over the overall tree canopy and its health.

Street Trees Responsible Party	Percentage
Private	48.12%
Seattle Department of Transportation	45.47%
Seattle Parks and Recreation	6.22%
Seattle Fleets and Administrative Services	0.16%
Seattle Public Utilities	0.03%

Tree Species vulnerability analysis

Downtown's street trees bring both beauty and environmental benefits to the city. Common types include Sweetgum, Norway Maple, London Plane, Red Maple, and Red Oak trees. Each of these trees adds vibrant colors to the streets, especially in the fall, with hues ranging from deep reds to bright yellows. They are also known for their unique features, such as the star-shaped leaves of Sweetgums and the peeling bark of London Plane trees. However, these trees face challenges like pests and diseases, including the Asian longhorned beetle and oak wilt. Proper care and maintenance are essential to keep these trees healthy and ensure they continue to enhance the urban landscape.

Street Trees	Percentage	Main Characteristics
Sweetgum	7.67%	Sweetgums are known for their star-shaped leaves and spiky fruit. They display stunning fall colors, ranging from yellow to deep red. Sweetgums are susceptible to pests like the sweetgum webworm and diseases such as bacterial leaf scorch.
Norway Maple	6.51%	Norway Maples have a broad, rounded canopy and produce dense shade. They exhibit striking yellow fall foliage. These trees are prone to pests like the Asian longhorned beetle and diseases such as tar spot and verticillium wilt.
London Plane (Tree)	6.14%	London Plane trees are appreciated for their distinctive peeling bark and tolerance to urban conditions. They showcase attractive yellow and brown fall colors. London Plane trees can be affected by pests like the sycamore lace bug and diseases such as anthracnose.
Red Maple	4.62%	Red Maples are popular for their brilliant red, orange, and yellow fall foliage. They face pests such as the Asian longhorned beetle and diseases like verticillium wilt and tar spot.
Red Oak	4.41%	Red Oaks are known for their strong wood and beautiful red fall leaves. They are susceptible to pests like the gypsy moth and diseases such as oak wilt and leaf spot.

Recent Development and Initiatives

Downtown Seattle's urban environment is being enhanced through a range of strategies focusing on sustainability, connectivity, and urban livability.

Viaduct Removal

One major waterfront improvement effort was the removal of the Alaskan Way Viaduct, an elevated highway constructed in the mid-20th century to address growing traffic demands. While it provided critical transportation infrastructure, the viaduct also created physical and visual barriers between the Downtown area and the waterfront. Its removal, completed in 2019, aimed to improve seismic safety and reconnect the city with its waterfront. This project has opened new opportunities for urban redevelopment, green spaces, and public access to the waterfront, reshaping the historic relationship between Downtown and its water resources.



Figure 11 Removal of the Viaduct (*Puget Sound Business Journal / WSDOT*)

Sustainable Buildings

To promote environmental sustainability, Seattle has implemented a range of policies to encourage more efficient buildings, including expedited permit reviews, additional development capacity, and incentives for achieving advanced energy and water standards. These policies have led to the incorporation of green building practices in new developments throughout Downtown. The Sustainable Building Policy sets more stringent standards for City capital projects, with the intent of “leading by example”. A notable example is the Seattle Municipal Tower, which has been retrofitted for improved energy efficiency, water conservation, and waste reduction. The privately developed Second & Seneca Building, with its green roofs and energy-efficient systems, also exemplifies the city's commitment to sustainability in urban development.

I-5 Lid Project

In addition to its green building efforts, Seattle has been seeking innovative ways to improve the physical environment of Downtown. One such major project is the proposed I-5 lid, which aims to cover portions of the I-5 freeway with a lid park. This project aims to reconnect neighborhoods divided by the freeway and provide new green spaces and sidewalks. By enhancing urban connectivity, providing recreational areas, mitigating noise pollution, and improving air quality, the I-5 lid project integrates infrastructure with community needs and environmental sustainability.

Waterfront development

Another critical component of Downtown's urban environmental improvement is waterfront redevelopment. The redevelopment of Seattle's waterfront has opened up new opportunities for public access and engagement with the waterfront. Projects like Waterfront Seattle are transforming the central waterfront with parks, paths, and public spaces to enhance accessibility for residents and visitors. Currently, many buildings along Alaskan Way still have their "backs" to the waterfront, limiting their interaction with this valuable urban landscape. Future redevelopment could reimagine these spaces by redesigning the buildings to face the water, thereby creating a more attractive and integrated urban waterfront.

Regulations on Future Development

Restrictions on Planting in View Corridors

With the removal of the Viaduct new views of Elliott Bay are accessible and should be considered in our future policies. Seattle has established regulations to preserve iconic views of Elliott Bay, the Olympic Mountains, and other significant features by restricting certain developments within designated view corridors.⁹ These policies, originating from the 1995 Downtown Plan and reinforced in subsequent subarea plans, ensure that public view corridors remain unobstructed. Specifically, the vacation of streets that provide these views is heavily regulated to maintain light, air, open space, and visual access to the harbor.

Design Review in both Downtown and Belltown

Design review panels regulate new buildings in Downtown and Belltown by adhering to established guidelines, specifically assessing their contribution to public enjoyment and compatibility with existing structures based on scale, materials, and design.¹⁰ In Downtown, the guidelines focus on enhancing pedestrian experiences, preserving historic character, and encouraging mixed-use development. In Belltown, the guidelines emphasize preserving neighborhood character by respecting context and historical elements, promoting vibrant street-level activities, maintaining human scale, and encouraging innovative design with high-quality materials.

Water

Historic Relationship to Water

Swamps (natural floodplain)

Historically, Downtown was characterized by swamps and natural floodplains.

⁹ Seattle City Council Resolutions, Resolution 30297, <https://clerk.seattle.gov/search/resolutions/30297>

¹⁰ Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections, Design Review Guidelines, <https://www.seattle.gov/sdci/about-us/who-we-are/design-review/design-guidelines> ¹² Ethan Bancroft, "In celebration of Earth Month, learn how Waterfront Seattle is helping to keep residents, Elliott Bay, and its marine neighbors healthy" SDOT Blog, April 2024

Fishing access (boat access) Treaty of Point Elliott

The Puget Sound Coast Salish people, including the Duwamish and Suquamish tribes, have lived in the Downtown Seattle area for thousands of years. The waterfront was a fishing village, a center for trade, and a place through which many different tribal communities traveled. The signing of the Treaty of Point Elliott in 1855 was a significant event, as it guaranteed these tribes the continued rights to fish, hunt, and gather in their traditional territories. These rights remain recognized today, and ongoing efforts aim to protect and restore fishing habitats in honor of these historical agreements.¹¹

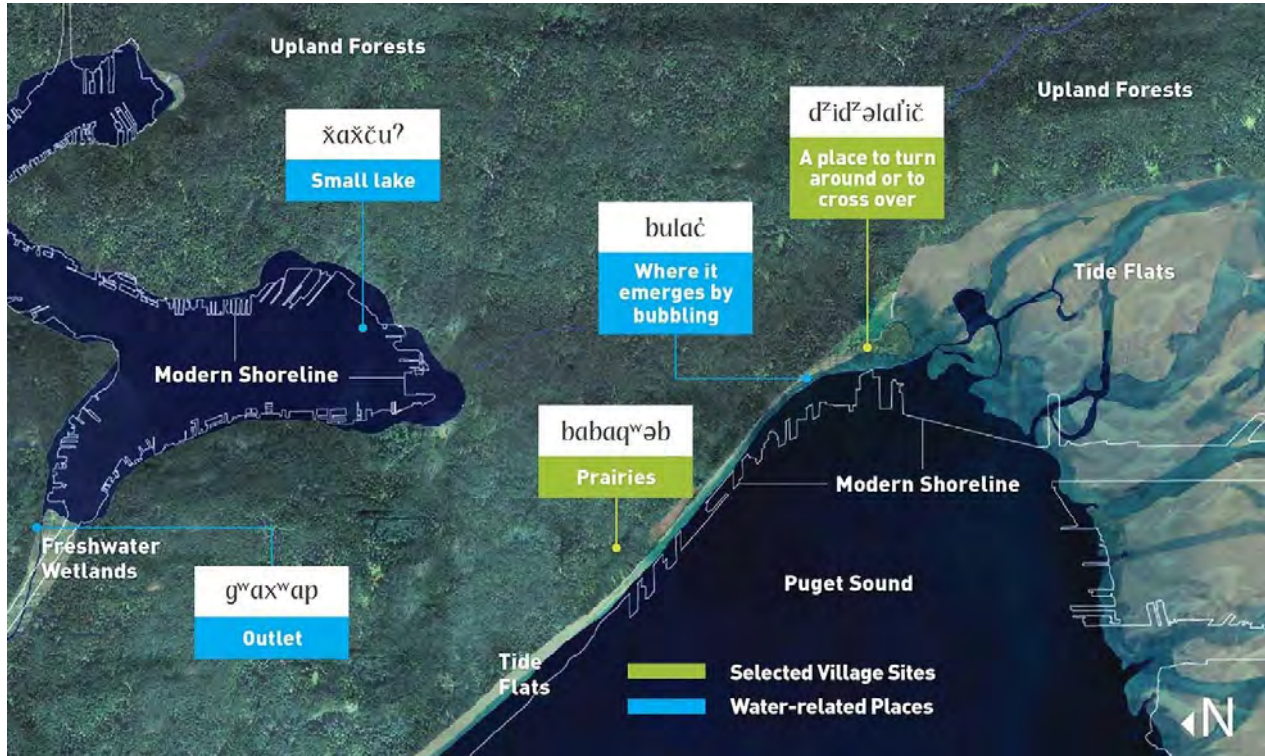


Figure 12 Historic Downtown Waterline (The Burke Museum, Waterlines Project)

Watersheds

Downtown is primarily part of the Puget Sound watershed, with influences from the Lake Washington watershed. Puget Sound helps moderate the local climate, providing cooling in summer and warmth in winter. It supports diverse marine and terrestrial species, enhancing ecological health and offering habitats for wildlife and recreation activities. The watershed also maintains water quality and volume by acting as a natural filter.

¹² Ethan Bancroft, "In celebration of Earth Month, learn how Waterfront Seattle is helping to keep residents, Elliott Bay, and its marine neighbors healthy" SDOT Blog, April 2024



Figure 13 Seattle Watersheds

Water-based Habitats

Bay / Estuary Coastal Zone - Intertidal Habitat

The Downtown area features intertidal habitats in Seattle’s bay and estuary coastal zones, which are vital ecological areas with moderately protected marine embankments that connect to the open sea. Historically, the shoreline in Downtown was similar to other natural shorelines around Puget Sound, with bluff-backed beach, intertidal marshes, and mudflats. Today, however, much of the waterfront is dominated by piers and over-water structures, which have significantly impacted the natural habitat.

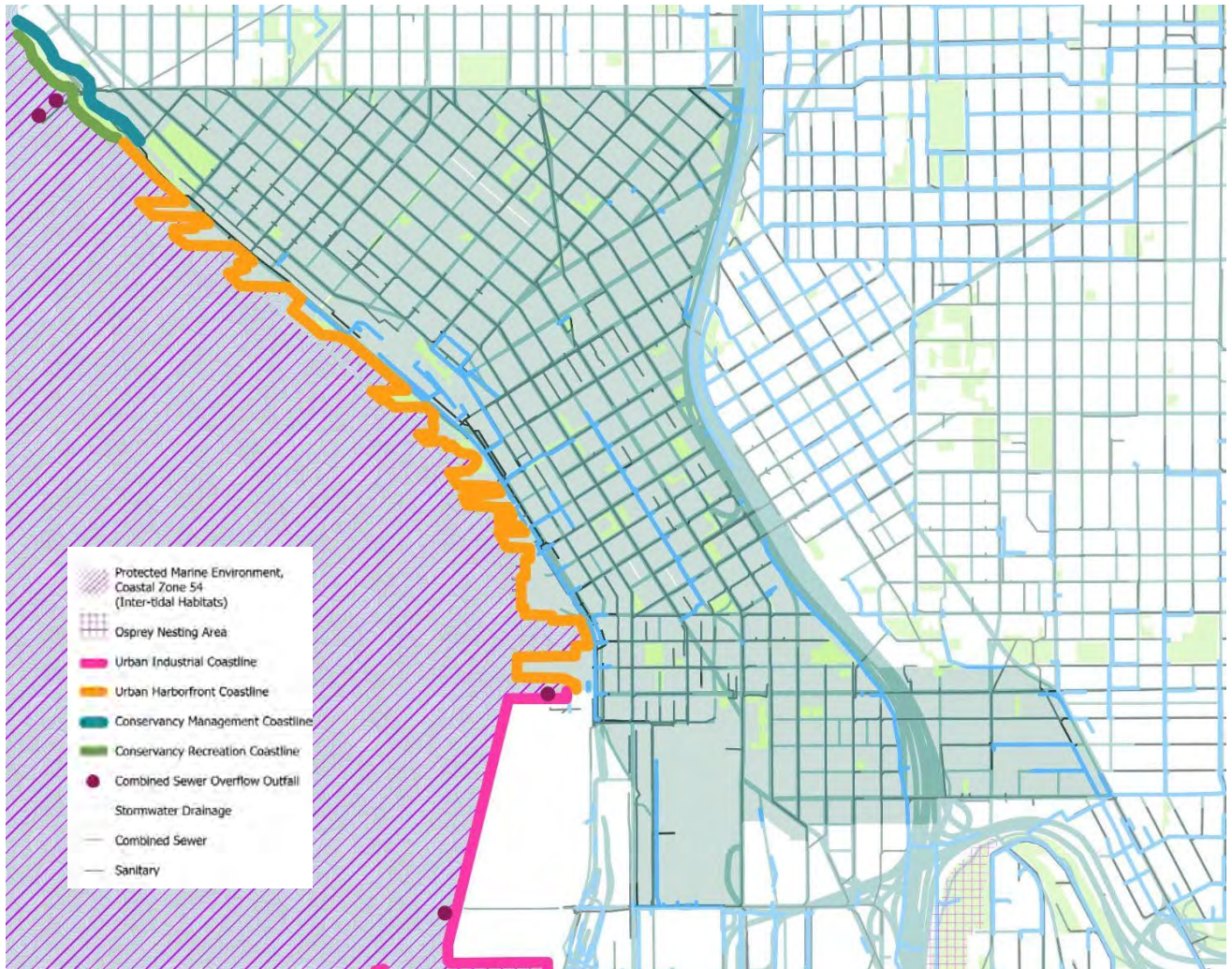


Figure 14 Marine Habitats

Marine Habitat Improvement efforts

The City of Seattle is actively working to improve the marine habitats along the waterfront. One of the key initiatives related to this effort is the Elliott Bay Seawall Project. ¹²The project focuses on constructing a new earthquake-resistant system that supports the street and right-of-way, provides access to the waterfront piers, improves marine habitat, and supports upland uses. ¹³ The original seawall, built between 1915 and 1934, provided shoreline protection but was vulnerable to earthquakes and significantly altered the natural habitat. In addition to ensuring sustainable shoreline protection, the Elliott Bay Seawall Project focuses on restoring a salmon migration corridor and improving ecosystem productivity, providing an opportunity for habitat restoration along Seattle’s urbanized Downtown waterfront.

¹² Ethan Bancroft, “In celebration of Earth Month, learn how Waterfront Seattle is helping to keep residents, Elliott Bay, and its marine neighbors healthy” SDOT Blog, April 2024

¹³ Mortenson-Manson, “How do you revitalize Seattle’s waterfront and protect the Puget Sound at the same time?”

Water Quality

Several challenges and factors affect the current water quality in Elliott Bay. The area, which has an active waterfront and slopes away from the water, faces pollution from several primary sources, including vessels in the water and runoff from the land. These pollutants are harmful to marine habitats.

Pollution Impact

The presence of pollutants from various sources, such as barges, poses significant environmental risks.¹⁴ These contaminants often result in oil encasing docks, which can persist on rocks and wash off during low tides, causing long-term damage. Such pollution incidents have severe consequences, notably affecting fish runs. Coho salmon, for instance, suffer high mortality rates due to polluted runoff entering streams during rainfall, which introduces toxins into their habitats and disrupts their life cycles.

Industrial and Developmental Impact

The development of Pier 91 and Elliott Bay Marina has led to considerable environmental degradation. The expansion of commercial fishing and recreational boating has exacerbated these issues. Moreover, compared to other areas in Seattle, Downtown faces unique challenges due to its higher density of impervious surfaces and increased urban activities, such as vehicle traffic and events along the waterfront, have further deteriorated water quality. These developments have also had a direct impact on the health and livelihoods of tribal fishers, who rely on these waters for their sustenance

CSOs Impact

Another major challenge in maintaining water quality in Downtown is the risk of combined sewer overflows (CSOs) and the overall capacity of the wastewater system. Over 80% of Downtown's infrastructure uses combined sewers that collect both stormwater and wastewater.¹⁵ During heavy rainfall, these systems can become overwhelmed, discharging untreated sewage into Elliott Bay and other water bodies. Areas like Alaskan Way and Vine St have been identified as exceeding CSO performance standards of no more than one overflow per outfall per year over a twenty-year moving average. Additionally, the high wastewater system capacity risks are concentrated around south Downtown and the CID area, posing significant threats to water quality. Downtown has three CSO locations that discharge into Elliott Bay near Myrtle Edwards Park, the Clipper Seattle Ferry Terminal, and Pier 48.

¹⁴ Tahoma Peak, "Envisioning an Indigenous Downtown Seattle", pg.19

¹⁵Seattle Public Utilities, "The Power of Water"

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/2be3ad7299c44445b4bbb213a039bf8b>

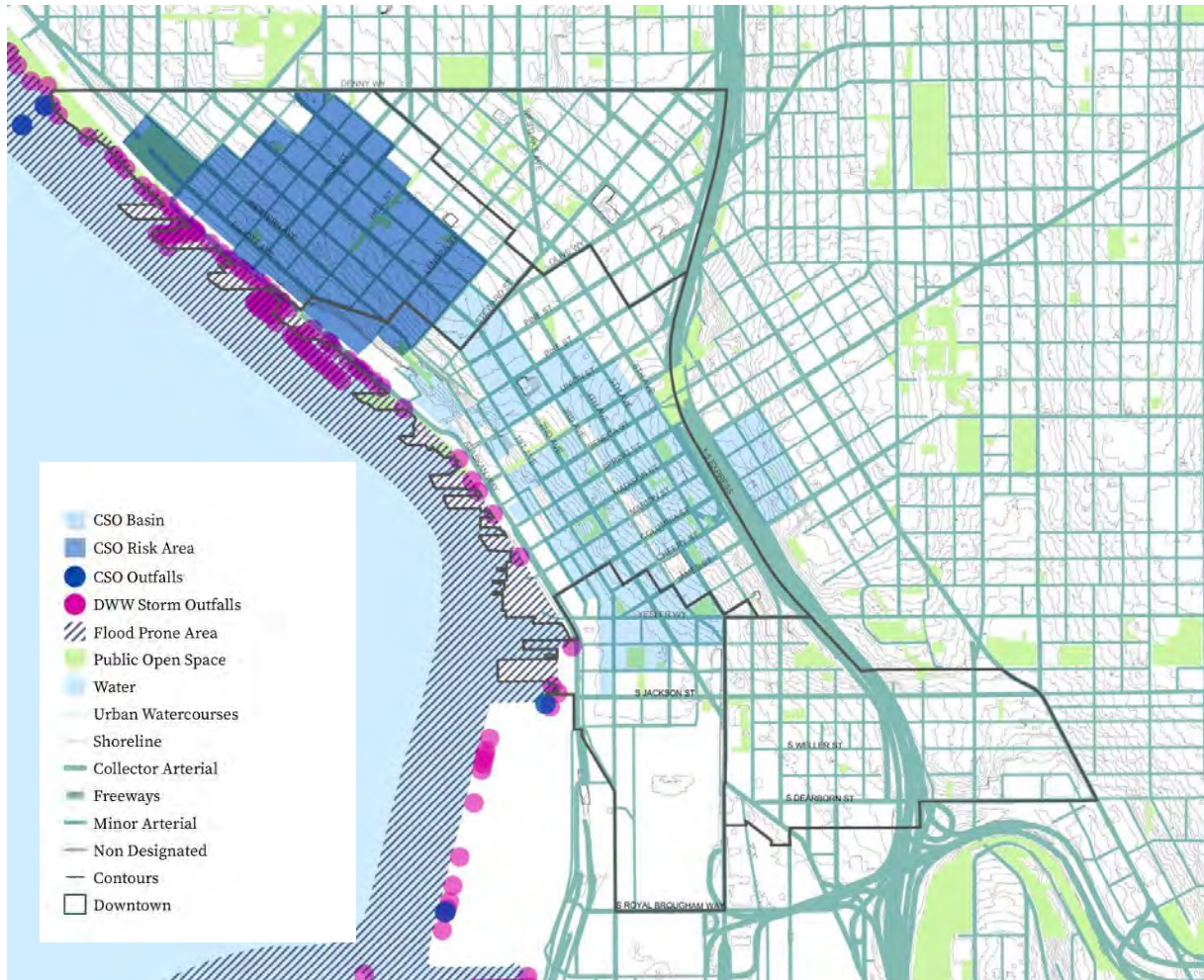


Figure 15 Flooding Risk and Combined Sewer Overflow Districts

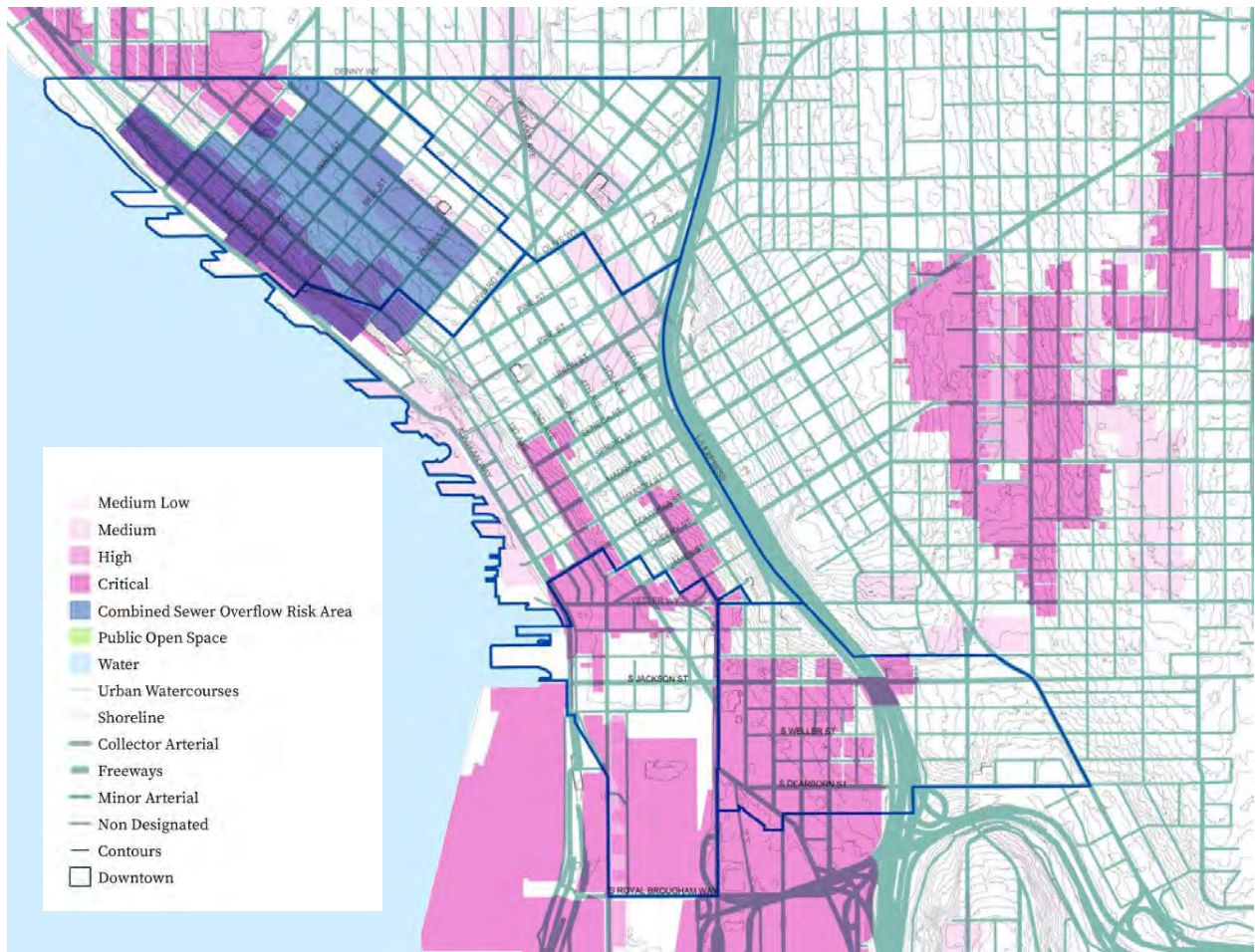


Figure 16 CSO Risk Areas and Wastewater System Capacity

Stormwater

Green Streets

The Green Streets program focuses on creating streets that prioritize pedestrian and open space functions while also managing stormwater. There are 21 adopted Green Streets in Downtown Seattle, integrating elements such as rain gardens, permeable pavements, and bioswales. These features help manage stormwater and create inviting, attractive, and safer streetscapes for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users. With the exceptions of Harbor Steps, a portion of Bay Street between Western Avenue and Elliot Avenue, and portions of Occidental Avenue South, all Green Streets allow motorized vehicular traffic. Green Streets serve as pedestrian gathering places and corridors connecting activity areas, often designed to slow vehicular speeds, making it reasonable for pedestrians and vehicles to share the space.

Example: Bell Street Park

The Bell Street Park is the City of Seattle’s first shared street project, establishing a new typology for streets as parks and open spaces. The project aimed to reclaim street space for

flexible use, elevating the street to a level, continuous surface that supports both mobility and community life. By integrating recreational and ecological features, such as permeable pavements, vegetated swales, and rain gardens, Bell Street Park demonstrates how urban spaces can be transformed to support environmental sustainability while providing recreational and aesthetic benefits to the community. It is important to consider that the lack of adjacent active uses create management challenges for this space. The success of Bell Street Park highlights the potential for similar initiatives to create more sustainable and enjoyable urban environments in other parts of Downtown Seattle.

Air

Air Quality

The Puget Sound Clean Air Agency monitors air quality in the Seattle area, sets standards, and regulates development to achieve regional air quality goals. They provide data from several air quality monitors in the Downtown Urban Center, including one at 10th and Weller Street in the CID.¹⁶ Downtown Seattle has high asthma rates, especially in Pioneer Square and the CID, where nearly 10% of adults are diagnosed with asthma.¹⁷

Diesel Exhaust

I-5 runs along the eastern edge of Downtown and through the Chinatown International District (CID), negatively impacting air quality in this urban area due to diesel exhaust from vehicles.. This exhaust contains tiny, highly toxic particles, which account for 78% of the potential cancer risk from all air toxins in the Puget Sound region.¹⁸ Additionally, it is linked to respiratory and cardiovascular issues such as asthma, heart attacks, and strokes.

Wildfire Smoke

In addition to local air pollution, the Seattle region faces annual wildfire smoke days, which have become more frequent since 2015. Warmer and drier weather caused wildfire smoke to extend into October for the first time in 2022. The wildfire season typically lasts from August to October. Smoke from sources such as fireplaces, wood stoves, land-clearing burn piles, and wildfires contains fine particulate pollution. These tiny, microscopic particles can easily enter the bloodstream and cause breathing and heart problems. The health effects of even short-term exposure are serious, especially for children, the elderly, and people with compromised immune systems.

¹⁶ Puget Sound Clean Air Council, Sensor Map, <https://www.pscleanair.gov/160/Basics>

¹⁷ City of Seattle, Climate Vulnerability Tool

¹⁸ Puget Sound Clean Air Council, Air Pollution and Your Health, Diesel Exhaust

Changing Climate

Seattle and the Puget Sound region are already experiencing the effects of climate change, including warmer temperatures, more frequent extreme heat events, prolonged wildfire smoke episodes, extreme precipitation, and sea level rise. These impacts are expected to worsen under various future climate scenarios, depending on successes in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving adaptation strategies for city systems and communities.

The impacts of climate change will have wide-ranging effects on Seattle. These include disruptions to the local economy, worsening public health disparities, increased stress on infrastructure, and changes to community well-being and local ecosystems. The burden of these impacts will not be evenly distributed. Neighborhoods with fewer community services—such as grocery stores, parks, libraries, and transit options—are often the same areas that were historically redlined and have higher populations of residents of color, non-English speaking residents, and older adults. These neighborhoods will be more vulnerable to climate-related extreme events. In addition, aging infrastructure systems are more vulnerable to climate-related hazards, as they are less able to mitigate climate-related hazards or cope with extreme events. Many systems are inherently connected so impacts to one system will often create cascading impacts to other systems, services, and assets.

Climate Vulnerability Assessment

In 2023, the City of Seattle developed a Climate Vulnerability Assessment (CVA) to support the One Seattle Comprehensive Plan.¹⁹ This report and tool analyzed vulnerability across five focus areas aligned with City departments' operations and planning processes: Economy, Public Health, Community Amenities and Wellbeing, Infrastructure, and Natural Systems. The CVA considers both physical and socioeconomic vulnerabilities to climate change within each focus area.

The climate vulnerability assessment tool provides spatial analysis of relative vulnerability at the census-tract level. Although these boundaries do not perfectly align with Downtown, they offer a framework for understanding the vulnerability of the larger Downtown area. The data boundaries used for the climate vulnerability analysis tool are shown below. These five focus areas are grouped into two larger categories: social and economic vulnerability, and physical vulnerability. Additionally, the tool combines natural systems and infrastructure into one category, as these two focus areas are interrelated.

Economy

Economic vulnerability refers to the impact of climate change on the local economy, including businesses, workers, and other economic factors. Downtown faces economic vulnerability to climate change due to a high number of climate-exposed employees, such as outdoor laborers. Downtown also faces a high number of small businesses which suffer from increased risk of flooding due to proximity to the waterfront.

¹⁹ City of Seattle, Climate Vulnerability Assessment, (June 2023)

Community Amenities and Wellbeing

The vulnerability of community amenities and well-being is caused by climate change's impact on essential community assets and services, such as food access, parks, and critical facilities that contribute to residents' well-being. In comparison to other Seattle neighborhoods, Downtown faces high vulnerability of community amenities and well-being. While Downtown hosts a relatively low number of critical facilities, these facilities are at a high risk of flooding. Moreover, Downtown suffers from heat dome effects exacerbated by low impervious surface and low tree canopy coverage.

Public Health

Public health vulnerability refers to how climate change exacerbates existing health risks and introduces new health challenges for residents. Vulnerable populations including unhoused residents, residents of shelters, low-income housing, and senior housing, tend to concentrate in or near Downtown. Comparatively to other neighborhoods, Downtown faces higher health vulnerability to climate change due to low tree canopy coverage and high asthma rates.

Infrastructure and Natural Systems

Natural systems vulnerability refers to the impacts of climate change on local environments, including urban and regional watersheds, urban forests, open spaces, and aquatic habitats. Downtown, situated on the coast, faces threats from sea-level rise and an increased risk of flooding. Infrastructure vulnerability concerns the effects of climate change on Seattle's energy, transportation, and water systems. The terrain rises steeply from the waterfront to meet I-5, which runs along the eastern boundary.

Climate Change Impacts and Hazards

The following sections provide an overview of climate change impacts and climate-related hazards facing Downtown Seattle grouped into categories of land, water, and air.

Land

Earthquake

The Puget Sound area has experienced numerous earthquakes, which can be categorized as either shallow or deep quakes. Downtown Seattle is particularly vulnerable to earthquakes due to its proximity to the Seattle Fault and the significant infill and regrading work completed in the early 1900s. Much of the infilled area is now classified as an environmentally critical area, either a liquefaction zone or a peat settlement zone, meaning these areas are likely to move during an earthquake. These zones have additional building development standards for new constructions. However, they also encompass historic districts with many unreinforced masonry buildings that are highly susceptible to severe structural damage during earthquakes.

The most significant seismic threat to Downtown comes from the Seattle Fault, which runs east-west through the city. The last earthquake on this fault occurred 1,100 years ago. Its recurrence

interval is estimated to be between 200 and 15,000 years. The potential magnitude of an earthquake on the Seattle Fault is projected to be around 7.0, according to the Seattle Office of Emergency Management.²⁰

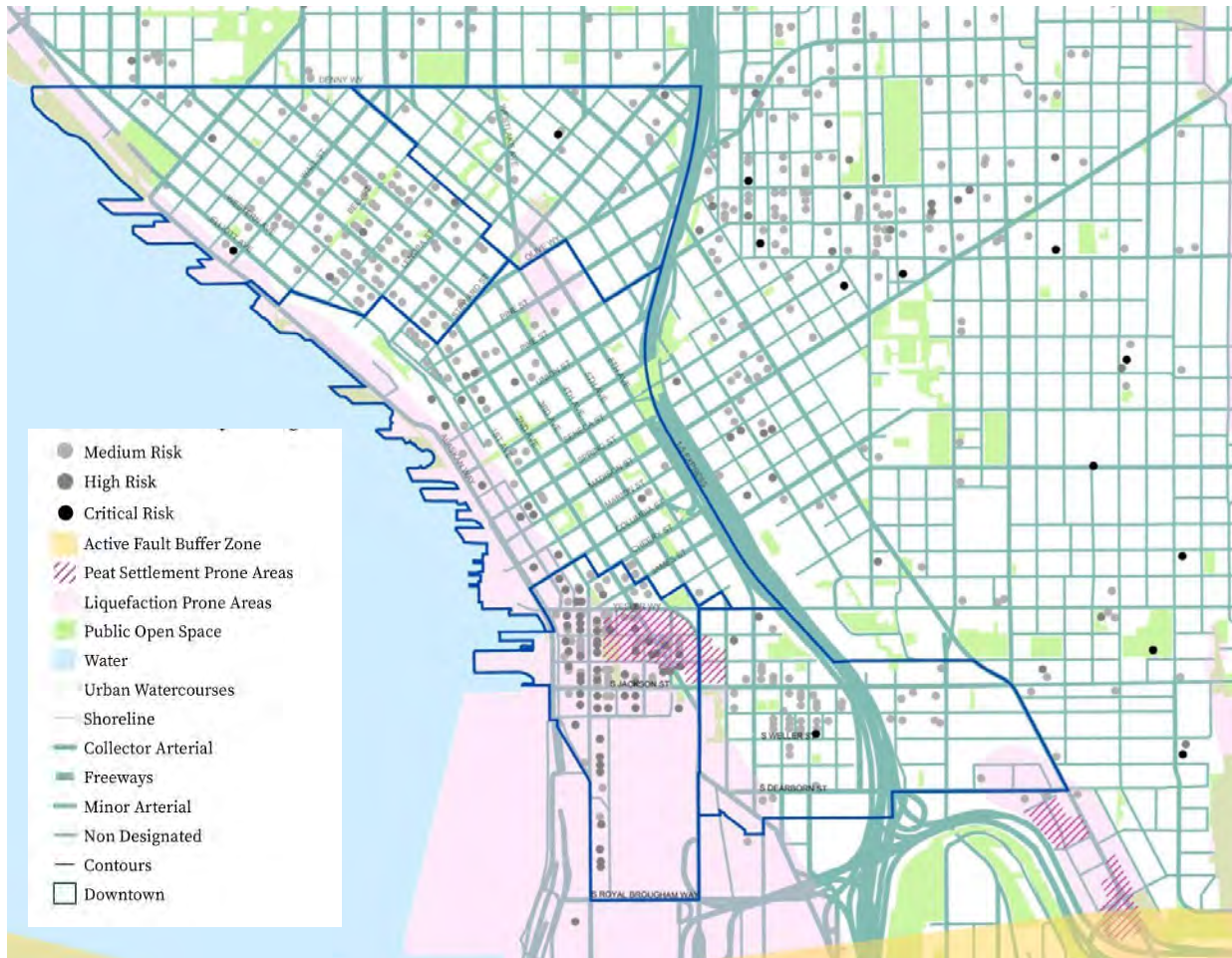


Figure 17 Earthquake Vulnerable Areas

²⁰ Office of Emergency Management, Earthquakes

Water

Sea Level Rise

One of Downtown Seattle's most significant climate threats is rising sea levels along its waterfront. By 2050, sea levels are projected to rise between 1.1 and 1.5 feet, and by 2100, they could increase by 3.1 to 5.1 feet. As sea levels rise, high tide flooding will threaten critical facilities within the 100-year floodplain. This risk is heightened by the proximity of essential infrastructure to the waterfront, including Alaskan Way, Colman Dock, and the Port of Seattle. The Port's infrastructure also faces job and economic vulnerabilities due to these rising sea levels. The reconstruction of the Elliott Bay Seawall completed in 2017 uses the highest predicted sea level rise from a University of Washington Climate Impacts Group study.

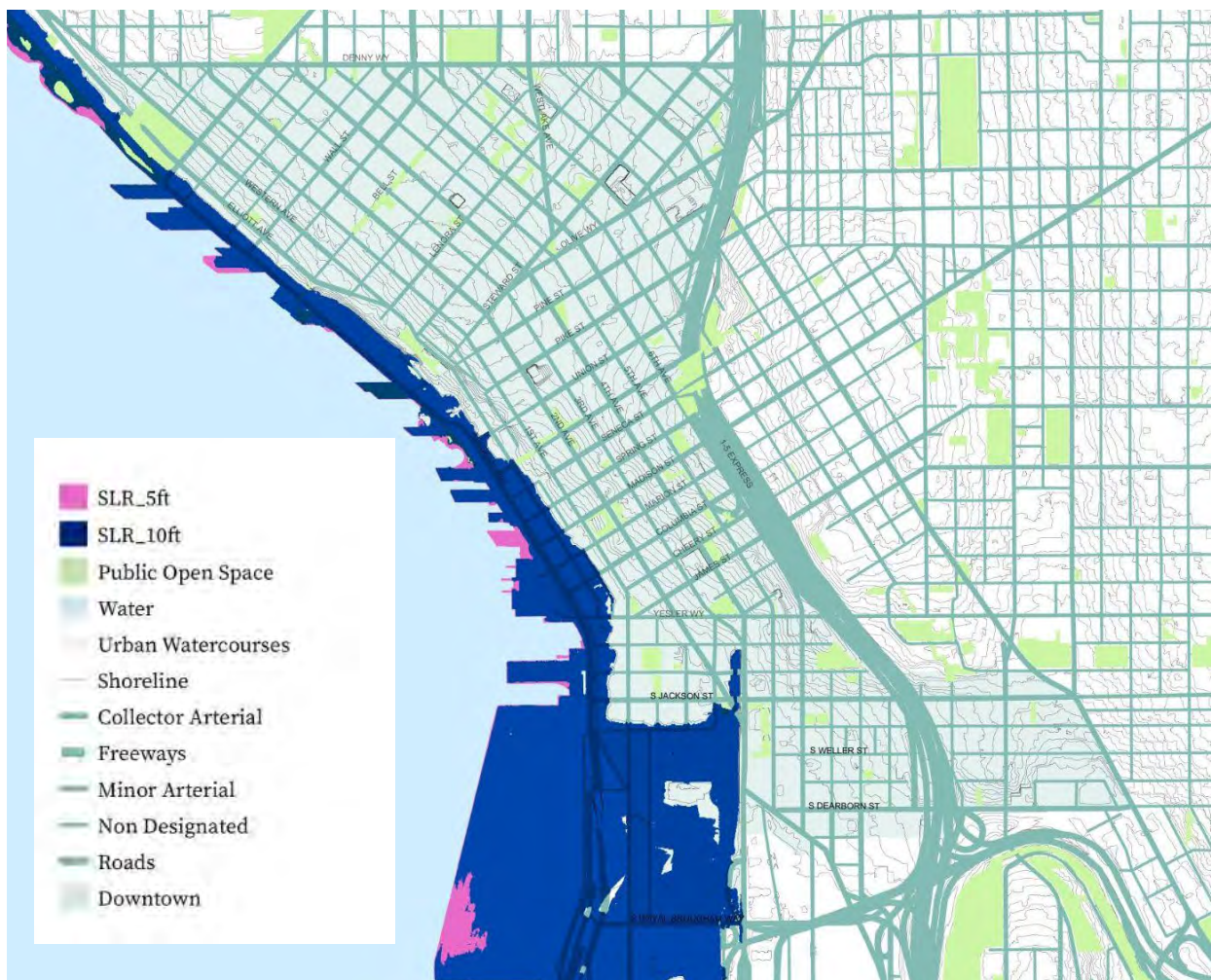


Figure 18 Sea Level Rise Impacts

Urban Flooding

Downtown Seattle's steep slopes and high percentage of impervious surfaces create a significant risk of urban flooding. Nationally, floods are the most costly and destructive disasters.²¹ This flooding often leads to localized pooling, especially at low points along Alaskan Way and in the Pioneer Square neighborhood, making pedestrian navigation difficult. Areas of I-5 that are low-lying near steep slopes have also seen urban flooding, which poses a threat to evacuation routes and connectivity.

Tsunami

Due to its waterfront location, Downtown Seattle is vulnerable to tsunami inundation. Tsunami damage results from the force of flowing water on structures, flooding from wave run-up, and debris carried by the water. Tsunamis can also create dangerous currents that disrupt maritime trade and are difficult for vessels to navigate. Additionally, existing coastal ecosystems in Elliot Bay could be damaged.

The most damaging tsunami would likely result from an earthquake on the Seattle Fault or other nearby faults. Evidence suggests that a Seattle Fault earthquake around 900 AD produced a 16-foot tsunami. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) modeled this event, showing flooding up to one mile inland with depths reaching up to 5 meters. The tsunami would strike immediately after the shaking stopped, potentially destroying shoreline buildings and flooding low-lying areas. Modern structures would likely fare better than older ones.

²¹ Office of Emergency Management, Flood Hazards

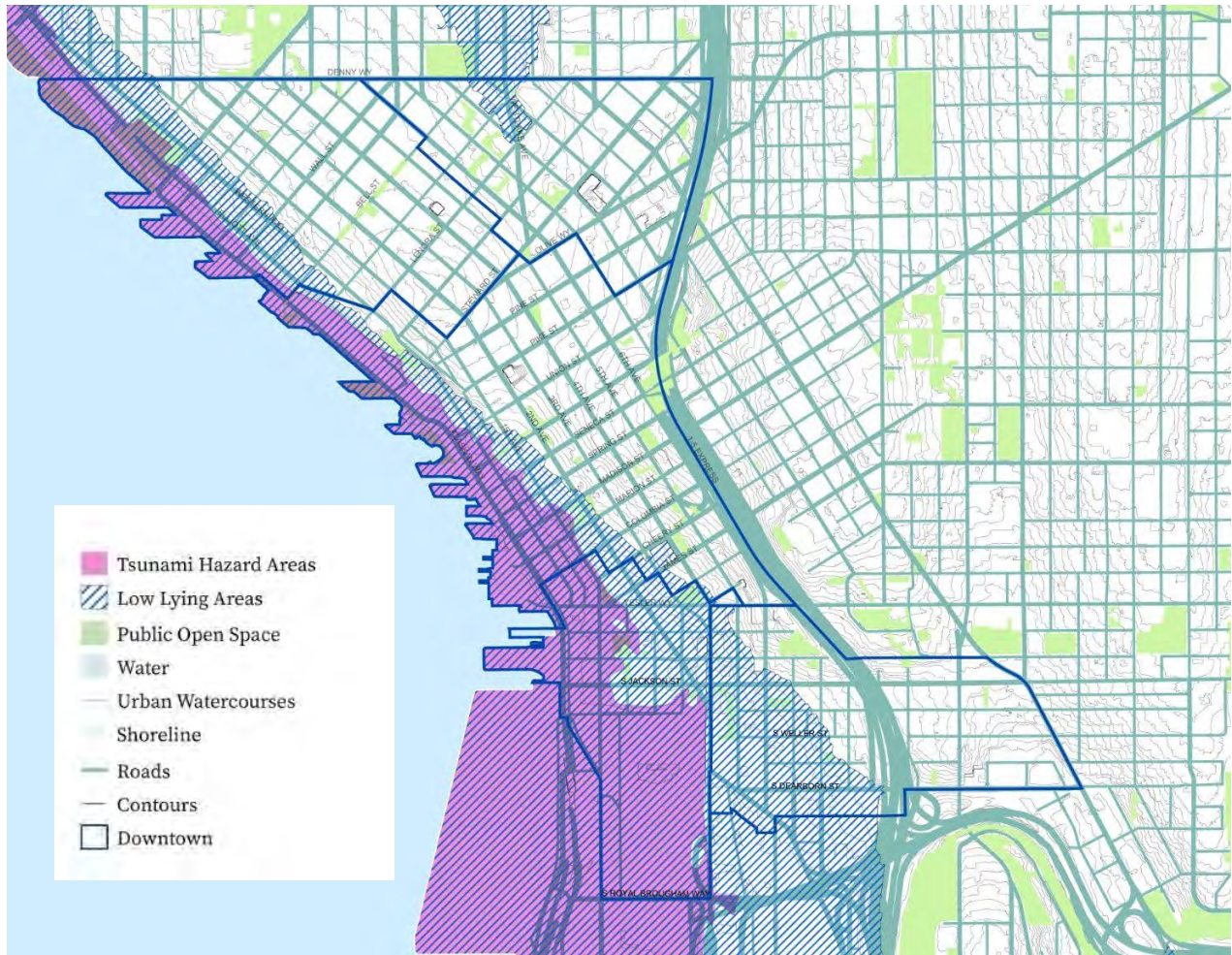


Figure 19 Tsunami Hazard Area

Air

Rising Temperatures

Over the past century, Washington State has experienced a 2.0°F increase in average temperatures (Frankson et al. 2022). In Seattle specifically, the average summer temperature (June - August) has risen by about 1.5°F from 1950 to 2020. This rise in temperature has resulted in more hot days, leading to an increase in heat-related illnesses and deaths. The waters of Puget Sound are becoming warmer and more acidic, affecting the entire marine food chain from phytoplankton to salmon to orcas. As temperatures continue to climb, certain areas in Downtown Seattle are expected to face worsening heat conditions. Furthermore, earlier snow melts due to rising temperatures increase water and flood risks, posing significant challenges for water management services.

Excessive Heat

Heat distribution in Seattle varies significantly across the city due to factors such as industrialization, impervious surface coverage, and tree canopy density, which amplify the urban

heat island effect in certain areas. The waterfront enjoys some cooling effects from the water, but other parts of Downtown, particularly the commercial core and Chinatown International District, experience some of the highest temperatures in Seattle. This is mainly due to extensive impervious surfaces and limited tree canopy coverage in these areas.

Downtown Seattle is heavily urbanized, with impervious surfaces (roads, buildings, and hardscape) covering over 93% of the urban center, totaling approximately 889 acres. These surfaces absorb and hold heat during the day, leading to higher local temperatures in their vicinity. Moreover, the impervious surfaces themselves can become very hot, posing a danger, especially to children and animals.

Areas with multiple surface-level parking lots lacking tree canopies, such as parts of the Chinatown International District and Denny Triangle, contribute to uncomfortable heat conditions for pedestrians due to the lack of shade and the heat-absorbing properties of asphalt.



Figure 20 Impervious Surfaces

Cooling mitigation

Several strategies can combat localized heat conditions, including increasing vegetation and tree canopy, adding water features like splash pads and fountains, and installing white roofs or green roofs on buildings. On hot days, cooling centers and air-conditioned public buildings are essential. Both Downtown public library branches—the Central Branch and the Chinatown International District Branch—have air conditioning and can serve as cool spaces. Additionally, there are fountains at Westlake Park and City Hall Plaza, as well as beach access at Pocket Beach in Myrtle Edwards Park.

Greenhouse Gases

Downtown's GHG Emissions Inventory

The City of Seattle tracks Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions across the buildings, transportation, industrial, and waste sectors to help the City develop effective programs and policies designed to reduce climate impacts. The GHG inventory tracks “core emissions” which correspond to emission sources that the city can most directly and significantly impact. Most of the City’s climate policies and programs are aimed at reducing “core emissions”. However, the GHG Emissions inventory also tracks “expanded emissions” which include core emissions and emissions from specific sectors. Some of these sectors provide detailed enough information to be measured at the census block level. While this does not exactly match the boundary of the Downtown Urban Center, it can still be used to understand trends in the surrounding area.²²

Seattle monitors neighborhood-level emissions on the [One Seattle Climate Portal](#). Depending on the emissions sector, the data covers the years 2020-2023. Some data from the earlier years may reflect the unusual commuting and living patterns experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic shifted everyday lives due to stay-at-home orders and subsequent business closures in March 2020.

Building Emissions

The largest sector of building energy consumption in Downtown Seattle is commercial, rather than residential or industrial. Over the past decade, Downtown has seen significant new construction that meets higher energy codes and primarily uses electrical energy, resulting in higher commercial electrical energy consumption compared to other areas of Seattle. However, historic neighborhoods like Pioneer Square and the International District have older, less energy-efficient buildings that rely more on gas and fuel energy. The CenTrio District Energy powers over 150 Downtown buildings with natural gas that contributes to these emissions.

²² One Seattle Climate Portal, <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/d109ec235c8a44b08675452e64b5e4fe/>

Transportation Emissions

Downtown Seattle is the region's major employment hub, attracting many commuters who drive, take ferries, use public transit, walk, or bike to work. The emissions from these various transportation methods differ significantly. The COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of remote work has altered regular commuting patterns. Telework has become more common for many Downtown jobs, reducing some transportation emissions in comparison to pre-2020 levels. Despite this, public transportation ridership, an energy efficient way to travel Downtown, has not returned to its pre-2020 levels.

Waste

Organics (food and yard waste and compostable food service ware) in the garbage are the biggest contributor to GHG emissions from landfills. In Seattle, organic waste is municipally collected for composting and is prohibited from disposal in the garbage. However, waste consumption studies show that these materials, especially food waste, are still being disposed of in the garbage/landfill stream. More than 30% of garbage is food waste that could be composted and avoid methane emissions that contribute to climate change.

Community Amenities and Wellbeing

In the Seattle Climate Vulnerability Assessment, “community amenities and wellbeing” refer to the social, economic, environmental, cultural, and political conditions identified by residents that “allow their communities and neighborhoods to flourish and fulfill their potential.”²³ Proximity and access to amenities are linked to positive health outcomes, including improved physical and mental health and resilience to climate change threats and impacts. This section summarizes the amenities, programs, management structures, and accessibility of parks and open spaces in Downtown Seattle.

Downtown Open Space Typologies

In Downtown Seattle, public amenities come in various sizes from a small plaza to a large waterfront park. These spaces are managed through different ownership and stewardship models, such as the Parks and Recreation partnership with the Downtown Seattle Association. Many public spaces are privately owned but publicly accessible, such as the numerous entry plazas surrounding office buildings. The waterfront has undergone significant investment, adding new amenities and becoming more accessible with the removal of the viaduct. Additionally, there are several historic squares with important cultural value to the city, such as Pioneer Square and Occidental Square. As development continues in Downtown, there are opportunities to expand open spaces and add more recreational amenities for public use. This section provides an overview of the diverse spaces and amenities that make up the public realm in this urban center and their connections to the surrounding neighborhoods.

²³ City of Seattle, Climate Vulnerability Assessment, June 2023, pg 33

Using the 2024 Parks and Open Space Plan, this report organizes Downtown’s parks and open spaces into the following categories: Boulevards, Green Streets, and Greenways, Plazas (referred to as “Downtown Parks” in the 2024 Seattle Parks and Open Space Plan), Mini Parks and Pocket Parks, Neighborhood Parks, Special-Use Parks and Specialty Gardens, Community Gardens, and includes additional underused or private-public space categories: Private Plazas and Street Vacations described in more detail below:²⁴

Plazas / Downtown Parks

Downtown Parks in Seattle are usually smaller, well-developed areas situated in the heart of the city. Parks like Pioneer Square and Occidental Square hold historical importance. This park type offers a respite from city traffic and often features more paved and hardscape areas. Many of these parks are also stewarded with partner organizations such as the Downtown Seattle Association, which organizes activities and events in several parks. According to the 2024 Parks and Open Space Plan, these parks generally range from 0.1 to 5 acres in size.

Mini Parks and Pocket Parks

Mini Parks are small parks, usually less than 0.25 acres, that offer open space in densely populated areas. In Downtown areas, these pocket parks may have some vegetation and tree plantings and places to sit.

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks can occupy nearly an entire city block and serve nearby residents. These parks typically feature recreational amenities such as play areas, gathering spots, viewpoints, and picnic areas. In Downtown Seattle, this includes Freeway Park. These parks generally range in size from 0.25 to 9 acres.

Special-Use Parks and Specialty Gardens/ Waterfront Parks

Special use parks and specialty gardens are standalone parks designed for a specific use. These parks may serve larger cultural institutions, such as the Olympic Sculpture Park and Pier 62.

Boulevards, Green Streets, Greenways

Boulevards, Green Streets and Greenways are the expansion of a dedicated street which often continues to serve as a right-of-way as well as providing a recreation benefit. This type of park can be publicly or privately owned. The new Alaskan Way is an example of a green street Downtown.

Community Gardens

Many community gardens are managed through the Seattle P-Patch program or by community stewards, as in the case of Danny Woo Community Gardens. All community gardens Downtown are open to the public to enjoy and are utilized as communal spaces. There are 3 locations in

²⁴ Seattle Parks and Recreation, 2024 Parks and Open Space Plan

Downtown Seattle, of which 2 are a part of the P-Patch program: Belltown Cottage Park and Goat Hill Park.

Private Plaza

Private plazas can include public art, green areas, or seating elements. They're commonly linked to ground-floor retail or building lobbies. While managed independently by the associated building's ownership, these plazas have the capacity to host cultural events, markets, and pop-up food trucks.

Street Vacations

Privately managed streets, or streets where the public has “vacated” the right-of-way, are only established when it is determined to be in the public's best interest. These vacations typically occur in connection with a development proposal for the surrounding area. In Downtown, these street vacations can be seen in the Denny Triangle, near the Amazon headquarters.²⁵

Public Realm Amenities

Access to parks and open spaces can be evaluated in two ways: physical access and social access.

Physical access refers to how easily community members can reach and visit a park. In this respect, Downtown is well served, with most areas being within a 10-minute walk of a park or open space. However, the ease and quality of the 10-minute walk to these parks and open spaces can vary significantly due to factors such as topography, sidewalk conditions, and infrastructural barriers

Social access considers the quality of the experience, the suitability of amenities for the local community, the stewardship of the space, and public perception. These factors are discussed in detail in the public realm amenities section above. When evaluating the accessibility of open spaces, it's crucial to consider the accessibility and location of specific amenities, especially recreational ones.

Assessment of Open Space

²⁵ Seattle Department of Transportation, “Street Vacation FAQ”

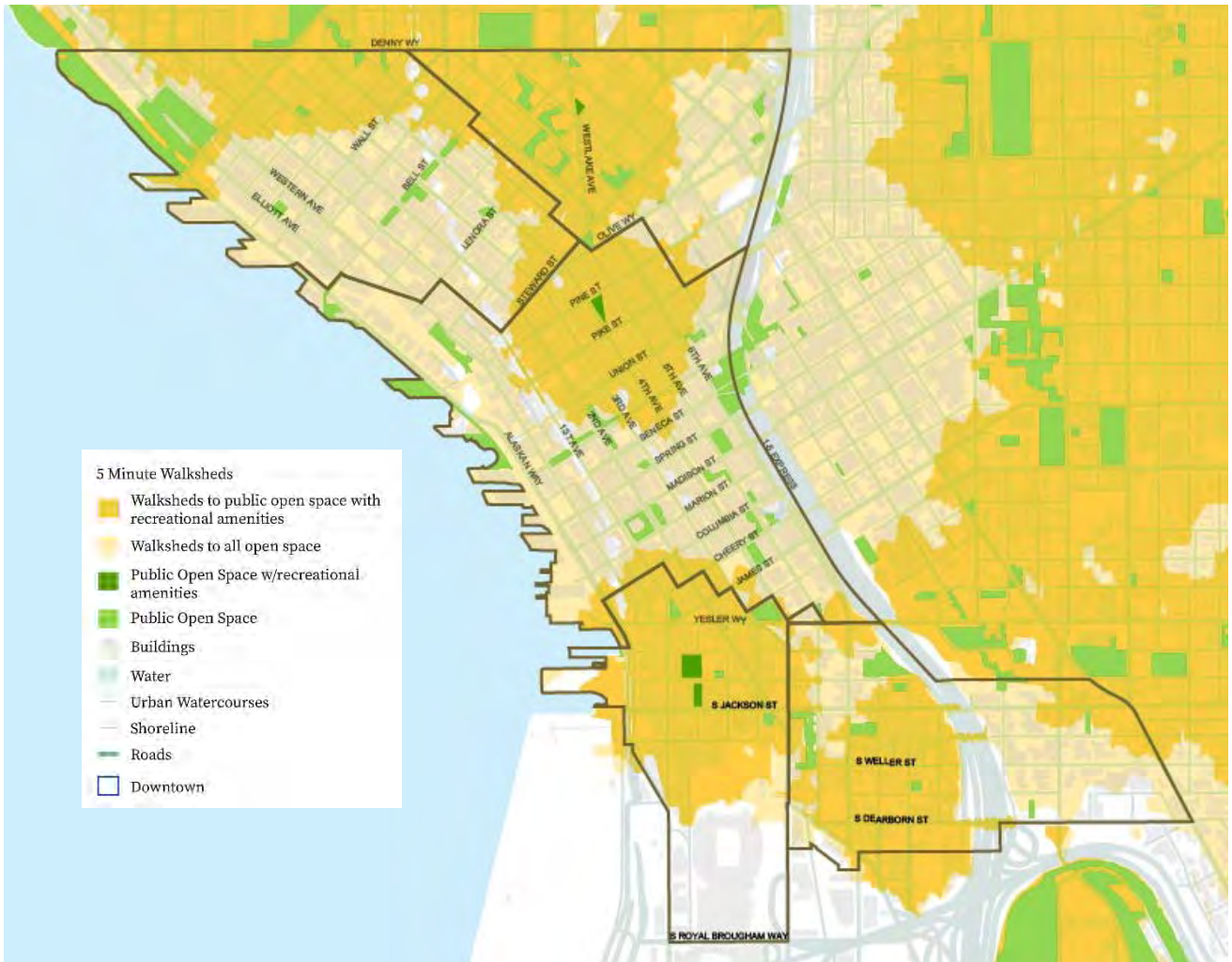


Figure 21 5 minute walksheds to Downtown open space and recreational amenities

Most of Downtown Seattle is within a 5-minute walk of a park or open space, except for parts of Chinatown and the Stadium District at the southern end of the Downtown urban center boundary. This is excellent for accessibility in a dense urban environment and meets the needs of workers and visitors. However, many of these parks and open spaces lack the amenities that residents, especially those with young children, need.

Residents may desire more recreational amenities near their homes, such as playgrounds, courts, and fields. Therefore, accessibility for residents might be better measured by a 5-minute walk to these recreational amenities. In this regard, there are significant gaps in almost all neighborhoods, particularly within the commercial core and Belltown.

Existing Park Amenities

Park features and amenities provided by parks owned and operated by the City of Seattle in Downtown Seattle include:

- 4 playgrounds
- 1 sports facility
- 4 community gardens
- 5 parks with water features
- 9 parks with water access
- 4 parks with trails
- 3 parks with public restrooms
- 3 dog parks

Public spaces in Downtown Seattle are primarily designed to support an office and retail environment. Notably, half of these open spaces are plazas, and ~40% are privately owned. While these plazas provide seating, shade, and a break from the urban hustle, they may not meet all the recreational needs of Downtown residents. They are often temporarily programmed with pop-up events, games, and food trucks but lack permanent play or recreational infrastructure.

Several open spaces are located near transit stations, serving as key entry points for tourists and visitors. Union Station, King Street Station, and Westlake Park are important gateways into Downtown Seattle. These parks offer tables, chairs, and seating areas, which are helpful for visitors as they orient themselves after arriving by transit.

There is a significant shortage of youth-oriented parks and open spaces with playgrounds and recreational facilities such as basketball and tennis courts. Downtown Seattle has no public fields and just one Pickleball court. In other neighborhoods, public school yards often provide these recreational amenities, but there are no public schools within the Downtown Urban Center boundary. However, just north of this boundary in First Hill, Yesler Terrace and Bailey Gatzert Elementary School both have multipurpose fields and courts. Downtown's only community center is located in the Chinatown-International District, but a planned South Lake Union Community Center may serve northern Downtown.

Downtown Seattle does have many water-oriented amenities along the recreational piers and waterfront. Additionally, several fountains are located at Westlake Park, City Hall Plaza, Union Station, and the Harbor Steps. However, some of these fountains are currently out of service due to maintenance and public health issues.

Ownership and Stewardship

Downtown public spaces are managed by a diverse array of owners and stewards who organize events, maintain the areas, and provide funding. This collaborative network is essential for keeping Downtown spaces well-maintained and fully utilized, ensuring they remain busy and vibrant. However, this arrangement also creates a complex system of agreements, regulations, and public understanding regarding how these spaces are operated.

Downtown has several types of ownership and stewardship models, including: publicly owned parks run by public entities, publicly owned parks with organized "Friends of" groups, publicly

owned parks managed by private or non-profit stewards. Privately owned publicly accessible spaces may be managed by private stewards. A combination of several combinations of these models. Within public ownership, entities like Seattle Parks and Recreation, Seattle Housing Authority, The Port of Seattle, King County Government, Seattle Department of Transportation, Washington State Department of Transportation, and the Federal Government all own open spaces in Downtown.

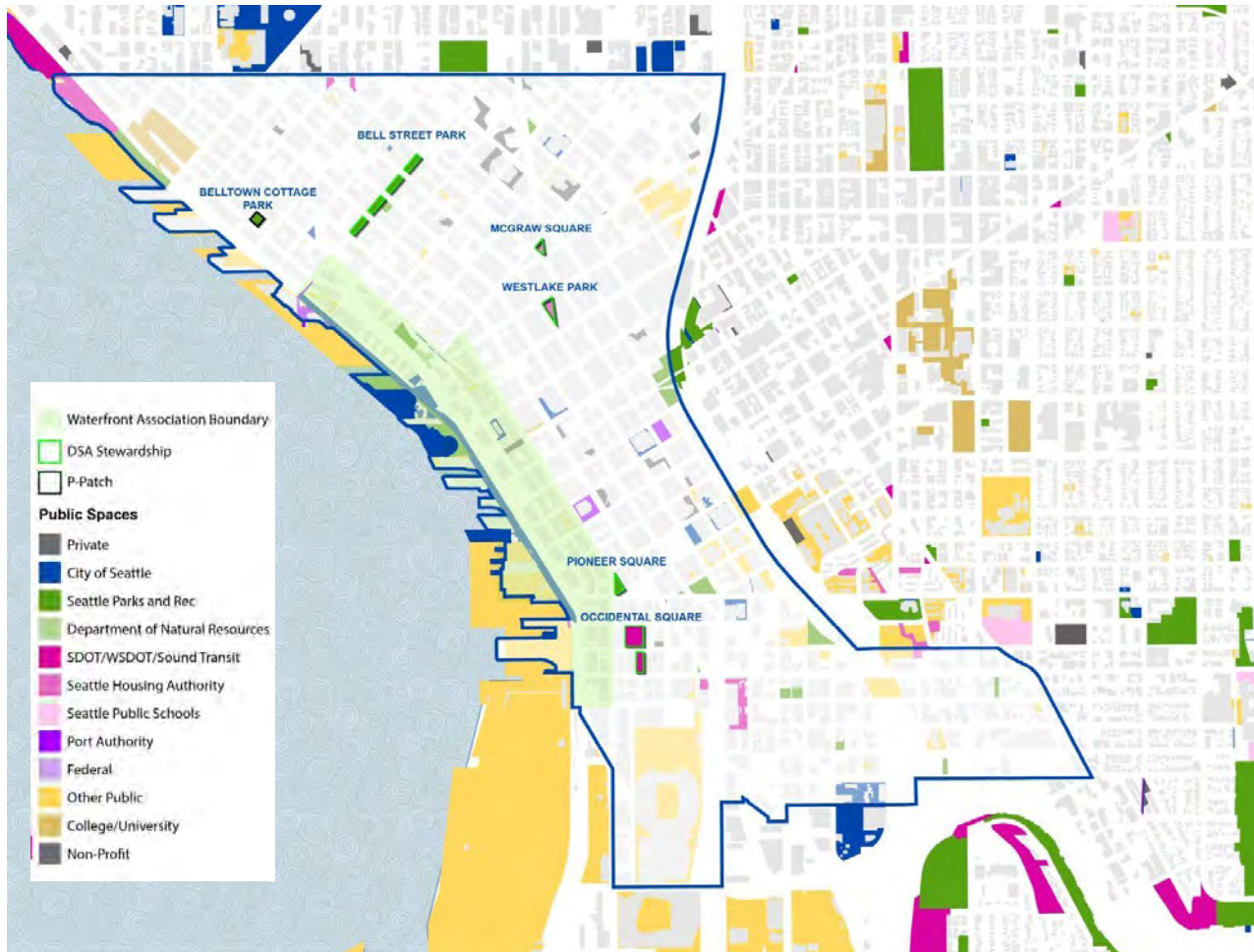


Figure 22 Ownership and stewardship of Downtown open spaces

Publicly Owned Spaces

. Many of the subarea’s publicly owned spaces, classified as Downtown Parks or Squares, or Waterfront Parks, are larger than typical plazas (over 0.25 acres), situated at key intersections or changes in the city grid, and have the capacity for larger events and programming.

Several organizations help manage and program publicly owned spaces in Downtown, each with different agreements with the respective public owners. Two of the largest non-profit entities are the Downtown Seattle Association (DSA) and the Friends of Waterfront Park.

- **Downtown Seattle Association (DSA):** The DSA provides event programming, public art, maintenance, and Downtown safety ambassadors for Bell Street Park, Westlake Park, McGraw Square, Pioneer Square, and Occidental Square. As a Metropolitan Improvement District, DSA funds these programs through membership rates.
- **Friends of Waterfront Park:** This organization manages the Waterfront Park network, which includes Pier 62 and 63, as well as Alaskan Way, and is expanding its management alongside the construction of Pier 28, the Overlook Walk, and Habitat Beach. In partnership with Seattle Center, Friends of Waterfront Park handles fundraising and event programming, while Seattle Center provides maintenance and public safety along the waterfront promenade.
- **Freeway Park Association:** This community based non-profit organization works with the Seattle Parks Department to manage advocacy, funding, and programming initiatives for the Freeway Park along the eastern edge of Downtown. They focus on arts, educational, and wellness programming in the park and conduct engagement within the community.

Post-COVID, the role of non-profit management in publicly owned spaces has expanded. For example, the DSA increased its management from three parks to five in 2023 under an expanded agreement with the City of Seattle. This growth is partly due to the ability of these organizations to raise private funding and build internal capacity, addressing the significant needs of Downtown.

Privately Owned Spaces

There are many privately-owned publicly accessible spaces in Downtown Seattle, including plazas, specialty gardens, parks, and activated streets granted to private entities through street vacations. The most common type of privately-owned publicly accessible space Downtown is the plaza. These are typically ground floor, hardscaped areas adjacent to the lobbies of tall office or residential buildings, usually under 0.25 acres in size. They are often temporarily programmed with food trucks and pop-up events that cater to the building's clientele.

Privately-owned publicly accessible spaces are often created as public benefits in exchange for certain development advantages and of these privately-owned spaces are part of Seattle's Privately Owned Public Space (POPS) program, which is regulated by the Seattle Land Use Code. Spaces that participate in the POPS program will include Official Seattle POPS logo at the entry to the space. Access hours and permitted activities can vary for different POPS.

Downtown Seattle also has specialty gardens and attractions created by private owners for public use. For example, the Waterfall Garden, created in 1978 at the original UPS building in Pioneer Square, and Amazon's headquarters in the Denny Triangle, which features several blocks of interconnected green space. Amazon, which owns the largest number of privately owned public spaces in the city (13.9%), programs these spaces with pop-up retailers and events to attract visitors.

Street vacations and alleys allow property owners to petition the Seattle City Council to acquire adjacent public right-of-way, thus converting it to private property. This process is only applicable when there is an adjacent development project planned. Several private owners in the Denny Triangle, including Amazon, have taken advantage of street vacations, resulting in well-maintained streets and trees due to private funding.

Inventory of Open Spaces

Abbreviations:

- **GSP** = Green Seattle Partnership
- **FoW** = Friends of Waterfront Park
- **SHA** = Seattle Housing Authority
- **SCIDpda** = Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority

Park is stewarded by the public or private owner, unless otherwise listed. The 1224 South King Street park site in the CID, currently under development, is not included in this inventory, but is scheduled to be completed within the next two years.

Name of Park	Park Type	Size (Acres)	Owner	Steward	Amenities
YESLER TERRACE HILLCLIMB*	Mini Park	1.11	SHA	SHA	Greenspace, Agriculture
CHINATOWN/ID BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREA	Mini Park	0.01	SDOT	-	Greenspace
OLYMPIC SCULPTURE PARK	Specialty Garden	37.30	NPO	Seattle Art Museum	Waterfront, Greenspace, Trail
BELL STREET PIER AT PIER 66	Waterfront Park	0.90	PORT	-	Waterfront
FORTSON SQUARE*	Pocket Park	0.01	SDOT	-	-
WATERFALL PARK*	Mini Park	0.14	PRIVATE	Anne E. Casey Foundation	-
WASHINGTON STREET END	Waterfront Park	0.06	SDOT	-	Waterfront
URBAN TRIANGLE PARK*	Neighborhood Park	0.21	SPR	-	Greenspace, Playground
ALASKAN WAY BOULEVARD	Waterfront Park	37.30	SPR	FoW	Waterfront, Greenspace, Trail
BEACON PLACE*	Greenway	0.25	SPR	GSP	-
BELL STREET PARK BOULEVARD	Boulevard	1.41	SPR	DSA	-
BELLTOWN COTTAGE PARK/P-PATCH	Community Garden	0.33	SPR	Local residents	Greenspace, Agriculture
LITTLE SAIGON PARK (under construction)	Neighborhood Park	0.27	SPR	Friends of Little Saigon,	Greenspace, Playground

				SCIDpda	
CITY HALL PARK*	Neighborhood Park	0.95	SPR	-	Greenspace
DONNIE CHIN INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S PARK*	Neighborhood Park	0.23	SPR	Friends of International Children Park, SCIDpda	Greenspace, Playground
HING HAY PARK*	Neighborhood Park	0.64	SPR	Friends of Hing Hay Park, SCIDpda	Restroom, Greenspace
JIM ELLIS FREEWAY PARK	Neighborhood Park	5.17	SPR	Freeway Park Association	Greenspace, Trail
KOBE TERRACE*	Neighborhood Park	2.20	SPR	-	Greenspace, Agriculture
MYRTLE EDWARDS PARK	Waterfront Park	37.30	SPR/SDOT	GSP	Waterfront, Greenspace, Playground, Nature, Trail
OCCIDENTAL SQUARE*	Plaza	1.63	SPR/SDOT	DSA, Seattle Parks Foundation	Sport
PIERS 62 AND 63*	Waterfront Park	1.75	SPR	FoW/Seattle Center	Greenspace
PIONEER SQUARE*	Plaza	0.32	SPR	DSA	-
PREFONTAINE PLACE*	Plaza	0.04	SPR	-	-
REGRADE PARK	Mini Park	0.30	SPR	-	Dog park
TILIKUM PLACE	Plaza	0.20	SDOT	-	Fountain
UNION STATION SQUARE*	Plaza	0.04	SPR	-	-
VICTOR STEINBRUECK PARK	Waterfront Park	0.80	SPR	-	Waterfront, Greenspace
WATERFRONT PARK*	Waterfront Park	1.82	SPR	FoW/Seattle Center	Waterfront, Greenspace
WESTLAKE SQUARE	Plaza	0.01	SPR	DSA	-
200 CEDAR STREET	Plaza	0.19	PRIVATE	-	-
ENSO CONDOMINIUMS	Plaza	0.08	PRIVATE	-	-
WHOLE FOODS PLAZA*	Plaza	0.16	PRIVATE	-	-
COURTHOUSE PLAZA*	Plaza	0.83	PRIVATE	-	Greenspace
TAYLOR AT DENNY	Pickleball Court	0.19	SDOT	-	-
AMAZON NITRO	Plaza	0.81	PRIVATE	-	Greenspace, Dog park
AMAZON SUMMIT	Plaza	0.68	PRIVATE	-	-
AMAZON DAY 1 DOG PARK	Neighborhood Park	0.64	PRIVATE	-	Greenspace, Dog park
AMAZON DOPPLER	Plaza	0.42	PRIVATE	-	Greenspace

2101 4TH AVE	Plaza	0.24	PRIVATE	-	-
720 OLIVE WAY	Pocket Park	0.03	PRIVATE	-	-
MCGRAW SQUARE	Plaza	0.23	SPR/SDOT	DSA	-
WESTLAKE PARK*	Plaza	0.47	SPR/SDOT	DSA	-
ARNE GILLAM COURTYARD	Pocket Park	0.28	PRIVATE	-	-
US APPEALS COURT	Plaza	0.75	FED	-	Greenspace
901 5TH AVE*	Pocket Park	0.38	PRIVATE	-	Greenspace, Fountain
BANK OF AMERICA BUILDING*	Plaza	0.12	PRIVATE	-	-
SEATTLE MUNICIPAL TOWER*	Pocket Park	0.17	COS	-	-
COLUMBIA TOWER*	Pocket Park	0.36	PRIVATE	-	-
CITY HALL PLAZA*	Plaza	0.54	COS	-	Fountain, Restroom
915 2ND AVE*	Plaza	0.74	FED	-	-
WELLS FARGO CENTER*	Plaza	0.36	PRIVATE	-	-
1111 THIRD AVE*	Plaza	0.14	PRIVATE	-	-
1201 THIRD AVE*	Plaza	0.17	PRIVATE	-	-
BENAROYA HALL*	Plaza	0.44	COS	-	-
SEATTLE ART MUSEUM*	Plaza	0.22	NPO	-	-
SEATTLE PASSPORT AGENCY*	Plaza	0.06	PRIVATE	-	-
METROPOLITAN PARK*	Plaza	0.59	PRIVATE	-	Greenspace
DANNY WOO GARDEN*	Community Garden	2.20	MIXED	InterIm CDA, Local residents	Greenspace, Agriculture
UNION STATION PLAZA*	Plaza	1.49	MIXED	-	Fountain
KING STREET STATION PLAZA*	Plaza	0.27	SDOT	-	-
HARBOR STEPS*	Plaza	0.38	PRIVATE	-	Fountain
PIER 70	Waterfront Park	0.53	PRIVATE	-	Waterfront
VIEWPOINT ON PIER 67	Waterfront Park	0.06	DNR	-	Waterfront
MARKETFRONT PUBLIC SPACE	Plaza	0.51	DNR	Pike Place Market	Restroom

*Denotes park that falls under the “highest priority” for future public space improvements

Access to Open Space

Slope and Topography

Seattle's Downtown area has a steep incline from the shoreline up to First Hill and Capitol Hill, with some east-west streets having slopes exceeding 12%. This steepness can be extremely challenging for people with physical disabilities or anyone using wheels, such as those using wheelchairs or strollers. According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), slopes should be less than 5% to be considered accessible without needing a handrail. This significant incline makes pedestrian travel through Downtown difficult, effectively separating the northern neighborhoods (Belltown and Denny Triangle) from the Waterfront and southern neighborhoods (Pioneer Square and the Chinatown International District).

Although there are accessible pedestrian routes through buildings that use elevators and escalators, these pathways are often not clearly marked as public and may pass through private properties, which can pose a barrier to use.

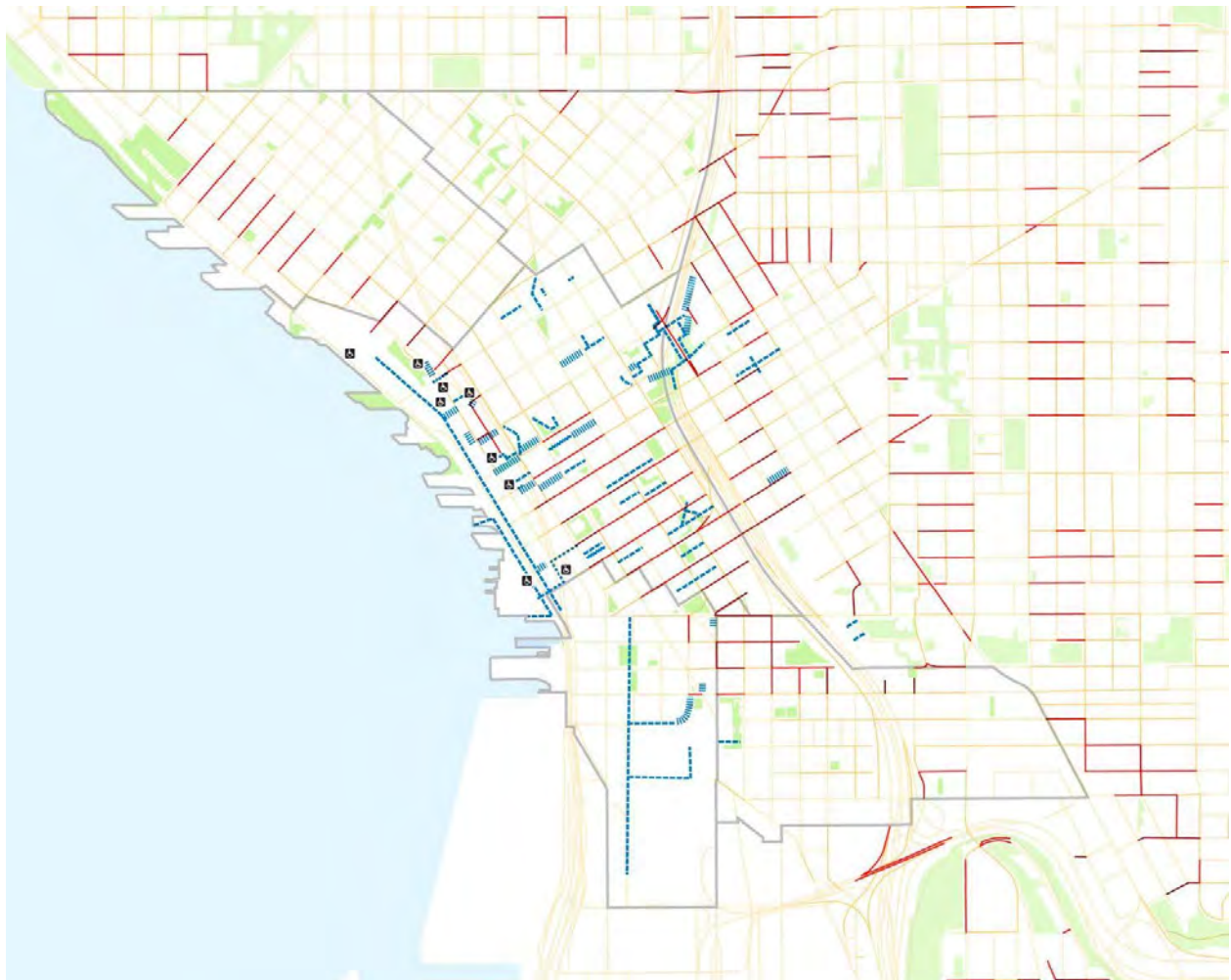


Figure 23 *Downtown Seattle Accessibility*

Access to the Waterfront

Before the viaduct was removed, the waterfront and its parks were difficult for pedestrians to access. With the viaduct's removal and the new Alaskan Way design, accessibility has improved greatly. However, a steep slope of nearly 120 feet remains between Alaskan Way and 1st Avenue. To address this challenge, pedestrian bridges are being constructed at Lenora Street, Pike Place Market, Marion Street, and Columbia Street, and a new elevator is being installed at Union St as a part of the Waterfront revitalization project. Other pedestrian accessibility improvements such as additional crosswalks with push buttons and raised intersections are also planned for the Alaskan Way redesign.

Access to the water is an important amenity within the Downtown open space network. For Native and Indigenous cultures, the ability to touch the water, launch boats, and fish holds high cultural and spiritual significance and is part of protected treaty rights. However, because much of the waterfront is built on piers, physical access to the water has been difficult. The ongoing waterfront revitalization efforts aim to improve this access. Tribes have moorage rights at Pier 62, and the newly constructed habitat beach will feature a natural shoreline, allowing people to walk down to the water—an access that has not been available for a long time.

Visual access to the waterfront is also important. As Downtown slopes down to the waterfront there are incredible view opportunities along the East West streets. These scenic views are protected in both the land use code and shoreline standards code, which protects view corridors in the shoreline area, including vegetation and landscaping review, which is assessed through the Seattle Design Review Board.

Access to Downtown from Other Neighborhoods

Access to Downtown from surrounding neighborhoods is crucial, as Downtown serves as an economic and job center and hosts many city services, social services, cultural and art hubs, entertainment venues, and open spaces. However, access varies and can be challenging from some neighborhoods due to significant infrastructure and topographical barriers.

I-5 poses a significant barrier to accessing Downtown open spaces from Capitol Hill, First Hill, and parts of the Chinatown International District. Pedestrians and cyclists must cross I-5 via overpasses to reach the Denny Triangle and northern parts of the Commercial Core neighborhoods. These overpasses often have narrow sidewalks and steep grades, creating a sense of danger for pedestrians. Additionally, several intersections with cars exiting the I-5 expressway see vehicles traveling at high speeds. To address some of these issues, the Pike and Pine Corridors are undergoing construction to widen sidewalks, street crossings, and clearly mark bike lanes. The proposed I-5 lid park will also help with pedestrian connectivity from Capitol Hill to Downtown if completed.

Freeway Park, which bridges I-5 and spans multiple blocks, provides a green respite and facilitates easy connectivity from the north section of First Hill. However, south of Freeway Park to the Yesler Way overpass, connectivity is challenging. Numerous on- and off-ramps and

underpasses make pedestrian navigation difficult, and much of the area beneath the freeway is allocated for parking and vehicular infrastructure.

In the Chinatown International District, the underpasses at King Street and Jackson Street run beneath 15 lanes of traffic. This section of I-5 is entirely used for surface-level parking, creating a significant divide that separates Little Saigon from other parts of Chinatown. While there have been efforts to improve wayfinding with public art and murals under the overpass, accessibility between the east and west sides remains difficult.

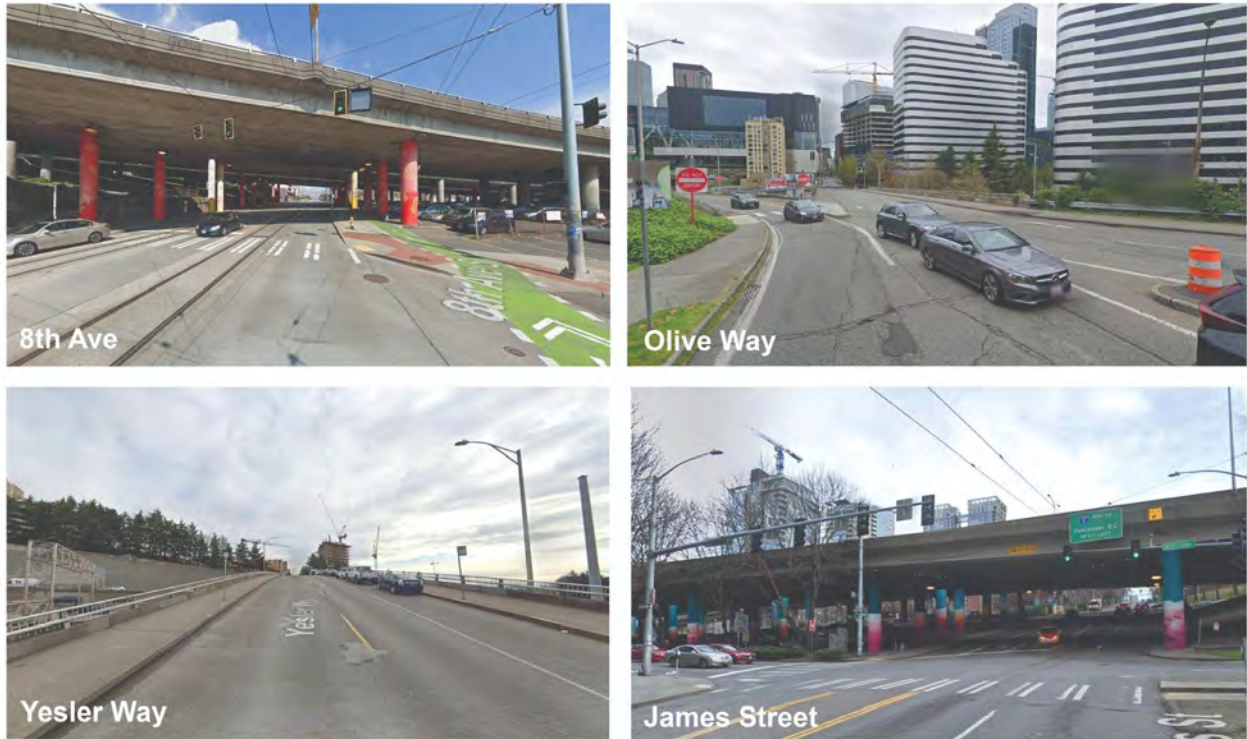


Figure 24 Conditions of I-5 Crossings

Priority Areas for Future Park Investment

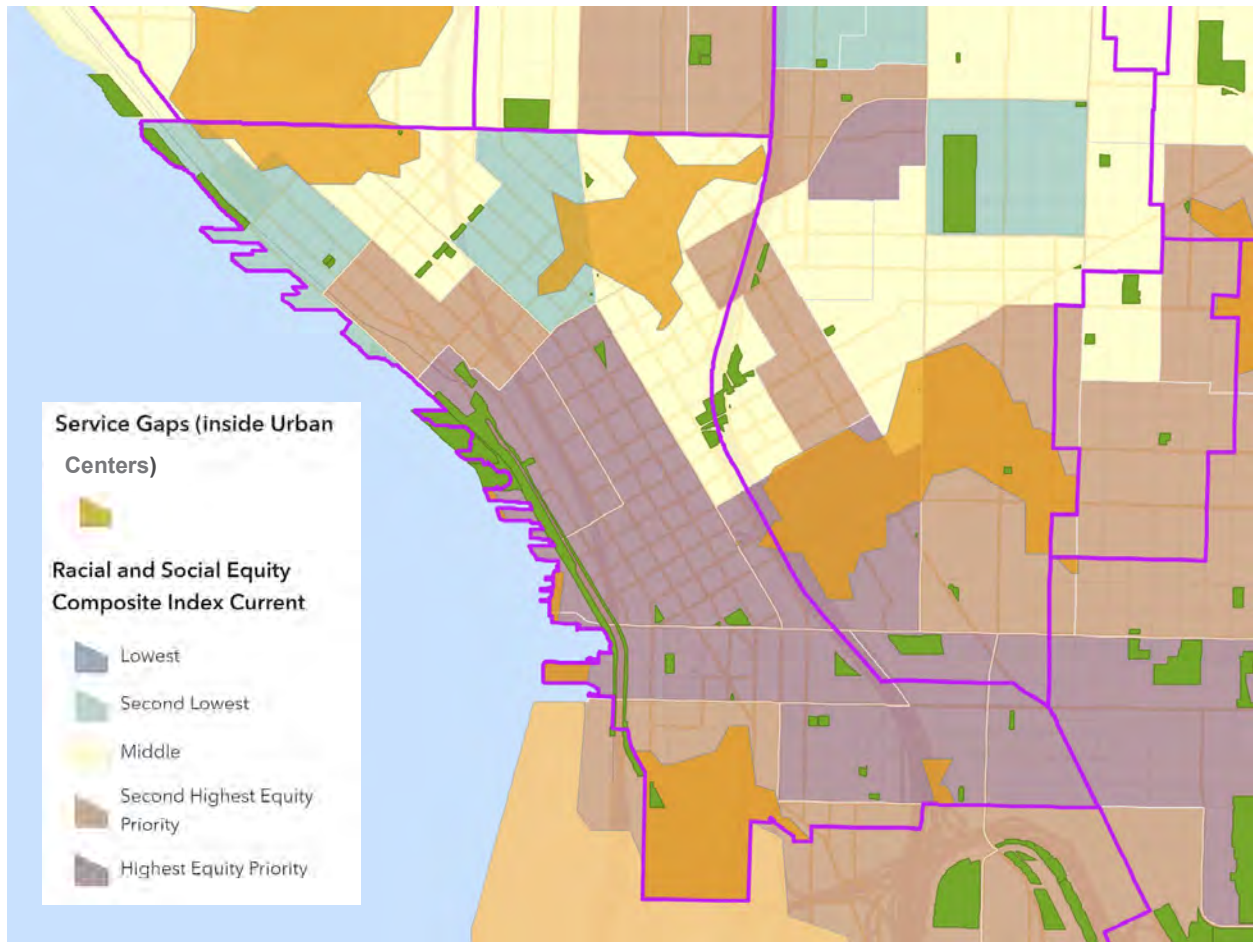


Figure 25 Service Gaps in Public Parks

Race and social equity

Many communities of color and low-income neighborhoods have historically received fewer investments in public amenities like parks, leading to a lack of equitable access to these resources. In Downtown, the CID neighborhood is identified as a priority community (identified in maroon in the map above) and has areas with limited walkable access to a park (identified in orange), according to the 2017 level of service model created by the Seattle Parks and Recreation Department.²⁶ Service gaps are areas without a public park within walking distance. The priority is to address the most critical gaps first that overlap with the high-need areas identified by the race and social equity index, such as in the CID.

²⁶ Seattle Parks and Recreation, 2024 Parks Gaps Analysis <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/2576566fd50747eb8a25432380b2f018/page/2024-Gap-Analysis-Map/?dlq=Legend-Window-5&views=Equity-%26-Health>

Park pressure

Park pressure evaluates the ratio between neighborhood population on the total acres of all public spaces serving that community. Today, Downtown's parks support many more households than other neighborhoods throughout the City. With 42.9 acres of total open space and 6100 households currently in the urban center, almost 143 households share an acre of park space.

City Acquisition Methodology

To respond to unprecedented demand and limited access, the City of Seattle uses a land acquisition framework to assess acquisition priorities for park investment to address identified gaps. When a suitable property is found based on size and site characteristics, the Department will evaluate it for acquisition. Beyond the walkable access gap located close to the stadiums adjacent to the CID, there are two additional service gaps within Downtown. One gap is in the northern edge of Belltown and the other is located within the Denny Triangle neighborhood. The City is actively working to close those gaps, including in the Little Saigon neighborhood of the CID, where 1224 South King Street is being developed into a mid-block park space and pedestrian connection between Jackson and King Streets.

Future Park Site Potential

There are several sites in Downtown that have potential for development and could support a future park, either as its sole use or in combination with other city goals and growth needs. Many of the sites also help to close existing service gaps identified by the City's Parks and Recreation Department. Those sites include Pier 48 on the waterfront, which was included as part of the design plan for the waterfront's redevelopment, the future of I-5 and planning for a lid park space over I-5, Denny Triangle, and the Viaduct Portal site.

Opportunities + Recommendations

Racial Equity Toolkit (RET) Alignment

The following recommendations highlight policies, projects, and programs in support of thoughtful and sustainable growth of the Downtown. The draft RET outcomes for Downtown are shared below:

Process

- There are clear and direct connections between the diverse lived experiences of Downtowners and the plan recommendations.
- The Downtown Plan policies and projects prioritize historically excluded communities.

Arts and Culture Representation

- A thriving, creative community lives in, works in, and shapes the Downtown experience.

Access to Housing

- Downtown offers diverse housing options that support where people are in their lives without creating a cost burden.

Access to Employment and Creating Businesses

- Downtown is a center for businesses - of all sizes - that create financial opportunity and stability for entrepreneurs, owners and employees.

Relevant RET outcomes are tagged in *italics* next to the recommendations.

Buildings

1. Make progress on the seismic retrofit of unreinforced masonry (URM) buildings by communicating the importance of the upcoming mandatory URM retrofit legislation with building owners and providing clear technical assistance to property owners. *Process; Access to Housing*
2. Leverage the City's available incentives towards the use of green building practices for all new construction projects.
3. Explore options for incorporating solar or green technologies on rooftops, with a focus on mitigating urban heat island effect.
4. Pilot a highly efficient mixed-use transit-oriented development (TOD) project at Westlake Center *Access to Housing*
5. Explore a local power generation model, or district energy model.
6. Expand the number of resilience hubs beyond public libraries to provide relief and access to all, focused in the International District and SODO, in alignment with the climate vulnerability assessment. *Process*
7. Explore ways to incentivize and increase participation in the existing composting program (both through large institutional and commercial partners or residential scale) to reduce the diversion of food waste and its impact on emissions. This aligns with the Food Action Plan's priority to "Partner with institutional food services, grocers, manufacturers, distributors, and consumer-facing food service businesses to prevent food waste."
8. Consider a technical assistance or pilot neighborhood-scale building decarbonization program or developer decarbonization incentive that utilizes the Seattle Building Emissions Performance Standard regulations and Clean Buildings Accelerator program to exceed City and State requirements for emissions and carbon waste and encourages

smaller building owners to participate. Currently the minimum required building size is 20,000 square feet.

9. Provide marketing and communications to Downtown business owners, building owners, and residents with language isolation about incentives and free or low cost access to heating conversion from oil to electric heat, and stoves from natural gas to electric.

Process

10. Provide a unified signage and communications system to direct people to ADA accessible routes through buildings, along streets, and on paths. *Process*
11. Create design standards for new development and redevelopment on the waterfront to take advantage of new waterfront investments and provide a welcoming face onto the waterfront.

Streets and Sidewalks

12. Focus accessibility, lighting and safety investments in areas without existing sidewalks, including the I-5 underpass in Chinatown International District. *Process*
13. Utilize small spaces along streets to increase habitat for pollinators and birds
14. Increase curbside electric vehicle (EV) charging stations close to retail destinations and consider waiving charging fees. *Access to Employment and Creating Businesses*
15. Implement a regular tree maintenance and adoption program to properly maintain existing street trees within view corridors.
16. Expand tree canopy to have the most direct benefit to communities Downtown with the greatest vulnerabilities as identified by the City's climate vulnerability assessment.
Process
17. Reconfigure the allocation of the Third Avenue ROW for the use of buses to widen the zone for comfortable and safe pedestrian use. *Access to Employment and Creating Businesses*
18. Complete capital investments in bike and pedestrian infrastructure along Pike Street and Pine Street over I-5. Consider additional improvements along Pike and Pine over I-5 to reduce the impacts of noise and the air quality impacts from vehicle traffic. *Access to Employment and Creating Businesses*
19. Activate streets that pass under I-5 in the CID with pedestrian scaled lighting and other pedestrian supporting amenities. *Process; Arts and Culture Representation*
20. Align with the Pike Place Market Master Plan by partnering with the PDA to manage Pike Place, the street, First Avenue, and Western Avenue, including clear guidance for outdoor dining, loading and unloading, and pedestrian and vehicle use. *Access to Employment and Creating Businesses*
21. Implement stormwater street designs to help divert stormwater away from CSOs and reduce runoff into the Puget Sound, with a focus on mapped priority areas.
22. Promote developer participation in the Above Code Program offered by SPU (Seattle Public Utilities) to exceed standard environmental standards.
23. Improve public water access and cooling areas by installing spray pads or water features in current parks and plazas, especially in areas close to families.
24. Activate Downtown alleyways that are underutilized for loading and unloading with public art, lighting, and other pedestrian supporting amenities. *Arts and Culture Representation*

Parks and Open Space

25. Partner with Indigenous Tribes to create an action plan for the future of Pier 48 that tells the full history of Ballast Island. *Process*
26. Consider changes to the Downtown Amenity Standards for future private development in parcel parks and POPS to better align with the RET outcomes. *Access to Housing*
27. Focus new park space creation where there are service gaps identified by Seattle Parks and Recreation in the CID, Belltown and Denny Triangle. *Process; Access to Housing*
28. Expand family-centered amenities and play spaces for youth in existing parks and in future publicly and privately owned open spaces. *Process*
29. Collaborate to support the industrial maritime strategy for Downtown flood resilience. *Access to Employment and Creating Businesses*
30. Consistent with Seattle’s Food Action Plan priorities, seek opportunities to use Downtown’s public or private parks to increase access to community growing space/community gardens. This aligns with the Food Action Plan’s priority to “Increase land access and stewardship rights for community groups to grow food on public, City-owned land and support a continuum of culturally relevant, food and nutrition educational activities to reach diverse communities.”
31. Leverage existing City of Seattle grant programs that seek to expand healthy food access to add growing spaces and gardens to existing capital improvement projects.
32. Consistent with Seattle’s Food Action Plan and if in alignment with recommendations from Tahoma Peak, use public land and open to advance the Food Action Plan’s priority to “Increase the number of low-maintenance or passive food production (food forests, fruit trees) and foraging opportunities within Seattle, stewarded and directed by Native and Indigenous communities and other community partners.”
33. Address barriers to increase development of courtyards and rooftops that support Downtown residents’ outdoor access.
34. Prioritize open, maintained, and accessible public restrooms
35. Expand the share of BIPOC artist commissions participating in the percent-for-art ordinance in Downtown. *Process; Arts and Culture Representation; Access to Employment and Creating Businesses*
36. Create a new typology that delineates “Downtown gateway parks”, or parks that are located proximate to major transit stations and gateways from other neighborhoods to Downtown. Include specific standards for wayfinding, seating, accessibility, and activation to provide more welcoming spaces for visitors.
37. Improve public water access and cooling areas by installing spray pads or water features in existing parks and plazas close to residential areas.
38. Dedicate resources to invest in the Portal site to support park uses.
39. Invest in green connections between unique Downtown destinations, like City Hall Park, Pioneer Square, and Occidental Square.

DAP Recommendations related to Environment and Climate that Align with the Subarea Plan

- 1.10. Improve street and sidewalk lighting across Downtown

- 1.11. Offer graffiti removal services on private property with owner permission
- 2.4. Bring satellite farmers markets into Downtown neighborhoods
- 2.6. Activate neighborhood alleyways to create more pedestrian-friendly experiences
- 2.7. Support the strategic vision defined by King County Executive Dow Constantine to redesign the County's Downtown campus
- 5.1. Hire a director of Citywide Special Events to implement the integrated and proactive strategy
- 5.3. Provide capital funding for accessibility and other capital improvements to Benaroya Hall, a City-owned arts facility
- 5.5. Create more murals and other art installations throughout Downtown
- 5.6. Support community-driven activations and cultural celebrations Downtown
- 6.3. Open a Tribal Interpretive Center at Waterfront Park
- 6.4. Connect Downtown neighborhoods with Waterfront Park
- 7.1. Pilot a green and healthy street by closing Pike Street between First and Second Avenues for pedestrians only
- 7.2. Reopen City Hall Park
- 7.3. Finish improvements to Downtown parks
- 7.4. Complete the full construction of the Seattle Waterfront by 2025, including free, family-friendly programming
- 7.5. Explore the future use of Pier 48 as new open green space
- 7.6. Continue to explore the lidding of I-5 to create park spaces and pedestrian connections from Capitol Hill to Downtown
- 7.7. Pilot low-pollution neighborhoods Downtown by establishing low-emission delivery opportunities
- 7.8. Implement the Building Emissions Performance Standards Policy (BEPS) pop

Envisioning an Indigenous Downtown Seattle

Date: December 19, 2025

Prepared for: Seattle Downtown Regional
Center Plan

Prepared by: Tahoma Peak Solutions

ENVISIONING AN INDIGENOUS DOWNTOWN SEATTLE




WHAT DOES A
VIBRANT, RESILIENT,
AND EQUITABLE
DOWNTOWN SEATTLE
LOOK LIKE FOR
INDIGENOUS PEOPLE? 

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Interviews were developed and implemented by Tahoma Peak Solutions (TPS) a Native woman-owned firm that tells stories and solves problems. TPS brings over 60 years of combined experience in Indigenous problem-solving and storytelling. TPS is committed to building a better future for Indian Country.

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Lisa Wilson is a Contractor with Tahoma Peak Solutions focusing on research, evaluation, training, curriculum development, and technical writing. She is an enrolled member of the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe. She is currently pursuing her PhD at the University of Washington's College of Education, focusing on the impacts of land-based education on the holistic well-being of students, including their physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual health. Lisa holds a Master's Degree in Social Work with a concentration in Children, Youth, and Families, and a Certificate in Interpersonal Trauma from the University of Denver and a Bachelor's Degree from Olivet Nazarene University. She is a founder and board member of FEED Seven Generations. FEED's mission is to revitalize the health and wellness of tribal communities by amplifying the voice of Native people, reconnecting to ancestral community health practices, and elevating land management strategies. Her areas of expertise are in Indigenous research methodologies and theory, qualitative

research, technical writing, and culturally sustaining curriculum and professional development.

While working as the Director of Curriculum and Instruction for her community, the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, she led curriculum development efforts for a land-based learning program in locations of their usual and accustomed lands. These included forestry operations managed by Manulife, State Parks, and the Crystal Mountain Ski Resort. This curriculum aims to support student's interaction and engagement from and on their ancestral lands. She also led an early childhood through high school curriculum project that focused on building social and emotional skills through the teachings of traditional plants. These lessons included land-based learning experiences, language integration, traditional stories, and experiential learning opportunities. The curriculum was also coupled with expansive year-round professional development for teachers that supported appropriate and respectful implementation and curriculum fidelity. Recent research projects have utilized Indigenous research methodologies to explore how Muckleshoot Tribal Members understand and experience health and well-being and explore Indigenous food systems in the Portland area.

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For more than a decade, Ms. Segrest has dedicated her work in the field of Nutrition and Human Health Science towards the efforts of the food sovereignty movement and catalyzing food security strategies rooted in education, awareness, and overcoming



barriers to accessing traditional foods for Tribal communities throughout North America. By utilizing a community-based participatory research approach she has worked to organize tribal community members in grassroots efforts towards strengthening sustainable food systems that are culturally relevant and nutritionally appropriate.

Ms. Segrest earned her Bachelors Degree in Human Nutrition and Health Sciences from Bastyr University and her Masters of Arts Degree in Environment and Community from Antioch University. Over the years, she has earned several certifications in advanced herbal studies and has extensively researched the subject of historical and traditional food and medicine systems of the Coast Salish tribes of Western Washington.

Her career began as a faculty for Northwest Indian College and as a Cooperative Extension Agent for the Traditional Foods and Medicines Program. In 2009, she worked with her community to launch the Muckleshoot Food Sovereignty Project, a grassroots effort toward increasing access to traditional foods within the Muckleshoot community by identifying food resources, developing and implementing culturally appropriate curriculum focused on traditional ecological knowledge. Over the span of ten years, Ms. Segrest has co-authored several publications including the books “Feeding Seven Generations: A Salish Cookbook” and “Indigenous Home Cooking: Menus Inspired by the Ancestors.” She was a Kellogg Food and Community Fellow at the Institute of Agriculture and Trade Policy. This afforded her the opportunity to share the efforts of the food sovereignty movement with audiences locally, nationally, and globally. Further, she made several important connections to the broader good food movement and key leaders in that arena. In 2019, she was featured in the Women’s Day Magazine, the Food Network Magazine, and the J.Jill “Inspired Women” Campaign. In 2022, she was a judge on the Hulu Network’s reality food show, “Chefs vs. Wild.”

SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks to our interview participants. We are honored that you shared your stories, wisdom, and experiences with us. We hold them with the utmost delicacy and respect. Thank you for your time and trust. Big thanks to Arundel Books for their continued partnership, support and generous use of space.



KEY FINDINGS

The findings emphasized several key areas for reclaiming space, narratives, and partnerships, as well as planning for the future and addressing current challenges.

RECLAIMING SPACE

In terms of reclaiming space, it's crucial to honor the original landscape and involve Indigenous people in shaping the city's design. This includes increasing representation in art and construction projects and creating a more welcoming environment.

RECLAIMING NARRATIVES

Reclaiming narratives involves promoting accurate Indigenous histories and visibility in public spaces. It's essential to educate both the public, Indigenous youth, and city employees about Indigenous culture and heritage.

WORKING TOGETHER

Working together requires strengthening partnerships between Indigenous organizations, tribal nations, and city government. Genuine collaboration and resource transfer are essential for supporting equity and Indigenous initiatives.

INDIGENOUS INPUT

In planning, a long-term city plan that includes input from Indigenous groups is necessary. Addressing foundational issues and adopting innovative housing approaches are also crucial.

ENCOURAGING INNOVATION

Encouraging innovation means removing restrictive systems and incorporating diverse community perspectives in city planning efforts.

EXPANDING PROGRAMMING

Expanding programming for youth, promoting Indigenous entrepreneurship, and addressing the impact of the pandemic are essential steps for a more resilient downtown.

CONSERVATION

Conservation efforts should prioritize protecting land and waters, implementing habitat restoration programs, and educating the public about environmental issues.

SAFETY

Addressing safety concerns, including crime and issues related to the unhoused, are vital for creating a safe environment downtown.

THINKING 7 GENERATIONS AHEAD

Thinking seven generations ahead involves emphasizing sustainability and collaboration to ensure community resilience and prosperity for future generations.

HONORING TREATIES AND RESPECTING TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY

Lastly, it's crucial to honor treaties by respecting Indigenous sovereignty and rights, ensuring fair treatment by state institutions.



INTRODUCTION

WHAT DOES A VIBRANT, RESILIENT, AND EQUITABLE DOWNTOWN SEATTLE AREA LOOK LIKE FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE?

It's a big question that invites dreaming and imagining ways of being beyond colonial confinements. Dreaming of an even more joy-filled future for our people, community, lands, waters, and all of our animal relatives. These terms might seem synonymous, but when our team broke down this question into three separate questions, we found a rich tapestry of experiences, ideas, dreaming, and passion. Our respondents represent a roster of leaders who conduct business, offer services, and develop youth programs for Indigenous people and by Indigenous people in the downtown subarea. Their answers are a beautiful example of Indigenous ways of knowing, demonstrating interconnectedness and standing alone in their specificity.

AS WE REFLECT ON THESE THREE WORDS, VIBRANT, RESILIENT, AND EQUITABLE, THEY INHERENTLY REFLECT MANY OF OUR INDIGENOUS VALUES.

We are vibrant, or full of energy, enthusiasm, and life! The hearty laughter of an auntie, the deep vibration of a drum during pow wow, the vibrancy of a new salmonberry blossom reaching and stretching in the springtime sun. We are resilient, or able to withstand and recover from difficult conditions. The wise steady eyes and beautiful lines within our Elder's faces speak to a lifetime of learning and persistence. The salmon people moving with consistent tenacity

as it pushes and jumps upstream, inspires us to also fight for the return of life. We are an equitable people. We understand and honor the nuance of each of our relatives and their unique circumstances, needs, and strengths. We honor these nuances and respond to these needs appropriately so we can all thrive, and we do so in our own unique way. From freshly cooked food and cedar roses gently and intentionally woven for a funeral to the joy and laughter of holding a new baby that was recently brought into this world. We wrap around each other in times of crisis and celebration. You'll see and hear these values echoed through the words and ways of thinking in our respondents. You'll also see an invitation to integrate these values into our collective dreaming of what the city of Seattle could look like. As we reflect on these words,

MAYBE A BETTER QUESTION TO ASK IS, "WHAT DOES AN INDIGENOUS SEATTLE LOOK LIKE FOR ALL?"

One of our participants said Indigenous people are powerful allies in city planning because stewarding these lands and waters is not just an interest, it's a "birthright", it's "why we have been put here." In the words and experiences of our participants, you will feel that passion and purpose that embolden them with urgency, concern, creativity, and hope for future generations of relatives to come.

COME DREAM WITH US!



BACKGROUND

CITY OF SEATTLE REGIONAL GROWTH CENTERS

The City of Seattle’s Planning and Development Department is undertaking a neighborhood planning effort for its six regional growth centers—Downtown, Capital Hill/First Hill, Northgate, South Lake Union, Uptown, and the University District. The Planning Department is committed to including the perspectives of under-resourced and underrecognized populations and understands that relationship building, sharing power, and diverse leadership must be involved in the planning effort. In 2023, they began working with Tahoma Peak Solutions, a Native woman owned consulting firm to develop an inclusivity guide focused on Indigenous groups, provide cultural safety trainings with their department staff to better understand the history and goals of the Indigenous community, and conduct research with Indigenous leaders in the downtown area to gather insights to inform the development of policies to ensure that urban centers can successfully accommodate future growth and become more equitable, vibrant, and resilient. They are also gathering feedback from all sub areas as phases of the project become relevant. They wish to focus investment and implement tools guided by each community’s interests and visions for its future to respond to community-identified needs.

HISTORY OF RESEARCH WITHIN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Indigenous communities have experienced a harmful history of research conducted upon, and not with, them. Western research practices have been used as tools of Settler Colonialism to erase Indigenous peoples in the pursuit of securing land (Wolfe, 1994). These practices used Western ways of knowing,

theories, and methods that don’t align culturally with Indigenous peoples (Tuck, 2009; Smith 1999). This lens casts Indigenous people in a negative light through amplifying deficits, misrepresentation, extraction of rich cultural information, and exclusion (Tuck, 2009; Smith 1999). This slanted and biased perspective justified the removal of Indigenous people from their lands and the erasure of Indigenous people by creating and reinforcing oppressive systems and structures (Tuck, 2009; Smith 1999). These systems and structures are both overt, like boarding schools or the adoption system, and subvert, like the continued erasure experienced within the education and mental health systems today. These practices have caused substantial historical, intergenerational, community, and individual trauma, harm, and a deep justifiable mistrust of research processes and institutions for many.

The truth is Indigenous people have always been researchers. The process of using observations and information to make informed decisions to meet the needs of our community is not exclusive of Western thought or systems. We have always observed and read the land and waters. Noted what we saw, and developed or adapted sophisticated skills, practices, tools, and technologies to ensure our community’s survival. We were, and are, innovative and adaptive people, contrary to the stagnant portraits of our people that are often seen in the media.

Today, we enact research and data sovereignty by using Indigenous theory and methods through community-driven processes to explore questions and identify solutions. We foster authentic and accurate information and honor and respect our community’s knowledge and traditions as valid and legitimate data sources. Data sovereignty works to decolonize research practices, systems, and structures. This project is both a celebration of the rich knowledge and experience our participants hold to answer important questions and an intentional step toward decolonizing research practices.



CONSIDERATIONS WHEN WORKING WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

FLAT POWER STRUCTURE

Foster trust by providing opportunities throughout the process for engagement and partnership. This could include providing input on methods, research design, member checking data and findings, and gathering input on how to disseminate information best.

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL TO CONTRIBUTE

It's important to create opportunities to hear from all voices and personality types. Some Indigenous people might be shy and would prefer not to share in front of a large group. Offer opportunities for large group discussion, but also offer opportunities for follow-up one-on-one conversations.

ENGAGEMENT

Many Indigenous people are thoughtful, intentional speakers. Offer ample wait times for participants to finish their thoughts. Don't rush a speaker through their thoughts. Also, carefully consider the size of the group. Keep large group discussions to ten or under. Using visual engagement strategies like writing on a board can be helpful too. Share the questions beforehand and create space and opportunity for participants to reflect and collect their thoughts before sharing.

INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP

Indigenous people can bring important knowledge and lived experience to the research process. It's important to honor that knowledge and experience by prioritizing Indigenous leadership within research projects.

BE A CONSIDERATE HOST

If you're asking people to gather and take time out of their day and other responsibilities, be a thoughtful host as a reciprocal act of appreciation for their participation. This could include providing food, snacks, compensation for time, childcare, offering multiple days and times to accommodate schedules, and/or offering locations that work best for participants. Gifting is an important practice in many Coast Salish communities as an act of appreciation.

RELATIONSHIPS

Ideally, asking someone to participate in a research study or project shouldn't be the first time they're meeting you. Instead, intentionally develop strong reciprocal working relationships with Indigenous people as a reflection of your organization's commitment to the original care-takers of the land you occupy.



METHODS

We held lived histories closely, as we planned and implemented the Envisioning an Indigenous Downtown Seattle project. It is a Native-led research study informed by many community-based participatory action research principles in its design and methods. We selected this approach because it honors those who are directly impacted by a research question or issue as most equipped to identify effective solutions and supports community-led transformation and social change (Burns, Cooke, & Schweidler, 2011). It honors that these individuals and communities hold rich and valid insights that can inform plans for strategic action (Burns et al., 2011).

It's grounded in the practical and relevant needs and concerns of a specific community, in this case, Indigenous leaders in the downtown Seattle area (Burns et al., 2011). The project also focuses on a specific place and its relationship to that place (Burns et al., 2011). It is also relationship-driven. The project drew upon existing relationships to build upon and further expand trust and rapport in the hopes to also further relationships and enhance collaborations. Trust and shared power is also demonstrated through communication, follow-up, data transparency, and engaging with participants in a reciprocal way.

The project enacted Indigenous methodologies aligned with the community's culture and ways of knowing. Oral traditions, including storytelling, are important cultural practices within Indigenous communities to share knowledge and histories (Archibald, J., Xiem, Q., Lee-Morgan, J.B. J., De Santolo, J., 2019). Storytelling is relational in nature and offers rich opportunities for collaboration and strengthening cultural practices to support deeper, richer, and fuller understandings (Archibald et al., 2019). The project used individual interviews, with some conducted over a meal of traditional foods.

The project and interview questions utilized a strength-based approach. It began with a broad, open-ended question regarding the ways participants envisioned a vibrant, resilient, and equitable Seattle for Indigenous people. This encouraged participants to dream and imagine a future with no bounds. Then participants were guided through follow-up questions as needed.

The study drew upon narrative inquiry methods which focus on story as the basic unit of analysis, paying special attention to the story's content and how participants articulate their life experiences through story (Bhattacharya, 2017). The project used a constructivist grounded theory approach as the method for data analysis using inductive open coding (Bhattacharya, 2017; Smith, 1999). The coder analyzed the stories using in vivo coding to construct categories that contribute to the development of a theory (Bhattacharya, 2017). Once the categories were established, the coder used member checking to create a shared data analysis experience and ensure that the codes and categories align with the participant's interpretations. The data analysis process resulted in a theory rooted and understood from the words and experiences of the participants (Harding, 1994; Bhattacharya, 2017). This method challenges histories of western research within Indigenous communities in which western concepts and understandings were placed upon, rather than determined by, Indigenous communities. Member checking positions participants at the center of the research and ensures coding and categories are accurate (Bhattacharya, 2017).

The eight participants were leaders who conduct business, offer services, and develop youth programs for Indigenous people and by Indigenous people in the downtown subarea. All participants were in their



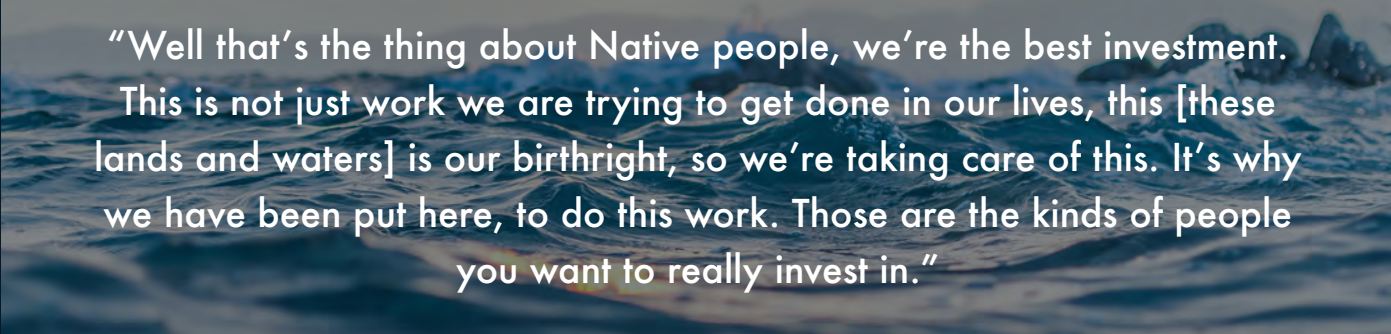
30's and 40's and represented both males and females. All participation was voluntary. The project invited a diverse set of Indigenous people to a focus group. Due to scheduling challenges, only one participant was able to attend. A rich and expansive conversation followed. It was because of this conversation, that the team decided to pivot and conduct individual interviews so each participant had the space and time to share their thoughts and experiences on the research questions. This method dug deeply into their experiences through three key questions. All participants were given the same questions with a list of possible follow up questions before the interview and had time to reflect on the questions before the interview (Archibald et al., 2019). The group lasted anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour. The interviews were audio recorded to analyze later. Interviews were recorded on an iPhone, using the Otter.ai app. Otter.ai processed the recordings into transcripts. After the audio was uploaded, the coder listened to the audio recordings while reading the transcript and scrubbed the transcript of errors. Next, the transcript was

downloaded into a Word document. A coder used the “comments” feature to code the transcript using in vivo coding (Charmaz, 2001; Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). The codes were organized into a Word document, where relevant direct quotes and summaries were placed under the codes. After the first interview, some codes were grouped with similar codes and/or into categories. (Charmaz, 2001; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The same process was used for the second interview. The codes were then merged along with identifying additional categories. The code was then used to code interviews three through five. Additional categories and codes emerged in each interview and were added. After the fifth interview, the codes were organized under broader themes that became the headers for the finding section. This process was an intentional methodological choice to prioritize and honor the participant’s voices. A draft of the final document was sent to participants for an additional opportunity for member checking and feedback before finalization.



2023 Canoe Journey Landing at Muckleshoot in Seattle with downtown in the background

FINDINGS



“Well that’s the thing about Native people, we’re the best investment. This is not just work we are trying to get done in our lives, this [these lands and waters] is our birthright, so we’re taking care of this. It’s why we have been put here, to do this work. Those are the kinds of people you want to really invest in.”

FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE, CARING FOR THE LANDS AND WATERS OF WHAT IS NOW CALLED SEATTLE IS NOT JUST AN INTEREST. THESE LANDS AND WATERS ARE THEIR BIRTHRIGHT AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY, THIS MAKES THEM STRONG PARTNERS AND ALLIES IN CITY PLANNING.

RECLAIMING SPACE

All participants spoke about how the reclamation of space is vital to a vibrant, resilient, and equitable downtown Seattle area for Indigenous people. But it’s important to note that Seattle is Indian Country now. This is despite colonial attempts to control and own. Participants discussed the many ways the current downtown area reflects and reinforces white colonial dominance. “Western culture is recognized everywhere, through modern structures and buildings.” Instead, another suggested considering what the original architecture, plan, and landscape was as a roadmap to move forward.

Participants spoke about the importance of increasing

“Native flavor” downtown by increasing Indigenous representation in art, built environment, architecture, design, spaces, places, plants, and landscape, and involving Indigenous people in the design process. They wanted more inclusion in art and cultural events as well as inclusion in entrepreneurs and companies bidding and construction opportunities. One suggested more Indigenous fixtures and inclusion on projects like the revitalization of the waterfront.

One spoke about the need for the city to feel more welcoming for Indigenous people through design. They suggested design elements like benches, seating, plants, and trees. Noting that it appeared places were intentionally designed to discourage people from gathering. “And it’s just really criminal to pull those things [benches] away to punish people—there should be public seating.” Examples of locations they said felt welcoming to Indigenous people were Winnipeg, Minneapolis, New Mexico, Arizona, Albuquerque, and Phoenix.

Some spoke specifically of increasing Muckleshoot and Suquamish leadership and cultural presence as “essential for a thriving downtown for everyone.” They believed this wouldn’t just positively impact the Muckleshoot and Suquamish but “would be good for urban natives as well.” When considering reclamation and implementing policies that support and celebrate Indigenous people, it’s important to



realize that it's not just good for a single Indigenous nation, but Indigenous people at-large and the whole population. This sentiment is heard often in Indian Country. For example, clean water, protecting the salmon run, swiftly locating our missing relatives, tending to our unhoused relatives, creating spaces to gather and laugh, are policies that benefit us all.

Participants suggested the importance of acquiring space and property to expand housing, businesses, and nonprofits for Indigenous people. Others spoke directly of land back movements and called upon King County and the City of Seattle to look at land holdings, buildings, and piers and return them to the Muckleshoot and piers to the Suquamish people. The land could be developed for businesses and/or offices for government-to-government relations with the Muckleshoot people.

Many spoke of the need for an Indigenous gathering space in the downtown area to gather, rest, eat, and engage in social and political activities. Many spoke to the challenges of accessing Daybreak Star, which is not accessible by public transportation. Many organizations were interested in hosting events or had a desire to build a conference center or gathering space in the future.

“RECLAIMING THIS [THE CITY OF SEATTLE] SO PEOPLE REALIZE THAT THIS IS INDIAN COUNTRY, RIGHT?...I KNOW IT MAY NOT BE A RESERVATION, BUT IT DOESN'T GET MUCH MORE INDIAN COUNTRY THAN RIGHT HERE.”

RECLAIMING NARRATIVES

Beyond reclaiming physical space, participants spoke of the need to reclaim accurate narratives and histories at the risk of erasure. They stressed the importance of Indigenous people and organizations needing to be more visible. They wanted to promote more interactions directly with Indigenous people as a way to learn more about the area, which stresses the importance of relationships and the practice of oral traditions in education. One participant wanted to see more information about the 29 federally recognized tribes in Washington State, but most spoke within the context of the Muckleshoot people, and one spoke of both the Muckleshoot and Suquamish people.

Participants had many suggestions for increasing Indigenous visibility. Many wanted more public campaigns that shared tribal history, culture, and language through story and storytelling. One suggested an Indigenous boat tour that shared Indigenous history. Many spoke to adding signage, using audio, leveraging technology like apps, and developing a QR program to learn language and history. These projects would support people to learn place names in the language and share history around culturally significant people and places. One suggested having a memorial for Indigenous fishermen who died fishing along the Duwamish. Multiple participants gave the example of the historical panels at Daybreak Star which have photos and historical information as an exemplar of these efforts. Another pointed to public facing partnerships like the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe with the Seahawks, Mariners, and Kraken which helped foster public awareness. It was important that these visibility projects were



WORKING TOGETHER

“BEING ABLE TO TELL YOUR OWN HISTORY IS A POWERFUL THING. THAT’S ALSO RECLAIMING SPACE- THAT’S HEADSPACE, AIR SPACE, STORY SPACE.”

accessible to the general public, but participants stressed that it was very important to maintain the correct spelling and phonemes of the traditional language. One suggested using an Indigenous owned studio to record stories, audio, plays, and podcasts. This reflects having Indigenous people involved in all steps of the creation and development of educational materials.

The audience for these projects were both non-Indigenous and Indigenous people with many speaking about the importance of Indigenous youth knowing their history. One desired more clarification on the histories and nuance of the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe and Duwamish Tribal Organization in order to, “set the historical record straight for people so that there is a reliable source that can tell that accurate history.” Others also stressed the importance of those working in city government to know these histories. “People working in government should learn accurate history and understand the role they play in continuing or re-establishing relationships with Native communities.”

Many Indigenous serving organizations spoke to how they are serving primarily Indigenous people who are not local and suggested a 411 program for Indigenous people to improve communication and awareness about available programming, resources, services, events. “All the things you need to know, if you’re a Native person in the urban city.”

Many want to see stronger partnerships with all stakeholders involved in the city including: Indigenous organizations, businesses, federally recognized treaty tribes, neighboring tribes, and city government.

Many had suggestions of ways the city could improve its partnerships with Indigenous organizations and nations. One said it was difficult to gain traction on initiatives because the city was reactive to “the social issue interest of the month.” Another spoke to the financial and reporting burdens of city contracts. Another spoke of the frustrations of negotiating with the city. “They come to the table. They already have a plan. They’re wasting our time. They’re checking the box and wasting our time. I’ve been to three or four meetings. ‘Well what do you think? Well we’ve already been working on this. So you’re calling us to the table to check the box.’” Also not feeling like there are strong advocates to continue to support and advocate for the best interest of Indigenous nations, organizations, and people once they leave meetings. “But it’s just every conversation I’ve had for the last twelve years falls on deaf ears...We don’t have anyone advocating after we walk out of the room.” One spoke of how truly understanding the reality of the human need and being responsive and reflective of that in policies. Another stressed the importance of transferring power and resources in order to support equity. “If you want to do true equity work, you have to do two things-transfer resources and then transfer power. And if you’re not willing to do those two things then just get out of here. Let’s do it on our own. I’ve had enough of this. I don’t want to have you knocking on my door anymore say[ing], ‘How can we serve your people better?’ I don’t care. Yeah, we’re doing just fine. Stop hoarding the resources.”

“I THINK AT THE CORE OF EQUITY IS THIS REALITY OF THE HUMAN NEED.”



One participant felt the rise in Land Acknowledgements was an opportunity to build general awareness which could hopefully foster longer and deeper relationships between local Indigenous organizations and businesses. Another suggested working groups with Indigenous organizations and allies would be helpful to address policy and planning barriers.

In terms of collaborations between urban Indigenous organizations, one participant highlighted the ways systems are designed to create competition and lateral violence, “Systems are designed to get us off course. And that’s what we have to remember. It’s designed to pit us against one another and that’s why we have to fight that every day.” Instead others stressed the importance of working together. “We need each other, we each serve roles, and where we can figure out that we need each other, it’s going to make it that much more efficient and effective.” Participants suggested supporting collaborative relationships by ensuring each organization had a clear vision and goal and stayed focused on it. This would help avoid mission creep and chasing money. Participants leading Indigenous organizations wanted to see more integration of services and wrap around services in collaborations with other Indigenous organizations.

PLANNING

Many participants believed a long-term detailed city plan was needed to support a vibrant, resilient, and equitable Indigenous community in downtown. One wanted to see a specific plan to develop more of the Duwamish river area. They felt the city had difficulty moving beyond needs assessments and community engagement towards an actionable plan. This resulted in the city continuing to “look backwards” and focus on disparities. One participant suggested creating a small pragmatic and disciplined group to flesh out goals based off of the assessments and community engagement work that has already taken place. Many participants stressed the importance of including reps of city Indigenous organizations and

local tribal nations in any city planning conversations. “Right now there isn’t any, right now the city only cares about accommodating business people who come in and leave at 5:30.”

One participant felt the lack of a strong “starting point” with foundational systems like transportation firmly in place, resulted in difficulties building and expanding the city with new initiatives like building a walkable city. It also caused new initiatives to have unintended consequences that negatively impacted other initiatives and aspects of the city.

INNOVATION

Many participants suggested innovation as a way to respond to the pressing needs of the city in order to cultivate a vibrant, resilient, and equitable downtown Seattle for Indigenous people. One saw the opportunity post pandemic as an opportunity to innovate and be a global leader. Many participants spoke of the ways current systems stifle equity and innovation. “So it’s just like those paternalistic oppressive racist systems, quite frankly, that are inflicted upon us. If you were able to remove that restriction from the building, what could you do?” Participants spoke about the ways the desire for power and control hinder innovative problem solving. “I would say, at the heart of it, there is, you know, a desire for power and there’s folks who have dictated what downtown Seattle is going to look like for a long time. And they need to be humbled and step back and make room for a new way of envisioning downtown.”

One specific example participants discussed was housing. Participants suggested considering new ways to build housing considering how building standards and materials are expensive and not sustainable. Instead finding other ways to innovate, and encourage innovation, in the housing space. “Why couldn’t there be a beautiful longhouse on the waterfront that was basically SRO [single room occupancy] housing where people have individual rooms and share a bathroom, or have their own bathroom, but share a



INNOVATION

bathroom, but share a living and kitchen space.” Participants spoke about how limiting building and zoning regulations were in regards to housing and their own plan for expansion. These limits stifled business development, innovation, and the ability to respond to the needs of the community. “I think it’s time to change regulations, find ways of ensuring affordable housing is really being lifted up, build and evolve from different structures already downtown.”

One organization developed a comprehensive strategic plan that included policy, advocacy, workforce development, community enterprises, communication, program expansion, business incubator, and protecting intellectual property. They suggested adapting a more systematic and interconnected approach could benefit city planning efforts.

They also spoke about the importance of having voices at the planning table that aren’t typically included. “Give room for innovation and understanding to communities of color, Native communities, Black communities and allow them to make big mistakes and not be incredibly successful in the eyes of colonized white society. Our ideas of success are going to be very different. Change those metrics and standards which are rooted in white supremacy and keep people in bondage. Give dollars back to communities of color and let them go and see what kind of beautiful things can happen. Participants believed including diverse communities perspectives and ideas on health, wellness, and housing could promote the future prosperity of all through planning and the built environment.

Many spoke to the unoccupied spaces in the downtown area. One participant spoke about the importance of developing a plan that came up with new ways of renovating these spaces. “Bring voices that have not traditionally been involved in those

“I THINK IF SEATTLE CAN HAVE A VISION AND UNDERSTAND THE OPPORTUNITY, WE CAN TEACH THE REST OF THE COUNTRY AND EVEN THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY WHAT A NEW DOWNTOWN COULD LOOK LIKE AND WHAT IT IS AND HOW IT COULD REALLY MEET THE NEEDS OF EVERYONE, NOT JUST THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY AND PEOPLE RICH ENOUGH TO LIVE IN THE DOWNTOWN.”

planning spaces. What can you imagine in the space? How can we understand new ways of housing?”

Many discussed the Pioneer Square area. One spoke about the negatives to centralizing services for the unhoused all in one neighborhood because the need is throughout the city. It’s also challenging because the area lacks other services to support this group. Diversification of the neighborhood through businesses, companies, shopping, commerce, and groceries would better support the unhoused and encourage more residents and businesses in the area. One said the area wasn’t very “family friendly,” but was hopeful that a new childcare program would encourage people to return to the area which would help the neighborhood.

Other innovative ideas participants suggested were an Indigenous transportation system and expanding PDA. Two participants spoke about the ways a PDAs, or public development authorities, hinders development and expansion of services. Another idea includes developing a marina at Duwamish, Shilshoe, or Elliot Bay because the current marina has problems servicing the fleet the size that it is.



PROGRAMMING

Participants also spoke about expanding or developing programming to support a vibrant, resilient, and equitable Indigenous community in the downtown area.

One area multiple participants discussed was the need for more youth programming. One discussed bringing local Indigenous youth living on reservations into Seattle to take part in programming that city organizations offer or participating in summer programs. They also suggested offering programs where youth and Elders could travel to historical sites and youth could share stories and learn Indigenous history from Elders. They could also work to develop traditional stories and history into plays and audio recordings. Another suggested expanding youth programming on the environment that was credit-bearing and provided job shadowing in the hopes of connecting them with life experience and possibly college degrees. One stressed the importance of youth having real-life experiences around climate change in order to better advocate when put in leadership positions later. These programs could also help leverage both traditional knowledge and western science, but they need to ensure that collaborations are handled respectfully and adequately compensate Indigenous participants. “Okay, that’s it and everything else is gone [climate change’s impact on fishing]. That’s it and we’re not going to let it die, but we need help. And we need not only help with funding, we need help to get our people out there to comprehend and understand what is going on.

“I FEEL LIKE THIS CITY CAN LEARN A LOT IF INDIAN COUNTRY PULLED TOGETHER TO ADDRESS THINGS LIKE HOUSING INSECURITY, FOOD INSECURITY, AND TRANSPORTATION NEEDS.”

“THESE KIDS ARE GOING TO BE SITTING IN FRONT OF FUTURE PRESIDENTS AND CONGRESSMAN. THEY NEED TO KNOW WHAT THEY’RE THINKING. IF YOU DON’T HAVE EXPERIENCES OR JUST BEING THERE [OUT ON THE LAND AND WATERWAYS] AND SEEING THE CHANGE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE, YOU WON’T BE A GOOD POLICYMAKER.”

The science of today needs to be meshing with our Traditional Ecological Knowledge. They want all of our knowledge, but they don’t want to support a life of dignity for our fishers.”

Another talked about the risk of starting business for many Indigenous people. Many Indigenous people are scared to start a business because they need capital and have come from poverty and it’s a big risk, it could put you back into poverty or homelessness.



PANDEMIC

Many spoke of the ways the downtown area was “suffering” due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the abundance of empty commercial space. One respondent thought that the lack of a workforce in-office downtown impacted economic development in the neighborhood.

Many pointed to the ways Indigenous communities were resilient throughout the pandemic. One believed it was because “we’ve been without for so long.” One attributed the quick and effective response came from a real fear of “losing Elders, relatives, loved ones. It sparked a remembrance of our resiliency in the downtown space.” Another believed it was time to shift energy from just surviving to thriving, “We were resilient because it was necessary-survivor mode. Next movement is about prosperity and business opportunities.”

Many believed that partnering and looking to people and organizations could help move the downtown area to a new future. “Indigenous people need to take control of the narrative of what a downtown should be in order to move towards a future post pandemic. “There’s a desire for downtown to be what it was before the pandemic, but the reality is, is that we need to be clear that I don’t think that’s ever going to come back and I think that’s ok. I think that downtown Seattle was not always great for Native people and Native businesses.”

“WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT RESILIENCY, I THINK ABOUT NATIVE PEOPLE. WE HAVE EXHIBITED THAT DOWNTOWN THROUGHOUT THE PANDEMIC.”



CONSERVATION

“HE’S CONSTANTLY CONCERNED ABOUT A LIFETIME OF WHAT IT MEANS IF I’M PULLING A NET UP ON MY BODY OVER AND OVER AND OVER AGAIN, THAT’S JUST BEEN DREDGED IN TOXINS.”

When asked about what would make a vibrant, resilient, and equitable downtown area, many spoke about the importance of protecting our land and waters. One spoke of the impacts climate change has had on increased water temperatures, lower oxygen in the water, increased flooding, higher water levels, and concerns for properties along the shoreline.

They also spoke of the impacts of pollution on land, water, fish, and tribal fishers. For example the way barges contaminate the water and the lack of response, “But there’s several times that this whole dock will be encased in oil. And it would be an environmental call and someone would have to come try and clean it up. If it gets as bad as it seems on some days, and it just gets ignored. And then it gets on the rocks. The low tide gets it on the rocks and it washes off.” The impacts of pollution also impacts the fish runs. Streams the Coho travel through the west channel. “As soon as they go in that drain they roll over and die. It’s the runoff as soon as it rains. All the poisons and stuff. It’s amazing what percentage of fish run through a little stream. How it represents the overall system. It can be a good number.” They also spoke of the environmental impact of Pier 91 development and Elliot Bay Marina on the kelp and salmon run and the expansion of commercial fishing and recreational boating. The population increase in Seattle also impacts sewage and water quality. More vehicles, concerts, and action along the waterfront also negatively affects the water and land quality and harms tribal fishers. “And they’re not very good

about telling everyone, hey there’s a fishery.”

The pollution impacts tribal fishers as well. The contaminants in the water affect their health who also bring it home to their families and children.

Suggestions of ways to better combat these issues were programs that protected steelhead, designating areas along the Duwamish as Superfund Sites to open up EPA funding opportunities, increasing plant filtration and protecting and creating more kelp, increasing habitat restoration efforts including protecting plants and planting cedars along the shoreline, creating studies to examine the impact of ships on kelp and including Indigenous youth so they can gain firsthand experiences with the impacts of climate change, practice collecting data, and use the data in educational programs to pursue degrees. Another idea was developing an educational curriculum on water and shoreline restoration, educating commercial and recreational boaters as well as the coast guard on fishing and treaty rights to combat people running through nets and harassing tribal fishers by sports fishermen.

“I DON’T KNOW. I LOOK AT THE CITY AND WHEN YOU TALK ABOUT RESILIENCY, AND IT’S GOT TO BE A PLACE THAT PEOPLE FEEL SAFE TO WALK. IT’S GOT TO BE A PLACE OF BEAUTY. IT’S GOT TO BE A PLACE WHERE WE’RE PROUD.



SAFETY

Many spoke about the importance of addressing safety issues in order to support a vibrant, resilient, and equitable Indigenous community downtown. One noted that if you push crime out of one area, it ends up somewhere else. Another noted that the increase in empty buildings and revolving businesses created less consumers, taxpayers, and taxpaying businesses. They believed this contributed to an increase in violence, and boat, trailer and fence damage. Another noted that an influx of tribal fishers unloading at the same time with limited space is also a safety concern. They also noted an increase in frequency of boats running through tribal fisher's nets.

The unhoused was another popular theme among participants. One noted that the issues downtown also impacted neighboring reservations as well. They believed some of the illegal activity that some unhoused engaged in was brought back to the reservation. One noted some camps had built an economy of sex work, drugs, wire stripping, and boat and bike theft and believed the city should have a heavier hand when crimes or activity interfered with the local economy. Others felt like the city should do more to support the unhoused and have seen a lack of adequate support, service, and mental health dollars since the 80's. Though participants had varying viewpoints on the best response to the unhoused population. Many recognized it was a persistent

issue that impacted a vibrant, resilient, and equitable Seattle area for Indigenous people. One spoke very powerfully about the psychological impact of existing in this way and the lack of response by both the city and individuals. "They say, one of the worst things about being homeless is the cloak of invisibility that society puts on you. They walk by you and don't even notice you. Don't even notice your existence, your presence. Don't want to look at you. Don't want to acknowledge you and so it's very lonely and isolating."

Another theme was law enforcement. Some saw a lack of police presence and support on Puget Sound to support tribal fishers, "They're focused on the lake. They won't come out and respond or help at all. You get no help. You're just literally out there alone. The only other people that help are other fishermen that will come by and you know, or chase them [people who run through tribal fisher's nets] down and scream at them. It's insane." A tribal nation lost a tribal fisher and felt there was little support from the city on search and rescue efforts. It took law enforcement 48 hours for someone to finally arrive. These sentiments reflect larger systemic issues and concerns around the missing and murdered Indigenous men and women epidemic. One participant noted the lack of law enforcement support aligning with the increase in the fish run and fleet. Another felt there needed to be further discussions and clarification around jurisdiction. They felt tribal needs were not a priority and there was little communication.

"WE WERE THERE WHEN KING COUNTY CAME UP AND CAME OUT FOR A WHILE. AND THEY SAID THEY'D BE BACK AND THEN THAT WAS LIKE THREE OR FOUR DAYS LATER...FISHERMAN WERE DRAGGING NETS TRYING TO HELP FIND THE BODY...HARBOR PATROL, COAST GUARD, SEATTLE POLICE AND FIRE, NO ONE HAD THE TIME."



7 GENERATIONS

Many emphasized the importance of thinking seven generations ahead and focusing on sustainability to ensure a resilient, vibrant, and equitable downtown Seattle for future generations. They stressed the necessity of organizations accessing resources for continued financial sustainability and building generational wealth to ensure their organization and ultimately community's resilience and stability for years into the future. They recognized a need to mobilize people and resources, but noted the difficulty of the constant stream of new nonprofits popping up as opposed to working together to build upon the strengths and organizations that already exist. This phenomenon contributed to a scarcity mindset around resources. Some brought up ideas of trying to create ways for passive income like parking lots. One encouraged organizations to "think more like a business," and organize community hedge funds, consider economic development opportunities, and develop a social enterprise incubator. Another suggested neighboring tribes consolidate tribal giving to push into one cause.

"We're
not going
anywhere."

HONORING TREATIES

Finally, one participant discussed that they felt state institutions weren't honoring the rights of Indigenous nations. They were overstepping sovereignty by shutting down tribal fishing or trying to collect taxes on activities related to fishing. "They don't honor the treaties." These comments show that there is further work to do to ensure tribal sovereignty and rights are maintained and protected into the future.

"No one in the office understands that we think generationally, right? We're thinking the next seven gens, right? What are they going to be up against? What are they going to be facing? How do we get them prepared for that? Hard concept for the office to understand. So I'm trying to. Well that's because we're here in perpetuity. We need to explain to people we're not going anywhere. You think about seven generations, because we're just not going anywhere. We're just like that mountain up there. You're not digging it up and moving it. Yeah, it's been here for 1000s of year. So are our people. We're not going anywhere."



RECOMMENDATIONS

◀ RECLAIMING SPACE

Consider the original architecture, plan, and landscape as a roadmap for future development.

Increase Indigenous representation in art, built environment, and design in the downtown subarea.

Involve Indigenous people in the design process and construction opportunities, including projects like the waterfront revitalization.

Make the city more welcoming for Indigenous people through intentional design elements like seating and green spaces.

◀ RECLAIMING NARRATIVES

Promote accurate Native narratives and histories through public campaigns, signage, storytelling, and educational materials.

Ensure Indigenous visibility in public spaces and partnerships with organizations like sports teams to foster awareness.

Provide accurate historical education for city government employees.

◀ WORKING TOGETHER

Strengthen partnerships between Native organizations, treaty tribes, neighboring tribes, and city government.

Ensure genuine collaboration and support from the city rather than token gestures.

Transfer resources and power to support equity and Indigenous initiatives.

◀ PLANNING

Develop a long-term city plan with input from city Indigenous organizations and local tribal nations.

Address foundational issues like transportation to enable future initiatives.

Encourage innovative approaches to housing and zoning regulations to support Indigenous communities.

◀ INNOVATION

Encourage innovation to address pressing needs in the city and remove restrictive systems.

Support diverse community perspectives and ideas, particularly from communities of color, in city planning efforts.



◀ PROGRAMMING

Expand youth programming to include cultural education, environmental awareness, and job opportunities.

Support Indigenous entrepreneurship with access to capital and resources.

◀ PANDEMIC RESPONSE

Partner with Indigenous people and organizations to shape the future of downtown post-pandemic.

Acknowledge that the pre-pandemic state of downtown was not always beneficial for Indigenous communities.

◀ CONSERVATION

Prioritize protecting land and waters to combat climate change and pollution.

Implement programs for habitat restoration, pollution control, and environmental education.

◀ SAFETY

Address safety issues downtown, including crime, homelessness, and law enforcement support.

◀ THINKING SEVEN GENERATIONS AHEAD

Emphasize sustainability and building generational wealth to ensure community resilience.

Encourage collaboration among organizations to maximize resources and impact.

◀ HONORING TREATIES

Ensure state institutions respect and honor Indigenous sovereignty and treaty rights.

Implementing these recommendations can contribute to a more vibrant, resilient, and equitable downtown Seattle for Indigenous communities and all residents.



CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

The team conducted five interviews of seven participants, which is a small sample size.

The interviews were conducted by two Muckleshoot Tribal Members and the conversation centered on the downtown area which is the usual and accustomed land of the Muckleshoot people. Our positionality as Muckleshoot people conducting interviews regarding our U and A could consciously or subconsciously impact respondents' responses to interview questions.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings from our discussions draw strong parallels to Indigenous Planning Values and Guiding Principles outlined in the Indigenous Inclusivity Guide. Those include relationality, respect, reciprocity and responsibility. In our comprehensive examination, strategies for reclaiming space, narratives, and fostering collaboration in downtown Seattle present a compelling roadmap for a future that is more vibrant, resilient, and equitable. The recommendations outlined provide a framework for not only honoring Indigenous histories and cultures but also for building stronger, more resilient communities that benefit all residents of Seattle.

One of the key themes that emerged from the findings is the importance of centering Indigenous perspectives in the planning, design, and development of the downtown area. By increasing Indigenous representation in art, architecture, and design, and involving Indigenous peoples in the decision-making process, the city can begin to undo the erasure of Indigenous voices and reclaim space that has been historically marginalized. Through intentional design elements such as seating and green spaces, the city can also create a more welcoming environment for Indigenous peoples, fostering a sense of belonging and connection to place.

Furthermore, promoting accurate Native narratives

and histories through public campaigns, signage, storytelling, and educational materials is essential for challenging stereotypes and misconceptions about Indigenous peoples. By ensuring Indigenous visibility in public spaces and partnerships with organizations, the city can foster greater awareness and understanding of Indigenous cultures and histories among residents and visitors alike. Providing accurate historical education for city government employees is also crucial for promoting cultural competence and fostering respectful relationships with Indigenous communities.

Building genuine partnerships between Native organizations, treaty tribes, neighboring tribes, and city government is essential for ensuring that Indigenous voices are heard and respected in decision-making processes. This requires not only token gestures, but also the transfer of resources and power to support equity and Indigenous initiatives. By developing a long-term city plan with input from Indigenous organizations and tribal nations, addressing foundational issues like transportation, housing, and zoning regulations, the city can begin to address systemic barriers to Indigenous communities' well-being and prosperity.

Encouraging innovation and creativity in addressing pressing needs in the city, such as safety, pandemic response, and conservation, is essential for building a more resilient and sustainable downtown. By supporting diverse community perspectives and ideas, particularly from communities of color, the city can harness the collective wisdom and expertise of its residents to create innovative solutions that benefit everyone.



Expanding youth programming to include cultural education, environmental awareness, and job opportunities, and supporting Indigenous entrepreneurship with access to capital and resources are critical for building generational wealth and ensuring community resilience. Prioritizing the protection of land and waters to combat climate change and pollution, addressing safety issues downtown, and honoring treaties are also essential for building a more vibrant and equitable downtown Seattle for Indigenous communities and all residents. In conclusion, implementing these recommendations will require sustained commitment, collaboration, and resources from city government, Indigenous organizations, tribal nations, and community stakeholders. However, the potential benefits are significant—a downtown that is not only more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable but also more vibrant, resilient, and culturally rich. By reclaiming space, narratives, and fostering collaboration, downtown Seattle can truly become a place where Indigenous peoples thrive and all residents feel a sense of belonging and connection to their community.

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ENVISIONING AN INDIGENOUS DOWNTOWN SEATTLE



BY
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TAHOMA PEAK
SOLUTIONS

Housing Innovations Technical Report

Date: December 19, 2025

Prepared for: Seattle Downtown Regional
Center Plan

Prepared by: Seva Workshop

Existing Conditions: Housing Study

DOWNTOWN REGIONAL CENTER PLAN | OCTOBER 2024

PREPARED BY: SEVA WORKSHOP

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INTRODUCTION

Downtown Seattle is the workplace for 188,000 employees from across the region and, in recent decades, has expanded its role as a residential center as well. Today, Downtown is home to more than 47,000 residents (2023), and the 2024 One Seattle Comprehensive Plan anticipates that Downtown will become the city’s largest residential center by 2044.¹ This transition from a commercial center to a thriving mixed-use heart for the region means that Downtown neighborhoods need to adapt their infrastructure, policies, and institutions to better support residents alongside workers.

Public engagement from this Regional Center planning process has revealed that housing unaffordability is one of the biggest challenges facing the Downtown community, and many current residents are at risk of displacement. Some Seattleites are reluctant to consider living Downtown due to safety concerns, poor overall neighborhood quality, and a lack of nearby services for families. Local developers in the project’s stakeholder outreach series also identified barriers to residential projects Downtown, with the high costs of land acquisition and development making building anything other than luxury housing Downtown seem unrealistic in the current financial climate.

Today, 7% of Downtown households are considered low-income, 9% very low-income, and 24% extremely low-income. In addition, 34% of all households—regardless of income bracket—are cost burdened from housing.² Development costs are passed down to residents, so high acquisition and construction costs result in homes with high rent or sale prices. By investing in more housing options Downtown, the City of Seattle wants to expand affordable housing choices for current and future residents and ensure that the Downtown community is an epicenter of diversity in the region.

Living Downtown is a lifestyle choice and the residential population of Seattle’s Downtown has increased significantly in recent decades.³ This study explores three housing types that reflect community needs but are not found in the current pipeline of market-rate development for the area. Because these types typically require substantial subsidy or incentives to attain feasibility, the report also explores various

¹ OFM Population Estimates, 2023; Draft “One Seattle Comprehensive Plan, 2024.

² HUD data, 2016-2020. Low-income households are those with incomes $> 50\% \leq 80\%$ HAMFI (HUD-Area Median Family Income), Very low-income households are $> 30\% \leq 50\%$ HAMFI, and Extremely low-income households are $\leq 30\%$ HAMFI. Cost burdened is defined as spending 30% or more of household income toward housing costs.

³ See the Downtown Land Use report for figures, 35% increase in housing units across 7 years.

supports that could be provided by public agencies and community partners could provide to achieve the vision of a more inclusive Downtown.

Downtown neighborhoods hold valuable potential to meet future decades' housing needs. Current zoning allows for concentrated development that meet growth targets, but financial barriers and supportive neighborhood investments are needed to round out a vision of Downtown as a fully mixed-use center, offering a high quality of life to all current and future residents.

This study uses case study research and interviews to demonstrate the creative structures that can diversify and expand housing in Downtown Seattle. The three types of housing explored in this report are:

- 1) High Density Multifamily Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)
- 2) Live/Work Units in a Historic District
- 3) Midrise Multifamily for Multigenerational Living

Project Interviews

The individuals listed below participated in interviews with Seva Workshop staff to better explain their projects, challenges, and potential connections to the Downtown Regional Center Plan. Their comments are integrated throughout this report, and we thank them for their valuable insights.

- Kaitlin Boyce, Associate Principal at Spectrum Development Solutions
- Grace Kim, Principal at Schemata Workshop
- Wendy Holmes and Jessi Fett at Artspace
- Wendy Gilmore, Office Manager and Resident at Project Artaud

Policy Landscape

The below policies summarize the most recent and relevant policy updates in Seattle, relevant to housing development Downtown.

City Ordinance 126854 – Shortening Design Review Process for Affordable Housing

In July 2023, the Seattle City Council approved legislation to streamline the Design Review process and reduce the amount of time it takes for new affordable housing projects to get approved. Developers who comply with the Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) performance option of building affordable units onsite can choose

the shorter Administrative Design Review rather than the full Design Review.⁴ This policy was in place during the pandemic and proved successful at reducing barriers to building affordable housing, and this ordinance extended the policy for another two years.

In the Washington State Legislature, two bills passed that complement the city ordinance. HB 1293 shortens design review processes statewide and SB 5412 exempts new housing from the SEPA process. The Mayor’s Office estimates that these policies combined could save affordable housing developers 12-15 months of regulatory process time.⁵

City Ordinance 126917 – 3rd Ave Residential Upzoning

In October 2023, the Seattle City Council changed zoning along a portion of 3rd Avenue from Downtown Retail Core (DRC) to Downtown Mixed Commercial (DMC) to encourage more residential units.⁶ The changes apply to 11 parcels along 3rd Avenue between Stewart and Union Streets, as shown in Exhibit 1. Under the new zoning, buildings that were previously limited to 170 feet tall now have a maximum height limit of up to 440 feet, as shown in Exhibit 2. The area is subject to MHA requirements, so any commercial or residential development built will need to include affordable units (performance option) or contribute to the City’s fund to build affordable housing citywide (payment option).

The goals of the rezone are to encourage more high-rise development and incentivize a new school Downtown.⁷ Building an elementary school Downtown has been a topic of conversation for years, but recent budget shortages and school closures may delay this vision. However, the rezone could allow for the future potential for a school thanks to podium height and residential tower height bonuses.

⁴ [CB 126854](#), July 2023

⁵ [Housen, Jamie, “Mayor Harrell Advances Design Review Process Changes to Boost Long-Term Production of Affordable Housing.” Office of the Mayor, 2023.](#)

⁶ [CB 120632](#), September 2023

⁷ [Trumm, Doug, “Seattle Council Approves Batch of Harrell’s Downtown Activation Plan Rezones.” The Urbanist, 2023.](#)

Exhibit 1: Downtown Rezone Allows for More Housing



Image source: The Seattle Times, from Seattle OPCD, 2023.

Exhibit 2: Zoning Change Comparison

<p>Existing DRC 85-170</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 170' maximum • 6 maximum commercial FAR • Street level active uses • Typically mid-scale mixed use buildings 	<p>Proposed DMC 240/290-440</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 440' maximum • 8 maximum commercial FAR • Street level active uses • Typically tall, slender floorplate residential towers. • Examples in Belltown and Denny Triangle 	
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Image Source: The Urbanist, 2023.

City Ordinance 127054 – Office-to-residential Conversion

In July 2024, the Seattle City Council approved legislation to support the conversion of existing office buildings to residential use. Downtown Seattle has experienced high vacancy rates, estimated at 25.6% in the fourth quarter of 2023, and this legislation reduces regulatory barriers in hopes of creating more housing in currently vacant office space.⁸

This new legislation applies in all Downtown zones, all Commercial (C) and Neighborhood Commercial (NC) zones, and all Seattle Mixed (SM) zones. To encourage development, conversion projects are exempt from Design Review standards and MHA requirements. The ordinance language anticipates that 12 projects will be converted into housing Downtown over the next seven years; the City will monitor their success and consider adjustments or expansions to the program, as appropriate.⁹

TYPE 1: HIGH-DENSITY MULTIFAMILY TOD

This project type addresses the need for additional family-oriented housing Downtown. These units should aim to hit a range of affordability levels and are most likely to be rentals, although a mix of ownership and rental projects could be beneficial. Integration of mixed uses would also allow for maximized community benefit. Implementation of projects that meet this description would be expected at light rail station areas or along the 3rd Avenue bus corridor.

Key Characteristics:

- High-rise multifamily project near a Downtown transit hub
- Inclusive of larger units, with at least 2 or 3 bedrooms
- Example residents: Family who wants a car-free lifestyle with access to Downtown’s employment opportunities and urban amenities

Case study examples:

- Orenda at Othello Square
- Station House in Capitol Hill

⁸ Office Vacancy Rate from [Colliers Seattle Office Report](#), Q4 2023

⁹ [CB 120761](#), July 2024

Case Study 1.1: Orenda at Othello Square



Completed
in 2021



176 rental units
40% income-restricted



49,000 SF
Healthcare/Childcare



Image Source: Spectrum Development Solutions

Project Description

Orenda at Othello Square is a mixed-use, mixed-income TOD building near the Othello light rail station in South Seattle. Orenda offers 176 rental units across seven floors that range from studios to 3-bedroom apartments, accommodating a range of family sizes. Seventy-two units are affordable for households between 65-80% AMI and will remain affordable for at least 20 years, made possible through the Multifamily Tax Exemption (MFTE) and an impact equity investment from Seattle Children’s Hospital.

The project was partially financed through a HUD 221(d)(4) loan program which offers a 40-year fixed-rate loan that bridges from construction through occupancy.¹⁰ Traditionally, construction loans convert to permanent financing, so this HUD loan was essential for securing a guaranteed long-term repayment rate from the onset of the project. This ended up having an outsized benefit for project finances, given the fluctuation in interest rates that happened between 2021 and 2023.

The building’s development was part of a master planning process for the Othello station area which has included extensive community engagement. Community feedback led to the inclusion of more family-sized units and a suite of amenities in this project and on adjacent sites that offer supportive services for youth. The ground floor of this building houses the Odessa Brown Children’s Clinic, part of the Seattle Children’s network of providers. It includes both a primary care clinic and a dental office. There is also a Tiny Tots childcare center offering onsite daycare for residents or employees. Next to the Orenda site is the Salish Sea Elementary School, which opened in 2021.

Challenges and Takeaways:

In our interview, Spectrum Development Solutions identified several project challenges for this unique development:

- **Mixed-use properties present unique complexities in design and operation.** This project has experienced extra challenges with maintaining safe and convenient access for both residents and the healthcare/childcare uses. Fire separation between these uses is also an issue, and there has been at least one instance where a small kitchen fire in a residential unit led to sprinkler deployment in the clinic, causing damage to expensive medical equipment. Another area of conflict has been parking – securing spaces that meet the needs of both tenants and employees required extra negotiations and trial and error to establish a workable routine. **Spectrum notes that a key to the project’s ongoing success was a lengthy but clear delineation of ownership and**

¹⁰ https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/housing/mfh/progdesc/rentcoophsg221d3n4

responsibilities between the building owners and commercial space owners (Seattle Children’s) at the project’s onset.

- **Inclusion of larger rental units does not ensure that families will occupy them.** Fair housing laws restrict how much a building’s owner can “choose” their tenants, provided the applicant meets qualifications. Despite affirmative marketing campaigns and the inclusion of family-oriented amenities, Spectrum notes that many of their larger units are occupied by adult roommates rather than families with children. They report some success with the vision that employees at the healthcare clinic could live in the building. **The units are still meeting a need for housing that exists in the community, but it isn’t precisely matching the intention of the build.**
- **The property was built as part of a master planned development site, but other projects from the coordinated vision are stalled.** The Orenda project was intended to couple with the school site (built), an “Opportunity Center” combining community serving commercial space and affordable rental units (stalled), an affordable homeownership project (stalled), and a shared plaza for community gathering (stalled).¹¹ The construction timeline for the unrealized buildings in the development is unclear at the time of this report due to administrative complications, environmental cleanup, and pandemic cost increases,¹² leaving the residents of Orenda on a block that feels unfinished for the foreseeable future. HomeSight reports that financing challenges have also contributed to their delay, as appetite for risk associated with unconventional project profiles impacted their plans during the pandemic. They have restructured the financing plans and continue moving forward but have also found the HUD financing partnership to be administratively onerous. **Monthly meetings between these development partners continue, but ultimately the owners of Orenda do not have the power to realize the full vision of the site.**

¹¹ [Homesight, “Othello Square,” 2024.](#)

¹² [South Seattle Emerald, 2021.](#)

Case Study 1.2: Station House in Capitol Hill



Completed
in 2020



110 rental units
100% income-restricted



Offers a 1,400-square-foot
community room for rent



Image Source: Community Roots Housing

Project Description

Station House is an affordable housing development directly adjacent to the Capitol Hill light rail station. Spread across seven floors, all 110 units are affordable to households with incomes of 30-60% AMI and range in size from studios to 3-bedroom apartments. Sound Transit sold land adjacent to the station to Community Roots Housing, a local affordable housing developer. Residents enjoy direct access to the light rail, along with shared amenities such as a rooftop lounge, BBQ space, garden area/pea patch, bike storage, and 1,400 square foot ground level community room.

“In Seattle, low-wage workers and communities of color are pushed out to suburbs where bus service is often reliable and infrequent. They’re forced to absorb the costs of car ownership, or they have to spend hours commuting to work by transit. That’s why we need transit agencies like Sound Transit to do everything in their power to site affordable housing near transit hubs.” - Katie Wilson, General Secretary of the Transit Riders Union¹³

The collection of four TOD buildings around the station, including Station House, were funded through the Seattle Housing Levy (\$8.7 million), King County (\$4.7 million for construction), and pre-development funding from Impact Capital and KeyBank.¹⁴ While this building is not mixed use in its program, it is located directly adjacent to many commercial spaces offering walkability to restaurants and grocery stores for tenants.

Challenges and Takeaways:

- **Capitol Hill’s station area development process led to the development of Washington’s 80-80-80 policy, which requires transit agencies to support affordable housing development at new station areas by land donation.**¹⁵ For Station House, Community Roots Housing purchase land without discount, although it can be noted that the market-rate developers for Connection on Broadway (the remaining 3 of 4 TOD sites in Capitol Hill) were only offered land leases rather than an option to purchase. Today, Sound Transit must transfer 80% of land used for light rail construction staging to developers who will make at least 80% of new units on the TOD site affordable to households at or below 80% AMI. **With this policy in place the potential/tentative new light rail stations from the Ballard Link Extension project proposed in Denny, the CID, and Midtown will result in significant affordable housing development and offer the opportunity for a coordinated station area program.**¹⁶

¹³ [“This Seattle Affordable Housing Project Is a Transit Rider’s Dream,”](#) July 2021

¹⁴ [Edlen & Co., “Capitol Hill Station Development,”](#) 2021.

¹⁵ [RCW 81.112.350](#)

¹⁶ <https://www.soundtransit.org/system-expansion/ballard-link-extension>

- **Schemata staff echoed concerns heard from the Orenda project, that larger unit sizes do not guarantee family tenants.** As experienced in Othello, the 3-bedroom units in Station House, though very popular, are often occupied by individuals living as roommates rather than the intended family occupants. Schemata staff also mentioned that the use of units as short-term rentals (e.g. Airbnb) has been a concern. Lease agreements should cite the Seattle regulations for short-term rentals, which restrict operators to a maximum of two properties if one is their primary residence. **Ensuring affordable housing units relieve cost burden for low-income households should be the top priority for unit design and lease structure, regardless of the makeup of the household(s) in the unit.**

TYPE 2: LIVE/WORK UNITS IN A HISTORIC DISTRICT

Downtown neighborhoods like Pioneer Square and the CID have galleries and creative space centered around the arts, but affordable housing is scarce. Live/work units provide flexible and affordable space for artists to support their livelihoods and build community with other artists. This section describes examples of live/work developments in historic districts, taking into account building retrofits and historic preservation regulations.

Key Characteristics:

- Adaptive reuse of an existing historic building for a residential purpose, with a focus on either Pioneer Square or the CID
- Units are designed as live/work spaces for artists
- Example residents: a local artist with a child and partner who shows in multiple nearby galleries and teaches at Pratt

Case study examples:

- Tashiro Kaplan Artist Lofts in Pioneer Square
- Project Artaud in San Francisco

Case Study 2.1: Tashiro Kaplan Artist Lofts in Pioneer Square



Completed
in 2004



50 live/work rental units
100% income-restricted



28 commercial arts-related
entities on ground floor



Tashiro-Kaplan building in early 1900s
Image source: Artspace, 2024.



Present-day building with 6 stories of
housing for artists and their families,
gallery space, and studios.
Image source: Art&Seek, 2014.

Project Description

The Tashiro Kaplan Artist Lofts houses 50 artists and their families in the historic district of Pioneer Square. The building was previously two separate structures and was formerly occupied by a hardware shop, farmers market, social services, and was used as a staging ground for the 3rd Ave bus tunnel. Community activism and an initiative of the City of Seattle Office of Planning and Community Development led to the site’s redevelopment as a 6-story building with 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom units. The project was designed to address an identified need to preserve housing Downtown for the artist community.

Given the site’s age, the conversion to housing included upgraded ADA accessibility, seismic retrofits, and life safety systems. Following historic preservation regulations, the bronze pivot windows, stucco beams, and columns of the original façade were replicated with modern materials to mimic the original external aesthetics.¹⁷ All 50 units are income-restricted affordable housing, available to households with incomes of 30-60% AMI. When prospective renters apply for housing, they are asked to describe their art form, identify how this type of live/work space would benefit their practice, and confirm expectations about common living and shared areas. This process allows the building to maintain its preference for artist tenants. On the ground floor, 28 commercial arts-related entities operate, including 15 independent galleries. Many of the galleries are open to the public on certain days and participate in the First Thursday Art Walk in Pioneer Square every month, providing cultural anchors for the arts community and visitors alike.

“Artists stabilize neighborhoods, add people on the street—a huge public safety factor—and bring in new businesses to cater to those artists and the visitors they attract. There’s growing awareness nationally of the ways in which artists make neighborhoods vibrant.”
- Jim Kelley, former Executive Director of 4Culture¹⁸

The Tashiro Kaplan Artist Lofts project was developed by Artspace, an organization whose mission is to “create, foster, and preserve space for the creative sector.” They respond to community requests for project support in 23 states across the country. Outside of Minneapolis, where Artspace is headquartered, all units are rentals. In addition to creating affordable housing, they provide technical assistance and help artists fill out paperwork, a burden common to artists because of their varied sources of income. Their work is grassroots-oriented – they operate in communities where they are invited rather than seeking out properties for redevelopment.

¹⁷ [Berkman, Madeline, *The Tashiro Kaplan Building: A Case Study*, 2021.](#)

¹⁸ [Lefevre, Camille, “Is affordable artist live/work housing the new normal?”, 2016](#)

Artspace leverages a range of funding sources and incentive programs to make their projects feasible. While not all were used in the Tashiro development, funding sources that can be used for live/work developments include the Washington State Department of Commerce Housing Trust Fund and their HOME Rental Development Program, City and County Economic Development Funds, Federal Home Loan Banks, LIHTC, Tax Increment Financing, and Historic Tax Credits (for historic buildings). Philanthropic funding sources contributed 5-15% of project costs and include 4Culture, Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, Building for the Arts, Raynier Institute & Foundation, Seattle Foundation, South Downtown Foundation, U.S. Bancorp Foundation, and Washington Mutual Foundation.¹⁹

Challenges and Takeaways:

- **Land acquisition costs is a key barrier to development in high-cost markets like Downtown Seattle.** Artspace staff note that land donation or discounted transfers is key to their work in expensive areas, and this was integral for the Tashiro project.²⁰ This concept is reflected in workforce housing projects, when employers will secure housing for their employees at rates that are better matched to their income than can be found in private markets. A development in Downtown Denver is spearheading an urban model for this concept, pairing a large commercial office site with income-restricted workforce housing on a centrally located Downtown site.²¹ **Creative development models provide inspiration for offering permanently affordable housing for specific groups, like artists.**
- **Federal legislation has paved the way to make artist-specific housing possible.** Fair housing legislation restricts a building owner from discriminating against tenants based on a number of factors, such as race and disability status. A special exception, however, has been included in this policy language that allows for projects to have a special focus on creative sectors. Section 42 of the U.S. Tax Code states that “a project does not fail to meet the general public use requirement solely because of occupancy restrictions or preferences that favor tenants who are involved in artistic or literary activities.”²² **Because of this exemption, it is legal to give housing preference to people who take part in creative pursuits.**

¹⁹ [Artspace, Tashiro Kaplan Artist Lofts, 2024.](#)

²⁰ King County previously owned the property site and sold it to Artspace for \$1.2 million, despite valuation for \$3 million at the time.

²¹ <https://www.denverurbanspectrum.com/2024/07/31/new-workforce-housing-development-coming-to-downtown-denver/>

²² [Cornell Law School, U.S. Tax Code, 2024.](#)

Case Study 2.2: Project Artaud in San Francisco



Completed
in 1971



79 live/work
rental units



4 performance spaces and
10 creative non-profits on-site



American Can Company factory in 1929
Image source: San Francisco Public Library



Present-day Project Artaud
Image source: Project Artaud

Project Description

Project Artaud is San Francisco’s first live/work project, developed in the city’s Mission District in the historic American Can Company factory building, now home to over 100 artists of all disciplines. The core of Project Artaud’s identity originated in the theater community, but now has equal representation from all the arts. The 79 live/work units occupy 3 floors of the historic and commercial space is occupied by performance and rehearsal spaces, as well as a flexible space for short- and long-term artistic residencies. The residential units are priced well below market rate, but renting at Project Artaud is not income restricted.

A non-profit organization, also called Project Artaud, runs the building and raises money through grants, member dues, and rental income. The building itself was originally purchased through a loan made possible by a down payment from a private individual, which Project Artaud paid off over the course of a decade. Building management is composed of a board of directors who also live in the building. Member dues create a self-sustaining model where residents contribute to a fund to cover general expenses. Decisions are built on consensus, with changes to bylaws and house rules determined by a collective vote.

Because Project Artaud is resident-driven, there are many admin and maintenance tasks that resident volunteers take on. Rents in the building are about one quarter to one half of neighboring rates for comparable unit sizes because residents do most of the building upkeep themselves.

“Giving people agency and control over their lives makes them more invested.”
- Wendy Gilmore, office manager and resident at Project Artaud

A unique aspect of Project Artaud’s financials is the passing along of home repair costs to the next tenant. Residents are not able to make money from improving their unit, but they can recoup the costs. If a resident replaces a toilet, for example, they pay out of pocket and get reimbursed by the incoming tenant for the toilet when they leave. As such, each unit is unique in its design and price, based upon the previous tenants’ upgrades.

As a non-profit, Project Artaud is allowed to host income-generating activities in its building, so they rent out four performing arts spaces and a sculpture studio to non-residents. They offer short and long-term residencies for these spaces, which individuals and partner organizations use for studio space, shows, workshops, and events. Rents here are higher than in the residential spaces, yet not as high as prevailing market rates in San Francisco in keeping with their mission to serve the arts

community. This expands the ways in which the building offers community benefits and acts as a creative stronghold in the neighborhood.

Challenges and Takeaways:

- **Project Artaud’s status as a non-profit entity allows more flexibility in project design and function.** The building was originally purchased by a philanthropic funder and operation as a non-profit means that they do not have to follow predetermined income thresholds or tenant selection processes. They can operate their commercial spaces for a profit that, in turn, benefits the non-profit entity. **This building was purchased in 1971, however, and replication of this model is challenging with the cost of buildings in today’s financial climate.**
- **Rents are reduced in exchange for a high level of participation from residents in the maintenance and care of the building.** Not all tenants are interested in playing this role, however, leading to friction among the Board and its members. Even for those willing to put in the time, it can be a challenge to expertly maintain and care for historic structures. **Running a highly involved, tenant-run building program is difficult and requires a strong collective of invested individuals.**

TYPE 3: MIDRISE MULTIFAMILY FOR MULTIGENERATIONAL LIVING

Most new housing units built in Seattle have been studios and one-bedroom units, which doesn't accommodate multigenerational families. This third housing type creates opportunities for families to live together Downtown. Particularly in neighborhoods like the CID that have large elder populations, multigenerational housing is essential for keeping residents and families in place. Another aspect of this model is long-term rentals or homeownership to improve stability and resist displacement.

Key Characteristics:

- Midrise buildings with a range of unit sizes
- Creative ownership opportunities or management structures that encourage longevity within the neighborhood for tenants
- Focus on application in the CID neighborhood
- Example residents: multigenerational households with longstanding ties to the CID looking to live in the neighborhood, but facing displacement risk

Case study examples:

- Capitol Hill Urban Cohousing
- Columbus United Cooperative in San Francisco

Case Study 3.1: Capitol Hill Urban Cohousing

Completed in 2016

9 long-term rental units

Shared rooftop garden, community kitchen, and courtyard



View of shared interior courtyard and units that face each other

Image source: Architizer



Shared rooftop garden overlooking Downtown Seattle

Image source: Berger Partnership

Project Description

Capitol Hill Urban Cohousing (CHUC) is a 9-unit, 5-story development with a shared management model, where building decisions are participatory and made through resident consensus. The family-sized units (2- and 3-bedrooms) encourage multigenerational living in an urban setting. Many cohousing communities are lower density, suburban, and include expensive ownership housing units. CHUC, however, is only 9 units, located in an urban setting, and under a long-term rental model that aims keep its pricing at lower-than-market rates. Project architect and resident, Grace Kim, said that this size of building is a good fit for cohousing projects and is well-sized for many of Seattle’s lowrise or midrise density zones.

CHUC is an example of a successful cohousing community that fits within a denser urban fabric. Residents enjoy shared access to a rooftop farm, outdoor seating area, central courtyard, bike parking, and a common area with a large kitchen and dining room. The open space and courtyards make the building attractive for families because children can play in shared spaces with neighborly supervision. Compared to single-family neighborhoods with fences and private yards, this multifamily cohousing model allows for an expansion of the nuclear household where neighbors offer community support.

The property was originally purchased and developed by Schemata Workshop and operates under a long-term rental model. The long-term rental model, in contrast to an ownership building, allowed the project to take advantage of the MFTE program where 2 of the 9 units are dedicated as income-restricted affordable. However, at the time it was built the City did not require the provision of affordable housing—Schemata chose this model because of their values.

“The City should get out of the way, cut down on unnecessary regulations, and make it easier for developers to create sustainable and affordable housing.”

-Grace Kim, Schemata Workshop

Challenges and Takeaways:

- **The design review process added time and complexity to the development process.** Schemata staff describe the design review process as “onerous.” They were required to fight for the ability to include a higher percentage of shared open spaces, lengthening their review and approval cycle. **Discretionary review cycles can be tough for projects that are making decisions outside of the norm and feel punitive toward those pursuing creativity and innovation in housing development.**
- **When developed, there was no requirement for affordable housing in the zoning code.** This led Schemata down a challenging and cumbersome process of

understanding the regulations and incentive programs that were available to help align with their vision of providing affordability in an expensive area. The decision to include affordable units and larger unit sizes do not fit development norms in Seattle and reduce the profit margin of multifamily buildings, but the larger units in CHUC remain in high demand. The integration of MHA policy in this neighborhood addresses the need for inclusionary housing policy, although a building as small as CHUC today is only required to include 1 affordable unit – or can forego inclusion by paying a fee. **Without policy and financial support, relying on developer initiative is unlikely to result in the creation of a large number of projects that resemble this multifamily cohousing model.**

Case Study 3.2: Columbus United Cooperative in San Francisco



Completed
in 2006



21 ownership
units



Preserved in historic Chinatown
through community activism



21 housing units above the Asian Law Caucus

Image source: San Francisco Community Land Trust



Chinese residents enjoy their renovated apartments at 53 Columbus Avenue

Image source: SFGATE, 2009

Project Description

The Columbus United Cooperative is a 21-unit, 3-story mixed-use building in San Francisco’s historic Chinatown neighborhood. The building was at risk of demolition in the early 2000s as a nearby local college looked to expand its campus.²³ The building’s low-income Chinese American tenants organized with the Asian Law Caucus and Chinatown Community Development Center to fight eviction. They won, and the property is now owned by the San Francisco Community Land Trust (SFCLT) who commissioned seismic retrofits and other needed renovations through city-funded programs and private financing. The Asian Law Caucus occupies the ground floor, and the building still houses original residents.²⁴

The building operates under a limited equity co-op model, which offers homeownership opportunities that maintain an income-restricted status in perpetuity, while SFCLT owns the land. When a resident moves out, they resell their unit up to a pre-determined price ceiling to retain affordability for the next owner. Price ceilings reflect changes to the market, so owners will never lose money by living in the co-op (although their financial gains are capped, in contrast to ownership in a traditional condominium). Residents also pay monthly fees to cover building costs such as property taxes, maintenance, and insurance.

The land trust model is one approach to offering homeownership opportunities for low-income households. In an urban area such as San Francisco which has experienced widespread gentrification and displacement, ownership offers residents the opportunity to benefit from the value increases they help create as members of the community. In San Francisco’s Chinatown, where many residents are immigrants with limited English proficiency, access to property ownership is a big challenge.

“We have very stable, very secure housing for low-income people. They’re free to use their money in other ways, like to educate children or start a small business.”

– Amy Beinart, former Organizational Director at SFCLT²⁵

The Columbus United Cooperative is an excellent example of successful community organizing combatting displacement pressure in an urban neighborhood. Without intervention, the long-term Chinese tenants would have been displaced. Now, thanks to the limited equity co-op model, residents can remain in place for an affordable price and benefit from community land value increases over time.

²³ [Paul, Cory, “Chinatown land trust helps low-income housing.” SFGATE, 2009.](#)

²⁴ [San Francisco Community Land Trust, 2024.](#)

²⁵ [Paul, Cory, “Chinatown land trust helps low-income housing.” SFGATE, 2009.](#)

Challenges and Takeaways:

- **Displacement of the cultural communities that define a neighborhood’s identity creates harmful ripple effects that can be challenging to quantify.** Fighting the redevelopment of property and displacement of long-term residents in urban neighborhoods is expensive and requires a depth of legal understanding that many immigrant communities do not have access to. Retrofitting older buildings to meet seismic codes is also expensive and difficult. Those who build and manage low-income housing within neighborhoods defined by immigrant identities, such as Seattle’s CID, are limited in their ability to ensure that tenants reflect the area’s cultural communities of origin. **Affirmative marketing strategies and right to return policies are examples of approaches that help address the desire to maintain the cultural identity of a neighborhood.**
- **Without community partnerships, vulnerable residents are more susceptible to displacement.** Partnerships were a big reason for the success of this project. The Asian Law Caucus and Chinatown Community Development Center supported low-income residents and used their advocacy expertise to keep their neighbors in place. Additionally, SFCLT played an influential role in acquiring the property so it could remain permanently affordable. **Community land trusts are a proven strategy for integrating affordable homeownership within a historic district.**

CONCLUSIONS AND TAKEAWAYS

It is challenging to maintain affordability and inclusivity in residential housing when it’s located in an attractive and successful Downtown neighborhood. These areas are often among a city’s most expensive properties and interventions are needed to ensure that the heart of a city is accessible to families, artists, and a wide and diverse range of cultural communities. The case studies outlined in this report highlight three different models for housing that can accommodate these groups within Seattle’s Downtown fabric. A few overarching takeaways include:

- Many of these projects are described by their developers as unique “unicorns,” defying conventional models for residential projects. One-off projects can serve important purposes but are limited in their scale of impact. The City will have to weigh the cost and benefit of financial support for niche projects (such as midrise artist lofts and culturally specific co-ops) and broader policy initiatives (such as affordable housing legislation and high-density TOD funding).
- Fair housing legislation protects tenant rights and makes it challenging to predetermine desired tenant types. Units that may be intended for family households or members of a certain cultural community cannot be legally

designated as such. A policy exemption for creative sectors does help allow for housing specifically for artists.

- Design review is seen as a barrier to success for innovative projects. Atypical design choices can lead to lengthy design reviews, even if the choices support broader citywide goals such as long-term rentals and affordable housing. Reducing legislative and administrative barriers can help encourage innovation, as seen in recent policy making these changes for office to residential conversion projects. The City of Seattle is currently undergoing study and engagement related to its design review program, with aims to reduce barriers in the development process across the city.²⁶
- Coordinated efforts between public agencies, non-profit partners, and values-aligned developers is the key to success for many of the identified case studies. Active effort on the part of government institutions helped make several of the identified case studies possible, such as the Kaplan Tashiro Lofts in Pioneer Square and Orenda in Othello. In other cases, like Project Artaud and Columbus United, grassroots efforts by community organizations and activists were key. In all cases, dedication, funding, and high levels of support were needed to realize the vision of the initiative.

²⁶ <https://www.theurbanist.org/2024/08/26/seattle-inches-to-design-review-overhaul/>

Housing Plans & Policies Technical Report

Date: April 8, 2025

Prepared for: Seattle Downtown Regional
Center Plan

Prepared by: BAE Urban Economics

Memorandum

To: Erica Bush, Urban Centers Planner
Jesse London, Urban Centers Planner
Rhiannon Sinclair, Agency
Brie Hensold, Agency

From: Paul Peninger, MCP, Principal

Date: April 8, 2025

Re: Housing Strategies for the Downtown Seattle Regional Center Plan

Introduction

Over the past decade, Downtown Seattle has emerged as the city's fastest growing residential neighborhood. While Downtown continues to be a major employment center and regional hub for retail, food, arts and culture, residential development is also an increasingly important part of the character of Downtown's diverse neighborhoods.

As part of the preparation of the Downtown Seattle Regional Center Plan, this memo outlines a comprehensive set of housing strategies to ensure that Downtown's growing housing stock serves the full diversity of Seattle households by age, income, family type and special housing needs. Considering existing initiatives and programs sponsored by City agencies, the Seattle Housing Authority, and various nonprofit organizations and developers, the strategies proposed here will inform housing programs and policies to be included in the Downtown Regional Center Plan.

Process and Racial Equity Tool Outcomes

The strategies presented here build directly on existing conditions and policy analyses prepared by BAE, Agency, SEVA, the City of Seattle and other project partners. They also build on extensive outreach efforts conducted for the Regional Plan and incorporate input from Seattle residents, nonprofit organizations, housing developers and other key stakeholders.

Importantly, the memo refers to and addresses specific proposed actions identified in the Racial Equity Tool (RET) Outcomes for the Downtown Regional Center Plan and described fully in other Plan documents. The specific Downtown RET outcome for housing is as follows:

Access to Housing: Downtown offers diverse housing options that support where people are in their lives without creating a cost burden.

Downtown Regional Center Neighborhoods

The Downtown Regional Center Plan Area is composed of five distinct neighborhoods with very different socioeconomic conditions and community needs. The strategies described below recognize the differences across neighborhoods by providing policies and programs that either apply to Downtown as a whole or to one or more of the distinct neighborhood subareas. As analyzed in other Plan documents and the City’s socioeconomic equity index¹, Downtown Seattle comprises both “highest equity priority” neighborhoods (e.g., Pioneer Square and Chinatown-International District) and neighborhoods with relatively low equity priority rankings (e.g., Belltown and Denny Triangle). The strategies and actions have been developed accounting for the differences in socioeconomic needs across the Plan Area.

Summary of Housing Needs and Policy Implications

To provide additional context and support for the strategies developed below, the following portion of this memo summarize major themes, findings, and policy recommendations from the Economic, Real Estate and Housing Existing Conditions Report prepared by BAE for the Downtown Regional Center Plan.

By 2044 Downtown is Projected to be the City’s Largest Residential Neighborhood, Requiring Need for Ongoing Affordable Housing Investment. Downtown Seattle has added a significant supply of new housing in recent years, estimated at nearly 20,000 new housing units between 2010 and 2024, and by 2044 is projected to grow by 13,500 additional housing units. Along with high rates of overpayment², overcrowding is a significant problem reported by many moderate- and lower-income families across Downtown neighborhoods. Achieving many of the RET outcomes and other key policy goals for Downtown will require additional affordable housing investments as well as new public service and social infrastructure to support future residential development.

Downtown has Sufficient Capacity to Accommodate Future Growth, but Additional Investments in Community Amenities and Basic Infrastructure are Critical to Ensuring Inclusive and Equitable Growth. According to the Land Use Analysis prepared by Seva Workshop for the Downtown Regional Center Plan, Downtown has sufficient zoned capacity to accommodate future growth estimates. However, investments in the public realm, basic infrastructure, transportation infrastructure, cultural institutions, and community amenities are necessary to ensure that future development is both equitable and inclusive and does not exert pressure on existing residents, businesses, and community institutions. In addition, the provision of affordable housing, noted above, is needed to ensure future development does not lead to the displacement of existing households and residents.

¹ <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/mapviewer/index.html?layers=3a6bcc7fa4c14c4daabdb1cd8f329758>

² Defined as paying 30 percent or more of gross household income towards total housing costs.

Downtown's Housing Market is Relatively Robust Despite Current Challenges to Development Feasibility. Both rental and for-sale housing remains in comparatively high demand in Downtown Seattle, and the cost of housing Downtown is generally higher than elsewhere in the city, particularly in terms of rental rates in multifamily residential properties.

Downtown Seattle has a Comparatively High Population of Both Higher-Income and Extremely Low-Income Households with Limited Housing Options for Low- and Moderate-Income Households. The Downtown Regional Center contains nearly twice the share of extremely low-income households relative to the City of Seattle and Puget Sound Region. Approximately 24 percent of Downtown residents have extremely low incomes, defined as 30 percent or less of the HUD Area Median Income (AMI). Extremely low-income households account for only 14.6 percent and 12.4 percent in the City of Seattle and Puget Sound Region, respectively. By contrast, the Downtown area contains a similar proportion of above moderate-income households, or those households with incomes above 100 percent of AMI, relative to the City and Region. As a result, Downtown is home to proportionally fewer households with incomes between 30 percent and 100 percent of AMI.

Many Existing Affordable Housing Developments Face Expiring Affordability Restrictions. Downtown Seattle has a substantial existing inventory of affordable residential properties. According to HUD data, 76 projects within the Downtown Regional Center have been financed in part with the Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) program. These projects are primarily concentrated in Belltown, Pioneer Square, and the CID. The 76 housing properties include a total of 6,163 total units, 94 percent of which are affordable. Of the 76 projects Downtown, 15 have expired rent restrictions, with another ten expiring in the next five years.

Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) Requirements for Downtown Will Add to the Future Inventory of Affordable Housing. MHA requirements for new development will aid in expanding the affordable housing inventory Downtown and throughout the city. New multifamily residential development in Seattle must either include affordable units in the development (performance option) or contribute to the Office of Housing's affordable housing development fund (payment option). However, the funding raised by MHA requirements is sensitive to the broader development landscape. In 2023 the program brought in \$67 million, 15 percent below the \$75 million in 2022, due to a private development slowdown in the face of increasing construction costs and high interest rates.

Goals and Policy Directions Framework

The proposed policies below fall into three major categories: Production; Preservation; and Protection. The policies also encompass for-sale/shared ownership housing types that provide opportunities for equity building and wealth creation for low- and moderate-income households. The goals and policies address the priority housing needs identified for Downtown Seattle and incorporate feedback received from community members, housing advocates, developers, and other key stakeholders. Following each major goal are a set of related policies and proposed implementing actions or programs.

Goal 1: Grow and Diversify the Supply of Housing for All Downtown Residents. As the Downtown housing inventory continues to expand, every opportunity should be taken to identify opportunities for diversifying and growing the Regional Center’s housing stock by unit type, size, tenure, and affordability.

Policy 1.1: Continue to monitor the supply of land available for housing. Maintain a parcel database for City use that allows planning, housing, and economic development staff to identify opportunities for future residential development of all types; share this information with affordable and market-rate housing developers to advance community objectives. Continually seek to have an adequate supply of sites to accommodate future housing needs in all Downtown communities.

- a. Maintain and leverage a publicly accessible database of land available for residential development.
- b. Identify key housing opportunity sites and proactively address environmental, infrastructure and regulatory constraints on future development.

Policy 1.2. Simplify the housing regulatory and permitting process to promote production and incentivize the creation of more diverse housing types. Although Seattle has done much in recent years to facilitate housing development through updated land use and zoning policies, the regulatory environment still constrains housing production.

- a. Allow greater flexibility in zoning requirements associated with residential development in areas of Downtown currently zoned “Downtown Office Core.”
- b. Reduce the regulatory and financial burdens of periodic Energy Code updates and seismic and energy upgrades in historic buildings through incentives and regulatory changes.
- c. Consider convening an interdisciplinary team of relevant City departments (OPCD, SDCl, etc.) to review the building code update processes to ensure consistency and clarity for the development of new residential properties.
- d. Continue to waive State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) requirements for all residential projects beyond existing State mandated period in September 2025.
- e. Update zoning along Third Avenue from Union to Stewart Streets and east along Union and Pike Streets toward Fourth Avenue to encourage residential land uses.

Policy 1.3. Lower housing development costs by incentivizing less structured parking in new housing development. High structured parking costs are one of the most significant costs and financial constraints for new residential development. While the City does not have minimum parking requirements in downtown, additional efforts can be made to reduce the amount of parking provided in individual development projects, leading to improved project feasibility. This includes investments in alternative transportation infrastructure and potential district-level parking strategies. .

- a. Invest in alternative forms of transportation to reduce need for on-site auto parking
- b. Encourage shared, district-level structured parking strategies to reduce project development costs and manage parking holistically.
- c. Better utilize existing off-street parking garages through shared parking agreements.

Policy 1.4. Continue to support the adaptive reuse of commercial buildings. Older – including historic – office, retail and industrial properties represent an important opportunity for creating new housing opportunities through adaptive reuse, particularly in Belltown, Pioneer Square and the CID.

- a. Leverage the City's Housing Levy and other existing and new funding sources to support the reuse of older offices and other commercial buildings that require seismic upgrades and other structural improvements.
- b. Consider adopting a pilot program that funds residential adaptive reuse retrofit costs in exchange for long-term deed restrictions requiring that resulting units are available and affordable to low- and moderate-income households in perpetuity.
- c. Building on existing City policies such as the recently passed Office to Residential Legislation, continue to work with Downtown property owners to adopt flexible zoning and development standards for adaptive reuse projects

Policy 1.5. Encourage the development of housing and related community infrastructure to serve family households, seniors and households with special housing needs.

- a. Expand family-focused services and programming around housing clusters and transit, including childcare, neighborhood-serving retail, and play experiences.
- b. Support the creation of housing that provides a mix of units for residents in different life stages (live-work housing, accessible senior housing, and family housing).
- c. Work with development projects to provide publicly accessible private open space that meets each neighborhood's goals and needs.

Policy 1.6. Partner with the private sector to advance innovations in new construction techniques and materials. Funders and developers across the United States are increasingly turning to new construction techniques and materials to address rising construction costs. The City can provide expanded financing and technical assistance to support efforts to spur innovation and lower develop costs and construction time-lines for new housing development.

- a. Continue to promote emerging green building and sustainable development practices.
- b. Support increased use of innovative construction techniques and materials that are both cost effective and time efficient such as mass timber and volumetric modular construction.
- c. Work with SDCI to identify and eliminate constraints on the financial feasibility of sustainable building practices.

Goal 2. Support the Development of Affordable Housing and Supportive Services. Although Downtown has a significant supply of affordable housing serving lower-income households, the need for affordable housing for both individuals and families far exceeds existing resources. Land use, regulatory and financial strategies specifically targeted to housing serving lower-income households are central to ensuring that Downtown’s neighborhoods are both inclusive and diverse.

Policy 2.1. Expand funding and financing resources for affordable housing. Funding tools for affordable housing may include resources like the City’s Housing Levy, private efforts such as the Amazon Housing Equity Fund and other public and private sources of subsidy for new affordable housing development. Financing tools include bonds, tax credits and exemptions, and district-scale financing mechanisms such as tax increment financing (TIF).

- a. Continue to support the development of LIHTC-financed affordable housing throughout the Downtown Regional Center.
- b. Prioritize affordable housing funding efforts in neighborhoods with the highest socioeconomic needs and displacement risks, including the CID and Pioneer Square.
- c. Continue to partner with foundations, Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), and private-sector funders to develop new funding sources for affordable housing.
- d. Evaluate the feasibility of creating district-scale public-financing mechanisms such as TIF.
- e. Leverage the Multifamily Tax Exemption (MFTE) to better incentivize the inclusion of affordable housing in market-rate development in alignment with the City’s Mandatory Affordable Housing (MHA) ordinance, and expand flexibility to allow horizontally-mixed use developments to leverage the MFTE program.

Policy 2.2: Leverage vacant, underutilized and publicly-owned sites for affordable housing development. Publicly- and privately-owned vacant and/or underutilized sites present strategic opportunities for investment in affordable housing. Particularly as new transit investments take place with the attendant consequences for increased land values, community ownership of key sites provides a critical hedge against displacement and can ensure a diversity of housing types by affordability.

- a. Explore opportunities for the acquisition and assembly of privately held vacant sites for future affordable housing development.

- b. Study the feasibility of site acquisition and assembly of key sites and the potential for the development of affordable housing.
- c. Conduct outreach to foundations, CDFIs, and other private- and public-sector partners to evaluate the feasibility of establishing an acquisition fund for underutilized and vacant sites.
- d. Create a comprehensive inventory of publicly-owned sites by agency and create a priority list of sites for development with affordable housing and other priority community-serving uses (e.g., schools, cultural centers, etc.).
- e. Create an inclusive community-led process for guiding the disposition and development of these key sites facilitated either by the City and/or a working group of public agencies with land assets located in the Downtown Plan Area.

Policy 2.3. Expand housing options for unhoused people. Homelessness remains one of the most pressing problems facing Downtown Seattle. New resources and investments should be focused on creating both temporary shelter and services for people experiencing homelessness throughout Downtown as well as longer-term service-enriched housing for both individuals and families.

- a. Create a comprehensive services navigation center in the Commercial Core for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.
- b. Invest in additional emergency and short-term shelters with supportive services and security.
- c. Work with the Office of Housing, nonprofits, and other key stakeholders to identify new opportunities for permanent supportive housing to serve the needs of the unhoused in all Downtown neighborhoods.

Policy 2.4. Continue to implement and update Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA). MHA is a key tool for creating affordable housing through on-site production of low-income housing and contributions to the City’s affordable housing funds. The City should continue to monitor and, as necessary, update MHA as it applies to Downtown, including by adjusting requirements to reflect market conditions, support project feasibility, and maximize affordable housing outcomes.

Goal 3: Preserve Existing Affordable Housing. Many properties serving lower-income households are at risk of conversion to market-rate housing without proactive interventions from the City, nonprofit, and private-sector partners. Over the long run, it is more cost effective to preserve these housing units than to fund the development of comparable new affordable projects, and preservation also acts as a powerful hedge against displacement in neighborhoods under increasing redevelopment pressures.

Policy 3.1. Preserve existing multifamily affordable housing with expiring income restrictions. Existing ordinances and programs, such as the City’s first right of refusal law passed in 2019, already provide powerful tools for preserving existing affordable housing serving households

earning less than 80% of AMI. But more can be done Downtown to identify and monitor at-risk properties and fund their acquisition,

- a. Continue outreach to affordable housing property owners to refinance and preserve existing affordable housing with currently expired or soon-to-expire affordable housing deed restrictions and/or covenants.
- b. Leverage existing funding sources and explore new public and private sources to fund the acquisition and refinance of properties at risk of conversion to market-rates.

Policy 3.2. Explore the feasibility of investing in low-cost market-rate properties and converting them into permanently affordable housing. Most low-income households live in market-rate housing, which may be relatively affordable due to its quality, location, or other factors. When these properties fail to meet return requirements, they may be vulnerable to rehabilitation or demolition and present an opportunity for acquisition and preservation.

- a. Partner with CDFIs, nonprofit developers and private-sector funders to explore the feasibility of creating a program to acquire and revitalize distressed multifamily properties.

Policy 3.3. Expand technical support and financial resources to lower-income homeowners facing displacement. The costs of repairs, maintenance or other unexpected costs can put significant pressures on lower-income households to sell their homes and relocate to other neighborhoods. The City and nonprofit partners should expand efforts to support this comparatively small but critical sub-set of Downtown households.

- a. Work with LISC, the Amazon Housing Equity Fund, the Black Home Initiative and other partners to expand outreach to lower-income owner households at risk of displacement.
- b. Explore the feasibility of structuring a targeted loan and/or grant program targeted to lower-income owner households in high-risk neighborhoods such as the CID and Pioneer Square.

Goal 4: Protect Downtown Tenant Households from Displacement. The City already provides a robust set of tenant protection tools within the limits of Washington State law. These tools should continue to be implemented and refined throughout the Downtown Regional Center.

Policy 4.1. Consider strengthening tenant protections for lower-income renters. The Office of Housing, SDCl, and various advocacy and legal-aid organizations provide assistance to lower-income tenants facing eviction.³ There may, however, be targeted resources that can be provided in the Downtown Regional Center focusing on neighborhoods with the highest percentage of at-risk lower-income renters.

³ <https://www.psrc.org/media/2064>

- a. Develop an expanded suite of tenant protection strategies that conform with Washington State law and proactively market and conduct culturally- and linguistically-appropriate outreach to tenants to provide legal assistance, financial support and other resources in the event that they face eviction or displacement.

Policy 4.2. Implement community preferences for rental and ownership housing as allowed through the City's existing community preference policy. Cities across the US use community preference policies to prioritize local residents and workers in applications for affordable housing.

- a. Work with nonprofit and community-based organizations to tailor community preference policies for each eligible Downtown neighborhood.

Goal 5: Promote Access to Ownership for Downtown Households. Compared to other parts of Seattle, Downtown has a very low homeownership rate. The following proposed policies would provide increased ownership and wealth building opportunities for lower- and moderate-income households, including BIPOC and immigrant communities at relatively high risk of displacement.

Policy 5.1 Promote Community Ownership of Residential Properties through Community Land Trusts. Building on successful examples of community land trust-sponsored projects in other Seattle neighborhoods, provide technical assistance and financial support to community and tenant organizations exploring the feasibility of acquiring existing residential properties.

- a. Conduct outreach to public and private funding partners to explore the feasibility of establishing a dedicated fund for the purpose of supporting community acquisition of residential properties.
- b. Create a program to allow lower-income households that rent to purchase their home through subsidy.

Policy 5.2 Expand First-Time Homebuyer Programs Targeted to Lower- and Moderate-Income Households. Existing first-time homebuyer programs in Seattle should be supplemented by targeted loan and/or grant programs tailored to the unique needs of Downtown households to mitigate the risk of displacement of existing downtown residents and expand opportunities for homeownership to communities and households that have traditionally been excluded from the homeownership markets, especially BIPOC communities.

- a. Work with City agencies, nonprofits, private-sector funders and employers to explore the feasibility of creating a first-time homebuyer fund and program targeted to Downtown Seattle.
- b. As feasible, create a pilot first-time homebuyer program prioritizing lower- and moderate income BIPOC households living or working in Downtown Seattle.

Inclusive Economic Development Report

Date: December 19, 2025

Prepared for: Seattle Downtown Regional
Center Plan

Prepared by: BAE Urban Economics

Interagency Review Draft Memorandum

To: Erica Bush, Urban Centers Planner
Jesse London, Urban Centers Planner

From: Paul Peninger, MCP, Principal

Date: December 11, 2025

Re: Inclusive Economic Development Strategies for the Downtown Seattle Regional Center Plan

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of the Downtown Seattle Regional Center Plan preparation process, this memorandum provides a comprehensive set of strategies for inclusive and equitable economic development for Downtown Seattle as a whole and its distinct neighborhoods and communities. These strategies, informed by both data analysis and extensive community engagement, aim to address Downtown's unique socioeconomic conditions while leveraging its position as an economic and cultural hub for the city and the region. Key findings and recommendations include:

Economic Context: Downtown Seattle remains the Pacific Northwest's largest employment center and is projected to add 60,000 jobs by 2044. However, socioeconomic disparities persist across neighborhoods, necessitating targeted investments in affordable housing, workforce training, public infrastructure and community-centered economic development. Downtown's rich cultural diversity is an important economic asset which can be leveraged for the benefit of existing residents and small businesses, and in particular in areas at high risk of displacement pressures such as Pioneer Square and the Chinatown-International District (CID).

Strategic Priorities:

1. Adapt the built environment to evolving economic conditions through zoning updates, flexible reuse of commercial spaces, and technical assistance.
2. Invest in public infrastructure, parks, and community amenities to meet the needs of a growing residential population.
3. Support small businesses and entrepreneurs, particularly in high-risk neighborhoods like Pioneer Square and the CID.
4. Protect and revitalize neighborhood commercial districts through façade improvement programs, legacy business preservation, and placemaking activities.
5. Enhance workforce training and education to create pathways to living-wage jobs.
6. Leverage vacant and publicly owned sites for affordable housing and community-serving developments.
7. Explore new district-scale entities and financing tools, such as tax increment financing and eco-districts.

Key Challenges: Housing affordability, infrastructure deficiencies, displacement risks, and underutilized land remain critical barriers to achieving equitable and inclusive growth. By aligning economic development strategies with racial equity goals and leveraging resources from public, private, and philanthropic entities, this plan lays the groundwork for a vibrant and inclusive Downtown economy.

INTRODUCTION

As part of the preparation of the Downtown Seattle Regional Center Plan (Plan), this memo provides a detailed set of strategies to promote inclusive and equitable economic development for Downtown and its distinct neighborhood subareas. Building on existing initiatives and programs sponsored by City

agencies and other economic development entities, these strategies and associated implementation actions are meant to inform economic development policies and programs to be included in the Final Downtown Regional Center Plan.

Strategy Preparation Process and Racial Equity Toolkit (RET) Outcomes

The draft strategies presented here are informed directly by existing conditions and policy analyses prepared by BAE, Agency, SEVA, the City of Seattle, and other project partners; most importantly, the strategies incorporate input from a diverse range of residents, business owners, nonprofit organizations, community leaders and other stakeholders who have participated in community workshops, meetings, and informational interviews conducted throughout the Plan preparation process.

The memo also refers to and addresses specific proposed actions identified in the [Racial Equity Toolkit \(RET\) Outcomes](#) for the Downtown Subregional Plan and described fully in other Plan documents. The specific Downtown Regional Center RET outcomes and proposed metrics for Economic Development include the following:

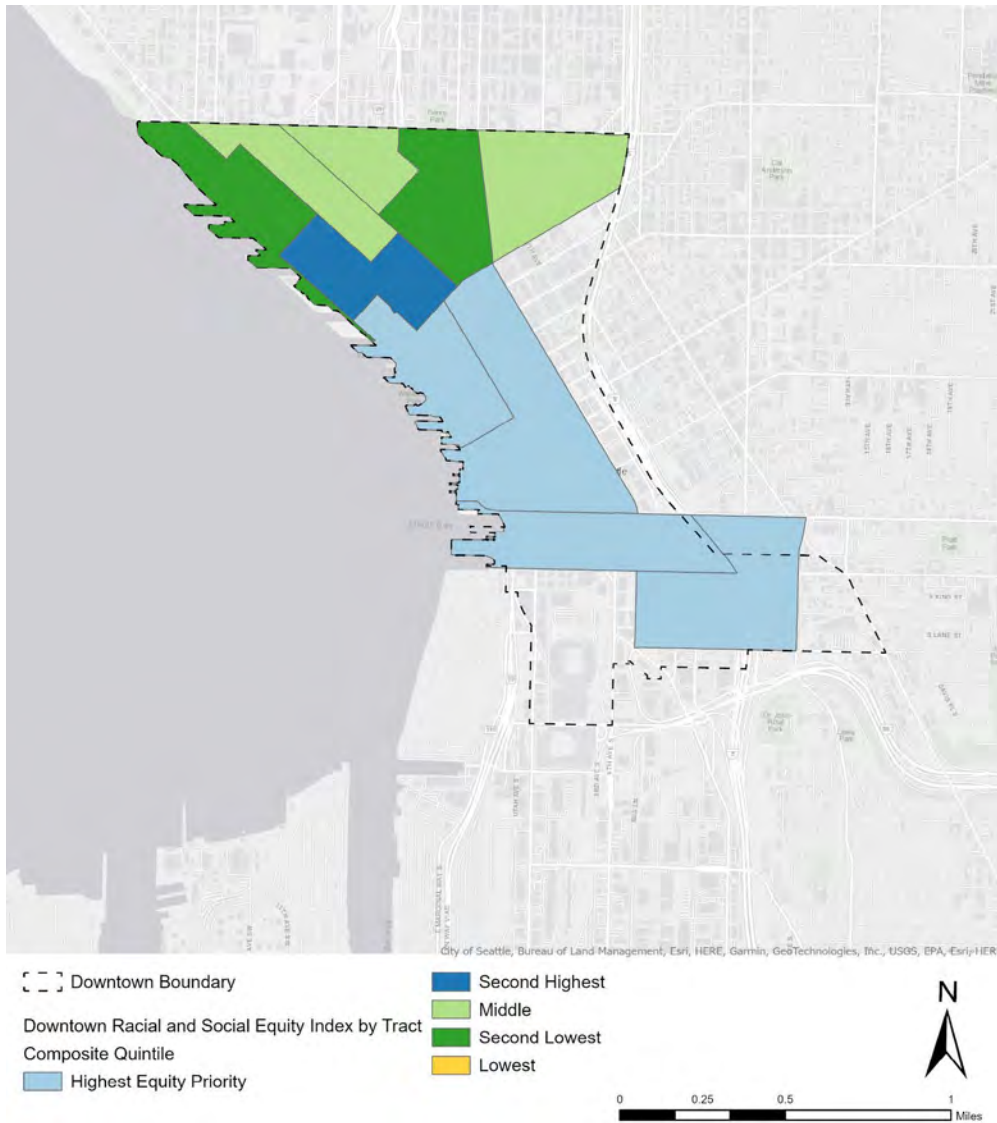
Outcome: Access to Employment and Creating Businesses: Downtown is a center for businesses of all sizes that create financial opportunity and stability for entrepreneurs, owners, and employees.

Proposed Metrics: 1) number of jobs and small businesses by economic sector; 2) small business creation by business and owner type; 3) jobs by race and ethnicity.

Downtown Neighborhoods Socioeconomic Profile

The Downtown Regional Center Plan Area is comprised of five distinct neighborhoods with very different economic conditions and community needs. As with other elements of the Regional Center Plan, this memo accounts for the differences across neighborhoods by providing implementation actions that either apply to Downtown as a whole or to one or more of the distinct neighborhood sub areas. As analyzed in other Plan documents and the City's socioeconomic equity index (see Figure 1 below), Downtown Seattle comprises both "highest equity priority" neighborhoods (e.g., Pioneer Square and Chinatown-International District) and neighborhoods with relatively low equity priority rankings (e.g., Belltown and Denny Triangle). Businesses, households, community organizations and cultural institutions in the Pioneer Square and CID neighborhoods have both reduced economic resources and a higher need for new investment and economic initiatives that explicitly account for intersecting factors (race, ethnicity, households type, income, etc.,). that limit economic opportunities for these communities.

Figure 1: Racial and Social Equity Index: Equity Priority Ranking



Source: City of Seattle, 2023; BAE, 2024.
 Subarea Geography: 2020 Census Tracts.

Consistency with PSRC Regional Economic Strategy

The 2022-2026 Regional Economic Strategy serves as the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the Central Puget Sound region, including Seattle. The strategy constitutes a blueprint for economic development centered on the following focus areas: Equity; Health; Childcare; Job Distribution; Broadband; Housing; Business Recovery; and, Industry Resilience. Both this memo and the overall Regional Center Plan have been prepared considering both the focus areas and the key industry sectors set forth in the Strategy. In addition, the Regional Strategy’s updated 2025 Economic

Development Priorities¹ are incorporated into this and other Plan documents as relevant and appropriate. These include equity; housing; childcare; workforce development; infrastructure; clean energy; and, arts culture and tourism sector support and coordination.

Defining Inclusive and Equitable Economic Development

According to the Aspen Partnership for an Inclusive Economy, “An inclusive economy is an economic system that includes everyone, regardless of age, gender, race/ethnicity, educational attainment, personal background, dis/ability status, or other traits, and respects their individual roles as workers, dependents, students, family members, entrepreneurs, and business owners.”² Within this approach to economic development, broad participation by and access to resources for workers, small businesses owners, and community institutions are integral to ensuring positive long-term economic outcomes. The Draft One Seattle Plan reflects this overall orientation to economic development and further provides “direction about how to maintain and grow Seattle’s vibrant, diverse, and increasingly global economy to benefit individuals equitably across income levels, as well as business, industry, and the city’s racially and culturally diverse communities.”³ This vision emphasizes equitable access to resources, support for small and micro-businesses, partnerships with neighborhood business districts, and investments in the local workforce.

SUMMARY OF ECONOMIC EXISTING CONDITIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

To provide additional context and support for the strategies and actions provided below, the following portion of this memo summarizes major themes, findings, and policy recommendations from the Economic, Real Estate and Housing Existing Conditions Report⁴ prepared by BAE.

Downtown Seattle is the Largest Employment Center in the Pacific Northwest and is a Major Center for Many of the City’s Critical Economic Growth Sectors.

Despite recent losses in office and retail employment in the wake of the Covid 19 pandemic, Downtown Seattle remains the City’s largest employment node and is projected to add an additional 60,000 jobs by 2044. According to the Draft One Seattle Plan and the City’s Office of Economic Development (OED), key economic growth sectors in Seattle include the following: Technology; Maritime, Manufacturing, and Logistics; Health Services; Life Sciences; Construction; Creative Economy; Green Economy.⁵ All of these sectors have an existing and/or growing footprint in Downtown Seattle and include a diverse range of businesses by number of employees and types of owners.

¹ <https://www.psrc.org/media/9253>

² www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/how-do-you-define-an-inclusive-economy/#:~:text=Economic%20Development,future%20of%20generations%20to%20come.

³ www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/OPCD/SeattlePlan/OneSeattlePlanDraftPlan2024.pdf

⁴ Placeholder for link to BAE report

⁵ <https://seattle.gov/economic-development/key-industries>

By 2044 Downtown is Projected to be the City's Largest Residential Neighborhood.

Downtown Seattle has added a significant supply of new housing in recent years and by 2044 it is projected to grow by an additional 13,500 housing units. Along with high rates of overpayment⁶, overcrowding is a significant problem reported by many moderate- and lower-income families across Downtown neighborhoods. Additional affordable housing investments will be needed throughout the Plan Area as well as new public service and social infrastructure to support the existing population.

Downtown Already has Sufficient Capacity to Accommodate Future Growth, but Additional Investments in Community Amenities, Affordable Housing, and Basic Infrastructure are Critical to Ensuring Inclusive and Equitable Growth.

According to the Land Use Analysis prepared by Seva Workshop for the Downtown Regional Center Plan,⁷ Downtown already has sufficient land use capacity to accommodate future growth targets; investments in the public realm, basic infrastructure and community amenities, however, will be needed to ensure that future development is both equitable and inclusive and does not exert displacement pressures on existing residents, businesses and community institutions.

Small Businesses are a Critical and Growing Component of Downtown Seattle Economic Base.

Seattle's Downtown Activation Plan views small businesses as a key component of a thriving downtown, providing ownership opportunities for entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds and filling vacant retail, restaurant, and office spaces with thriving businesses serving Downtown's resident and worker population.⁸ The average number of employees for private businesses located in the Downtown subarea is under 20 persons per business. This indicates the presence of a large number of small firms, including in key growth sectors such as Professional, Scientific & Technology Services businesses (averaging 18.6 employees), Retail Trade (averaging 16.7 employees) and other key sectors as identified by OED.

Despite Having Relatively Low Overall Rates of Unemployment, Downtown Seattle Would Benefit from Additional Investments in Education and Workforce Training, Particularly in Socioeconomically Vulnerable Neighborhoods.

Although unemployment across Downtown as a whole is comparatively low overall and job growth is projected to be robust, many Downtown community members face ongoing challenges entering the labor market and finding pathways to living wage jobs and careers. In addition to existing workforce training services provided by Worksource Seattle and other public-sector and nonprofit agencies, additional investments in K-12, higher education, vocational training and other educational resources are needed to ensure inclusive and equitable development.

⁶ Defined as paying 30 percent or more of gross household income towards total housing costs.

⁷ Placeholder for link to Plan

⁸ <https://www.downtownisyou.com/>

The Housing Market in Downtown Seattle is Relatively Robust Despite Current Challenges to Development Feasibility and Affordable and Workforce Housing Opportunities are Scarce.

Downtown has approximately 36,000 residential units, or nearly nine percent of the city's overall residential inventory. The cost of housing Downtown is generally higher than elsewhere in the City, particularly in terms of rental rates in multifamily apartments. Downtown also has a significantly higher share of lower-income households relative to the City and Region, and these households experience a significant rate of cost burden and other housing problems.

The Commercial Real Estate Market is in a State of Rapid Change, Leading to Declining Demand for Retail and Office Uses but New Opportunities for Lodging, Attractions, Entertainment and Mixed Uses.

Declining demand for retail and office space is leading to a restricting market for these real estate sectors; future development will likely focus on providing new, more contemporary, and higher quality space for retail, food service, and office users without adding significantly to Downtown's existing inventory of commercial space. Downtown's continuing significance as the region's cultural and entertainment hub will support new lodging and visitor uses; in addition, the changing landscape of commercial real estate presents new opportunities for the adaptive reuse of older offices and other commercial buildings for adaptive reuse, particularly for housing.

Vacant, Underutilized and Publicly Owned Sites Represent Important Opportunities for Community-Serving Uses and Amenities, Including Affordable Housing, Educational and Cultural Institutions, Small Business Incubators, Workforce Training Centers and other Nonprofit Organizations and Community Services. According to SEVA Workshop, over 56 percent of land in the Downtown Regional Plan area is owned by public agencies. Another three percent, or 79 acres, of property is currently vacant or is being used for surface and structured parking; Pioneer Square and the CID in particular have a large share of underutilized and vacant land. These land resources represent a critical long-term opportunity for community economic development, affordable housing, and public realm improvements.

Planned Transit Infrastructure Will Bring both New Investment and Mobility Options but also Potential for Displacing Existing Residents and Businesses.

The ST3 light rail expansion includes a number of projects to enhance mobility across the region. Downtown is most directly impacted by new stations and connections developed as part of the Ballard Link Extension Project. Three new stations are proposed Downtown: Denny (right at the border of the Downtown Urban Center boundary), Midtown (location of station TBD); and a new station in the International District. Enhanced connections will be offered at Westlake. Progress on this extension has been delayed as public comment has fueled additional rounds of study of the proposed alignments. These new investments represent critical opportunities for future economic development and community uplift but, without intervention, will present displacement risks for existing residents, businesses, and community institutions.

INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

BAE has developed the following strategies in response to the economic conditions and trends summarized above and building on community feedback and existing City and private-sector initiatives. Each strategy includes a range of land use, policy, and programmatic actions that either apply throughout Downtown or are targeted to a specific neighborhood or sub area.

Strategy #1: Support the Reconfiguration of the Built Environment to Adapt to Changing Economic Conditions and Community Needs

The Downtown Regional Center currently consists primarily of commercial land uses: office (25%); retail/other commercial (22%); and mixed-use (13%) properties. Institutions and public facilities account for another 10 percent of land, and multifamily properties make up 9 percent. An additional 14 percent of land is either vacant, an easement, or in use as a parking lot or structure.⁹ Scattered sites with single family homes, industrial uses, and parks comprise the remaining land uses. While proposed zoning changes in the [One Seattle Plan](#) would already provide significant flexibility in terms of allowing residential uses at a variety of densities, heights, and configurations, in the long-term, additional refinements to land use and zoning policies along with supporting technical assistance and funding programs will be needed to facilitate Downtown’s transition from a primarily office, retail and commercial center to a mixed-use area with employment, residential, entertainment, cultural, arts and many other types of uses and activities.

Implementation Actions:

1. Continue to Support the Adaptive Reuse of Commercial Buildings

- a. Leverage the City’s Housing Levy and other existing and new funding sources to support the reuse of older offices and other commercial buildings that require seismic upgrades and other structural improvements.
- b. Building on the existing State of Washington Department of Commerce program, consider adopting a pilot program that provides funding for residential adaptive reuse retrofit costs in exchange for long-term deed restrictions requiring that units created through the funding are available to low- and moderate-income households.¹⁰
- c. Building on existing City policies such as the recently passed [Office to Residential Legislation](#), continue to work with Downtown property owners to update flexible zoning and development standards for adaptive reuse projects.

⁹ Source: SEVA Workshop Land Use Existing Conditions Report, 2024.

¹⁰ Income limits for ownership and rental housing programs vary by program, funding source and agency, but for the purposes of this action, eligibility would be targeted to households earning between 60 and 100 percent of the Area Median Income as defined by the Seattle Office of Housing. www.seattle.gov/housing/property-managers/income-and-rent-limits

- d. Partner with organizations such as the [Alliance for Pioneer Square](#), the [Chinatown-International District Business Improvement Area](#) and others to tailor adaptive reuse policies and programs to the specific needs of small, heritage and BIPOC-owned businesses in these areas.
- e. Consider expanding support for community wealth-building initiatives like cooperative ownership models of businesses and cultural institutions, and other shared equity to ensure the benefits of economic development are equitably distributed. Similar to the existing Economic Development Initiative, the City could partner with community-based organizations to create a Community Investment Trust or similar entity where residents can invest in and co-own assets like reused commercial properties.

2. Review and Update Zoning Standards to Reflect New Retail Trends and Build on the Strengths of Existing Commercial Areas

- a. Building on the success of [Seattle Restored](#) and other efforts, continue to identify and remove zoning constraints on various retail, food service and entertainment uses, such as limits on outdoor food trucks, outdoor seating, pop-up retail, outdoor kiosks, music, and other special events. As needed, update the zoning code to provide greater flexibility for these uses and/or provide dedicated support and technical assistance for businesses seeking to activate underutilized commercial space.
- b. Conduct periodic zoning audits to ensure that existing zoning standards allow experiential retail uses such as temporary pop-up retail, kiosks, artisanal retail, outdoor events, and maker/craft businesses.
- c. Require flexible and adaptable ground-floor commercial space configurations in mixed-use buildings to allow for a variety of sizes and types of retail, food service and entertainment spaces to meet the needs of distinct types and sizes of businesses, including small and micro-businesses.
- d. In order to preserve the unique character of Downtown's diverse commercial nodes and corridors, consider restricting formula retail uses¹¹ in some areas of Downtown at elevated risk of commercial displacement, particularly Pioneer Square and the CID.

3. Continue to Update and Streamline Land Use, Zoning and Development Standard to Promote High-Quality Workplaces in both New and Existing Commercial Buildings

- a. Consider convening an interdisciplinary team across relevant City Departments (OPCD, SDCI, etc.) to review the building code update processes to ensure consistency and clarity for the development of new office space. This may include limitations on the frequency of periodic code updates in order to provide consistency and clarity for developers and property owners.

¹¹ Cities such as [San Francisco](#) have adopted such ordinances in targeted neighborhoods as both an anti-displacement and economic development strategy; the definition of what types of businesses constitutes a formula or chain retail use varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

- b. Conduct an audit of zoning and development standards to identify administrative and regulatory barriers to the reuse of office properties for other commercial uses/types of workplaces.
- c. Maintain and improve the transparency of permitting processes and land use regulations; make key land use documents and permitting forms available online.
- d. Encourage the development of office spaces that provide opportunities for flexible and open configurations, increased use of communications technologies, hybrid work schedules, social distancing, improved ventilation, and other key attributes of the modern workplace.

Strategy #2: Invest in Public Spaces and Community Infrastructure

As Downtown Seattle absorbs an increasing share of Seattle’s new housing and employment over the next 20 years and evolves to become the City’s largest residential neighborhood, public infrastructure, services, and amenities should also adapt to serve Downtown’s diverse communities. Building on the Draft Public Facilities and Services Analysis conducted by BAE,¹² the following strategies and actions have been developed to address key infrastructure needs which will improve Downtown’s ability to accommodate new growth while minimizing the potential negative impacts of change such as increased displacement pressures of existing households, businesses and community institutions.

Implementation Actions:

1. **Invest in New and Improved Parks and Recreational Amenities.** [Outside Citywide](#) has identified a majority of Downtown as the highest, or a high, priority for open space improvements. Deficiencies in public space access are most prevalent in Pioneer Square, Chinatown-International District, and the Commercial Core, Denny Triangle, and Belltown.
 - a. Align new residential development with strategic investments in high-quality parks, recreational amenities, and green spaces.
 - b. Partner with commercial property owners to update, improve and enhance accessibility to existing and new privately-owned public spaces, including in underutilized commercial centers where these amenities may no longer serve their original function.
 - c. Partner with BIA and community groups to seek funding for small-scale green and active park amenities in underserved areas.
2. **Improve Downtown’s Wastewater Infrastructure.** A majority of Downtown is served by a combined sewer system where wastewater and stormwater are held in the same pipes and conveyed to a wastewater treatment plant. Heavy rain events can cause combined sewer overflows, which in turn can result in negative public health and environmental impacts, as untreated sewage is

¹² Placeholder for link to Analysis

discharged into the local watershed. [SPU's 2019 Wastewater System Analysis](#) found that a majority of Downtown is in a capacity risk area. Pioneer Square and Chinatown-International District are particularly at risk.

- a. Partner with SPU to prioritize resilient wastewater infrastructure investments in areas of the highest need such as Pioneer Square and the CID.
- b. Encourage investment in green and green/blue wastewater infrastructure improvements to address existing system deficiencies and accommodate new planned residential and commercial growth,

3. Expand Services and Housing Options for Unhoused People. Homelessness remains one of the most pressing problems facing Downtown Seattle. New resources and investments should be focused on creating both temporary shelter and services for people experiencing homelessness throughout Downtown as well as longer-term service-enriched housing for both individuals and families.

- a. Create a comprehensive services navigation center in the Commercial Core for individuals and families and families experiencing homelessness.
- b. Invest in additional emergency and short-term shelters with supportive services and security.
- c. Work with key stakeholders including local government departments (the Office of Housing, the King County Regional Homelessness Authority, and the Human Services Department)¹³, nonprofit agencies, and others , to identify new opportunities for permanent supportive housing that serve the needs of the unhoused in all Downtown neighborhoods.
- d. Beyond expanding housing accessibility for unhoused people, implementing anti-displacement strategies specifically within neighborhoods near proposed development or infrastructure that is likely to drive land/property value (including planned transit infrastructure, parks, etc.) as a preventative safeguard to future homelessness. Such policies can include community land trusts, inclusionary zoning, or rent stabilization policies.

4. Continue to Prioritize Efforts to Make Downtown Safe and Welcoming. While reported property and violent crime has decreased between 2019 and 2023 in Downtown, the perception of crime in the area remains high. Building on the [Downtown Activation Plan](#), additional efforts are needed to make Downtown both safe and welcoming for residents, workers, and visitors alike.

¹³ Seattle HSD 'Homelessness' Impact Area page: <https://seattle.gov/human-services/reports-and-data/addressing-homelessness>

- a. Build on existing partnerships with the three Downtown BIAs (CID, Pioneer Square and the Downtown Metropolitan Improvement District), as well as the Seattle Center, the Seattle Metro Chamber, and the Downtown Seattle Association to expand resources for these organizations to support “clean and safe” programming in public spaces.
 - b. Continue to support and expand [community policing solutions](#) in Downtown neighborhoods.
 - c. [Enforce the recently created Stay Out of Drug Areas \(SODAs\)](#) including the area around Third and Pine in the Commercial Core, Belltown, the CID and Pioneer Square.
- 5. Plan for Additional Primary and Urgent Healthcare Facilities.** While Downtown is proximate to major hospitals west of Interstate 5 in First Hill, there is a scarcity of urgent care and primary care facilities within Downtown’s boundaries. New residential development in the area is likely to increase the demand for health services.
- a. Ensure existing and/or proposed land use and zoning regulations allow for an adequate supply of professional medical, laboratory, and urgent care space throughout Downtown, including in mixed-use buildings.
 - b. Partner with major medical providers to provide additional medical services and facilities Downtown, including through community health clinics in underserved areas.
- 6. Encourage Additional K-12 Educational and Childcare Facilities.** There are currently no public schools located within Downtown, and furthermore five of the eight public schools serving Downtown are at 80 percent or higher enrollment capacity. New residential development in Downtown is likely to increase the number of school-age children in the area, as well as the demand for both K-12 educational services and childcare facilities. In addition, childcare facilities are in many respects an essential aspect of inclusive economic development as access to affordable childcare enables parents to participate in the labor force or pursue training, leading to increased family income, economic growth, and productivity. This is particularly true for low-wage earners who can often reap large gains from additional education and training. Moreover, there is a significant body of academic literature that demonstrates how early childhood education can lead to better educational outcomes later in school and higher earnings over a lifetime.
- a. Partner with the Seattle Public Schools to reevaluate the long-term feasibility of building new K-12 public schools Downtown as the residential population grows.
 - b. Allow for childcare facilities on the ground floor of commercial, residential, and mixed-use buildings and enact standards for on-site amenities suitable for these uses, including child drop off and pick up zones.
 - c. Explore the provision of new childcare facilities as part of a community benefits program for major new development projects or through the adoption of a childcare linkage fee.
 - d. Identify sites or existing structures that might be feasible for new childcare facilities.

Strategy #3: Support Small Businesses and Entrepreneurs

As noted above, Downtown is home to a large number of small businesses across economic sectors. These businesses provide opportunities for wealth building and economic advancement in low-income and immigrant communities and are an essential part of the community character of Downtown's distinct neighborhoods.

Implementation Actions:

1. Support Existing Small- and Medium-sized Businesses and Encourage New Small Business Development

- a. Review existing home-based business rules and identify refinements that can be made to encourage new start-ups and small businesses.
- b. Continue to provide technical assistance and training to entrepreneurs and small businesses through existing [Office of Economic Development \(OED\) and partner economic development agencies](#).
- c. Partner with the OED and the Pioneer Square and CID BIAs to expand technical services and funding for businesses in Pioneer Square and the CID at substantial risk of displacement.

Leverage existing OED small business financing and grant programs, which offer a range of support from access to lending and competitive grants for storefront repairs, to a variety of other resources. Through these existing programs, enhance access to capital specifically for small businesses with women and/or minority ownership status. Building partnerships can provide resources like mentorship, network building, and community foundations in addition to direct access to capital.

2. Provide an Adequate Supply of Suitable Commercial Space for Small- and Medium Sized Businesses

- a. Partner with food policy advocates and regional operators of food incubators/shared kitchens such as the [Food Innovation Network](#) to explore the feasibility of creating a food incubator and/or commercial kitchen Downtown.
- b. Support the preservation and improvement of existing warehouse, distribution, production, and repair spaces in certain areas of Downtown where these uses continue to fulfill an important economic function, including areas like Little Saigon with a high proportion of heritage and BIPOC-owned businesses.
- c. Study the feasibility of preserving existing underutilized warehouse and light industrial buildings in the Downtown core for arts and entertainment and fitness uses such as rehearsal studios, nightlife venues, climbing gyms and other uses that require a relatively large footprint and/or require noise insulation and other physical amenities that these older buildings may provide.
- d. Work with property owners and developers to promote and deliver new small-scale office space options, such as centralized co-working hubs and short-term leases. Adapted zoning codes can encourage development of "innovation districts" that provide affordable

office spaces, access to capital, business mentoring, and coworking spaces for such businesses. There is an opportunity to partner with OED to establish a Downtown incubator program focused on technology, creative industries, and green economy startups.

Strategy #4: Support Efforts to Protect and Revitalize Neighborhood Commercial Districts

Placemaking for a commercial district is crucial for enhancing retail sales and improving the community's quality of life. By creating inviting public spaces, adding aesthetic elements (e.g., public art) and ensuring that the area is pedestrian-friendly, placemaking fosters a sense of community and encourages longer visits, leading to increased spending at local businesses. Additionally, well-designed retail districts can host events, support social interactions, and provide recreational opportunities, contributing to enhanced wellbeing for residents and creating a thriving, dynamic community environment. OED, the Downtown BIAs and other community organizations already sponsor a number of improvement and revitalization efforts; the following actions are meant to compliment these as well as the proposed place-based economic development policies outlined in the Draft One Seattle Plan.

Implementation Actions:

1. **Expand façade improvement support through loan and grant programs.** Commercial facade improvement programs help small businesses and commercial property owners improve their building's exterior and storefronts through financial incentives, such as matching grants and loans, tax abatements, and design assistance.
 - a. Pursue additional funding from both public and private sources to expand façade improvement programs beyond existing programs offered for small businesses in [Pioneer Square](#) and the [waterfront](#).
 - b. Partner with OED and the Downtown BIAs to offer a façade improvement loan and/or grant program for small businesses in commercial nodes and corridors in all five Downtown sub areas.
2. **Consider Creating a Downtown-Focused Legacy Business Program.** Legacy business programs have been adopted by cities across the US to assist longtime businesses that contribute to a neighborhood's history, identity, and character. These programs also offer financial incentives, including grants, to commercial landlords to retain legacy businesses.
 - a. Evaluate the feasibility of relaunching the [legacy business grant program formerly offered by OED](#), with a particular focus on historic businesses in Pioneer Square and the CID.
3. **Facilitate Retail Recruitment through Establishing Partnerships between Neighborhood Brokers and Property Owners**
 - a. Support a retail attraction initiative featuring a designated broker who specializes in retail spaces within a specific neighborhood and building relationships with the encompassing property owners.

4. Pursue grant funding to support improvements such as additional lighting and landscaping, street trees, bike parking, street furniture, and parklets.

- a. Seek grant funding from the private sector, community foundations, community development financial institutions and other funders to generate new resources for commercial district revitalization activities.
- b. Partner with OEDs, BIAs, nonprofit organizations and relevant city public agencies to implement improvements.
- c. Facilitate place-building activities and events throughout Downtown, focusing on the unique cultural and commercial identities of each neighborhood.

5. Plan proactively to prevent business disruptions related to planned transit improvements.

- a. Inspired by the example of the [Central Corridor Funders Collaborative](#) in Minneapolis Saint Paul, convene a working group of community groups, business organizations and funders to study the potential for establishing a fund and a set of related programs to assist small businesses during the planned light-rail construction projects due to take place through 2039.

Strategy #5: Improve Educational and Workforce Training Services to Provide Pathways to Living Wage Jobs

Downtown currently has a relative dearth of targeted workforce training and educational services and programs, particularly considering its status as the largest employment center in the Pacific Northwest. The following actions would involve partnerships between employers, the City, major educational institutions and community-based organizations, and would require additional funding commitments from both public and private-sector sources.

Implementation Actions:

1. Expand vocational and workforce training programs and services for Downtown residents.

- a. Partner with the existing resources such as [Worksource Seattle](#), [Seattle Central College](#) and other [workforce development agencies](#) to offer targeted services in Downtown locations, particularly Pioneer Square and the CID.
- b. Work with private-sector employers to explore the feasibility of creating new vocational and apprenticeship programs in key growth sectors of the economy such as maritime, the creative economy, green economy and other as identified by OED.

2. Leverage Major Public Works Projects to Create First Hire and other Workforce Training Programs for Downtown residents.

- a. Building on the example of [King County's Priority Hire Program](#) and the [City of Seattle Priority Hire Program](#), partner with OED and/or other workforce development agencies to launch a targeted Downtown workforce and economic development initiative designed to provide training and living-wage employment opportunities in the construction industry for Downtown residents.
 - b. Explore the feasibility of requiring major public works projects Downtown to be subject to a guiding community workforce agreement providing employment opportunities for employment with participating trade unions. Further, new policies requiring inclusive procurement policies can mandate a portion of public contracts be allocated to minority- and women-owned businesses (MWBs).
 - c. As with the King County and City programs, the program would prioritize individuals from economically distressed areas and underserved socioeconomic groups, aiming to enhance workforce diversity and provide equitable access to construction careers.
- 3. Consider the Use of Community Benefits Agreements to Expand Workforce Training and Job Opportunities.**
- a. Building in the example of the [Key Arena Agreement and MOU](#), encourage the use of community benefits agreements for major private-sector projects to provide additional funding for community development, workforce training and jobs for local residents, with a focus on women and BIPOC communities.

Strategy #6: Leverage Vacant, Underutilized and Publicly Owned Sites to Support Long-Term Economic and Community Vitality

Publicly-owned and vacant underutilized sites present a strategic opportunity for community investments in public infrastructure, affordable housing and other uses that support an inclusive and equitable economy. Particularly as new transit investments take place with the attendant consequences for increased land values, community-ownership of key sites provides a critical hedge against displacement and can ensure a diversity of housing types by affordability and businesses by type and size.

Implementation Actions:

- 1. Explore opportunities for the acquisition and assembly of privately held vacant sites for future community-oriented development.**
 - a. Study the feasibility of site acquisition and assembly of key sites and the potential for the development of community-serving residential, commercial, and civic uses.
 - b. Conduct outreach to foundations, CDFIs and other private- and public-sector partners to evaluate the feasibility of establishing an acquisition fund for underutilized vacant sites.
 - c. As feasible, create a new program either within the City or through a new public-private partnership to dispose of and develop the sites according to a set of guidelines/parameters for the development community-serving uses.

2. Prioritize the Use of Publicly Owned Sites for Affordable Housing and Community Economic Development.

- a. Create a comprehensive inventory of publicly owned sites by agency and create a priority list of sites for development with affordable housing and other priority community-serving uses (e.g., schools, cultural centers, etc.).
- b. Create a community-led and inclusive process for guiding the disposal and development of these key sites facilitated either by the City and/or a working group of public agencies with land assets located in the Downtown Plan Area.

Strategy #7: Evaluate the Feasibility of Establishing New District-Scale Entities and Financing Tools

Both the City of Seattle, through its various agencies and departments, and a variety of existing nonprofit and business organizations already have significant capacity and well development programs focused on Downtown neighborhoods. Despite this, research conducted by BAE for this effort suggests that additional organizational and financing tools may be required to address the full scale of future economic development and infrastructure needs for downtown over the 20 years of the regional center plan. These include but are not limited to the potential actions listed below.

Implementation Actions:

- 1. Study the feasibility of establishing a new special district such as an ecodistrict in all or part of Downtown promote and pilot sustainable, inclusive, and equitable economic and community development. This would potentially build on the example of [the Capitol Hill EcoDistrict](#) managed by the Urban League of Greater Seattle.**
 - a. Conduct outreach to key stakeholders in the City and existing nonprofit agencies and business organizations to comprehensively assess the utility and feasibility of creating new district to bring additional resources and capacity to all or part of Downtown.
 - b. As feasible, develop a funding strategy and business plan for creating the district and/or expanding the scope and capacity of existing entities such as existing BIAs and community-based organizations.

- 2. Conduct a Feasibility Analysis for the Establishing of a [Tax Increment Financing District](#) in All or Part of Downtown to Fund Needed Infrastructure Improvements.**
 - a. Consistent with recently passed legislation and working with private- and public-sector partners (e.g., taxing districts), convene a working group to study the feasibility of establishing a TIF district in all or part of Downtown Seattle to create a funding stream for future infrastructure improvements.
 - b. As feasible, establish a TIF District and develop guidelines to prioritize investments that advance the goals of inclusive and equitable development.

Appendix A: Economic Development Funding Sources

City of Seattle Programs

OED offers the following programs for entrepreneurs and small businesses:

- **Small Business Capital Access Program:** Provides grants to reduce 20% of the principal on qualifying loans, aiding small businesses in managing debt and improving financial health.
- **Tenant Improvement Fund:** Offers grants to small businesses (with fewer than 50 employees) for storefront expansion or improvements, enhancing their physical presence and customer experience.
- **Business Community Ownership Fund:** Assists businesses in securing fixed and affordable commercial rents, promoting long-term stability and community presence.
- **Storefront Repair Fund:** Provides \$2,000 grants for small businesses to repair storefront property damage, helping maintain attractive and functional storefronts.

Other relevant City of Seattle programs include:

- **Equitable Development Initiative (EDI):** Funds projects aimed at reducing displacement and increasing access to opportunities in high-risk neighborhoods, with a focus on serving the BIPOC community.
- **Digital Equity Grants:** Through the Technology Matching Fund and Digital Navigator Grant, these programs help bridge the digital divide for those with limited access, supporting digital literacy and connectivity.
- **Environmental Justice Fund:** Supports initiatives that address environmental conditions and climate change impacts, particularly in underserved communities.
- **Food Equity Fund:** Provides resources to bring culturally relevant food and knowledge to communities, promoting food security and cultural preservation.
- **Recreation for All Fund:** Offers grants for culturally relevant programs and events in parks, community centers, and pools, fostering community engagement and well-being.

State and Federal Resources

- The Washington State Department of Commerce oversees multiple programs aimed at strengthening communities and fostering economic development, such as the Housing Trust Fund and the Community Reinvestment Project (CRP). The CRP, for instance, provides grants to organizations supporting equitable economic development.
- The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) offers grants and technical assistance to support economic development strategies that lead to job creation.
- The Small Business Administration (SBA) provides loans, grants, and counseling services to small businesses to promote growth and sustainability.
- Along with other HUD-funded programs, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program provides annual grants to the City of Seattle to support the City's economic development agenda.

Private Philanthropy

- The Seattle Foundation is the region's largest community foundation, focusing on advancing equity and shared prosperity. Relevant programs include the Communities of Opportunity initiative, launched in partnership with King County, which aims to improve health, social, racial, and economic outcomes by investing in community-led partnerships and policy reforms.
- 4Culture: Serving all of King County, 4Culture integrates arts, heritage, preservation, and public art to enhance community vitality. By funding cultural projects and preserving historical sites, 4Culture contributes to the region's economic development and cultural richness.
- The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation provides grants to local organizations in and around Seattle. These grants support efforts to end homelessness, connect individuals to stable housing, and address pressing community needs, thereby fostering economic stability and growth.

Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs)

- Craft3 is a nonprofit CDFI that provides loans to businesses, nonprofits, and individuals, focusing on fostering economic, ecological, and family resilience in Pacific Northwest communities.
- Impact Capital offers financing and technical assistance to nonprofit organizations and affordable housing developers, aiming to revitalize underserved communities throughout the State of Washington.

- LISC Puget Sound, in collaboration with Kaiser Permanente, is implementing a place-focused and people-centered strategy to enhance health and wealth through district, business, and talent development in the Puget Sound region. This initiative aims to address barriers to inclusive growth and economic mobility, particularly those affecting Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities.

Land Use Technical Report

Date: August 2024

Prepared for: Seattle Downtown Regional
Center Plan

Prepared by: Seva Workshop



Seattle
Office of Planning &
Community Development

Land Use

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Downtown Regional Center Subarea Plan
AUGUST 2024

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DOWNTOWN IN CONTEXT

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



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

Exhibit 1: Downtown Context Map



Regional Role

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

Historic Development Context³

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



“Indian Camp on Ballast Island”, Image Source: DuwamishTribe.Org

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

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

⁴ [Ballast Island History](#)

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

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



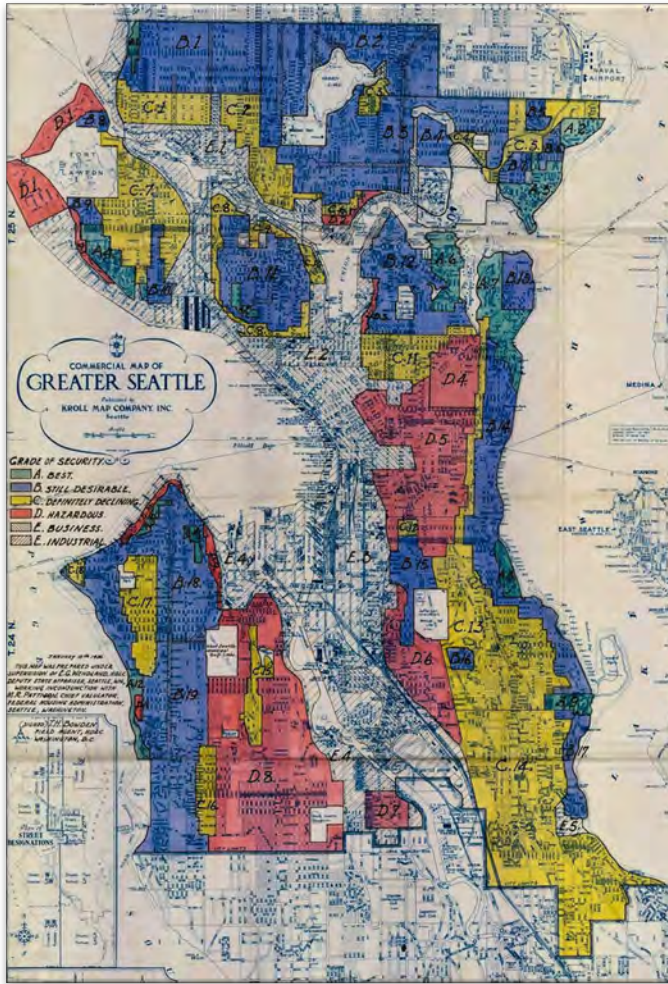
Milita lined up during anti-Chinese riot in Seattle, February 1886.

Image Source: [Museum of History and Industry](#), Seattle.

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the 1970s and 1980s, major development projects and new waves of immigration

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

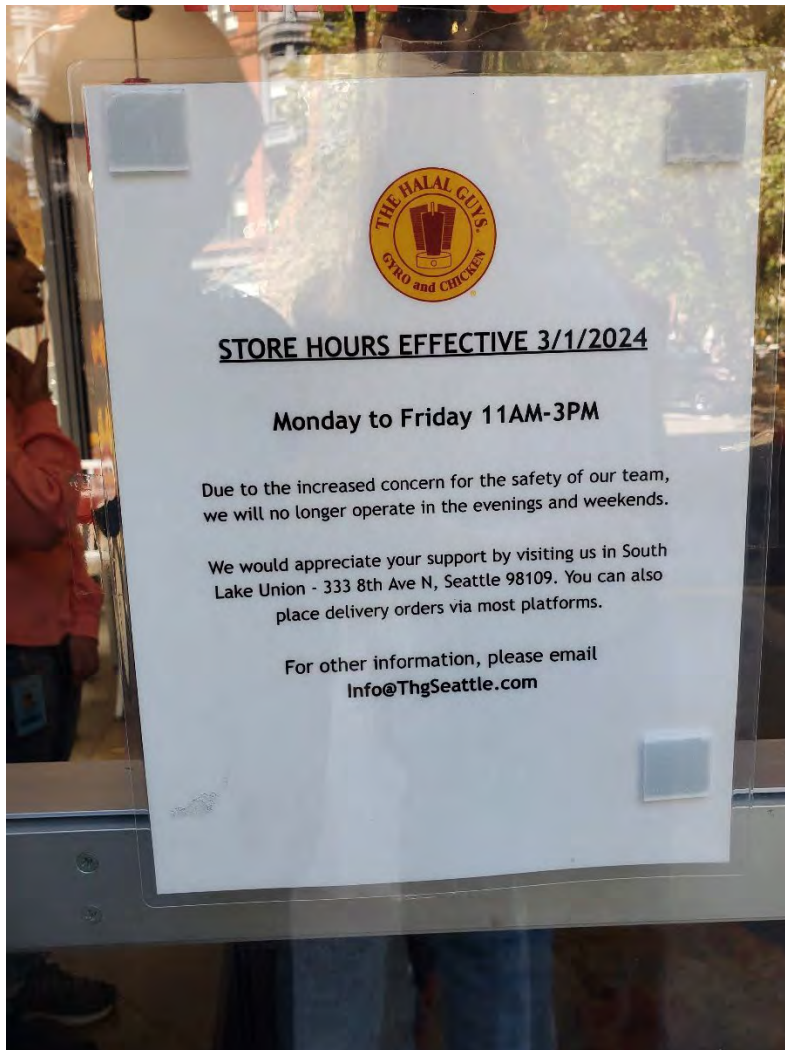
In the decades from 1990-2020, Downtown developed into a mixed-use and transit-oriented center, adding many more residential units and options for transit connection. In the 1990s, many cultural institutions were introduced or revitalized, and residential development expanded. Among cultural institutions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



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

Image Source: <https://www.historylink.org/File/2071>

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



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

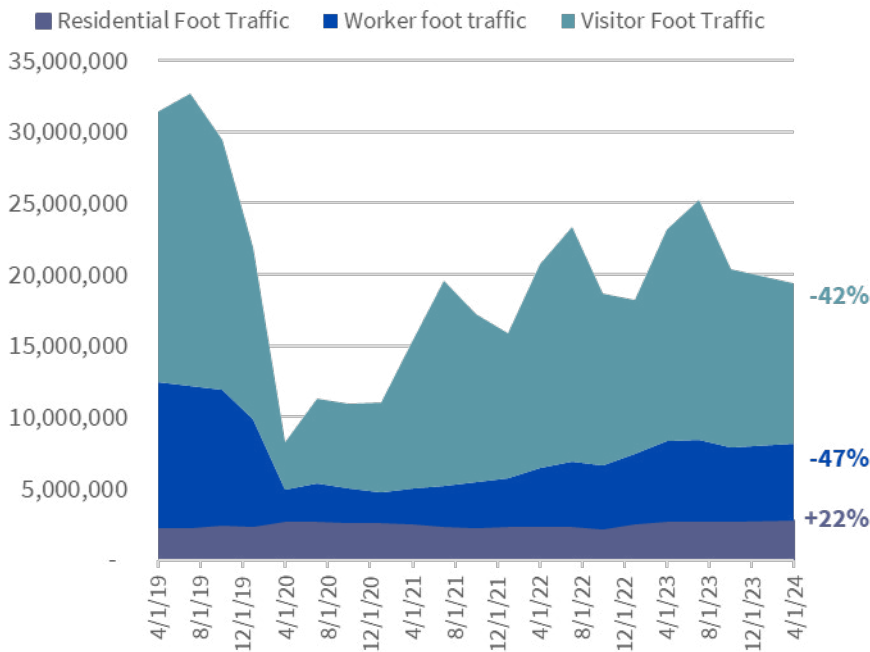
Photo taken 7/16/2024.

Current Context

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

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

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



Downtown 2023: Key Stats



Size: **934 acres**



Population: **47,859**



Housing Units: **33,698**



Jobs: **187,799**



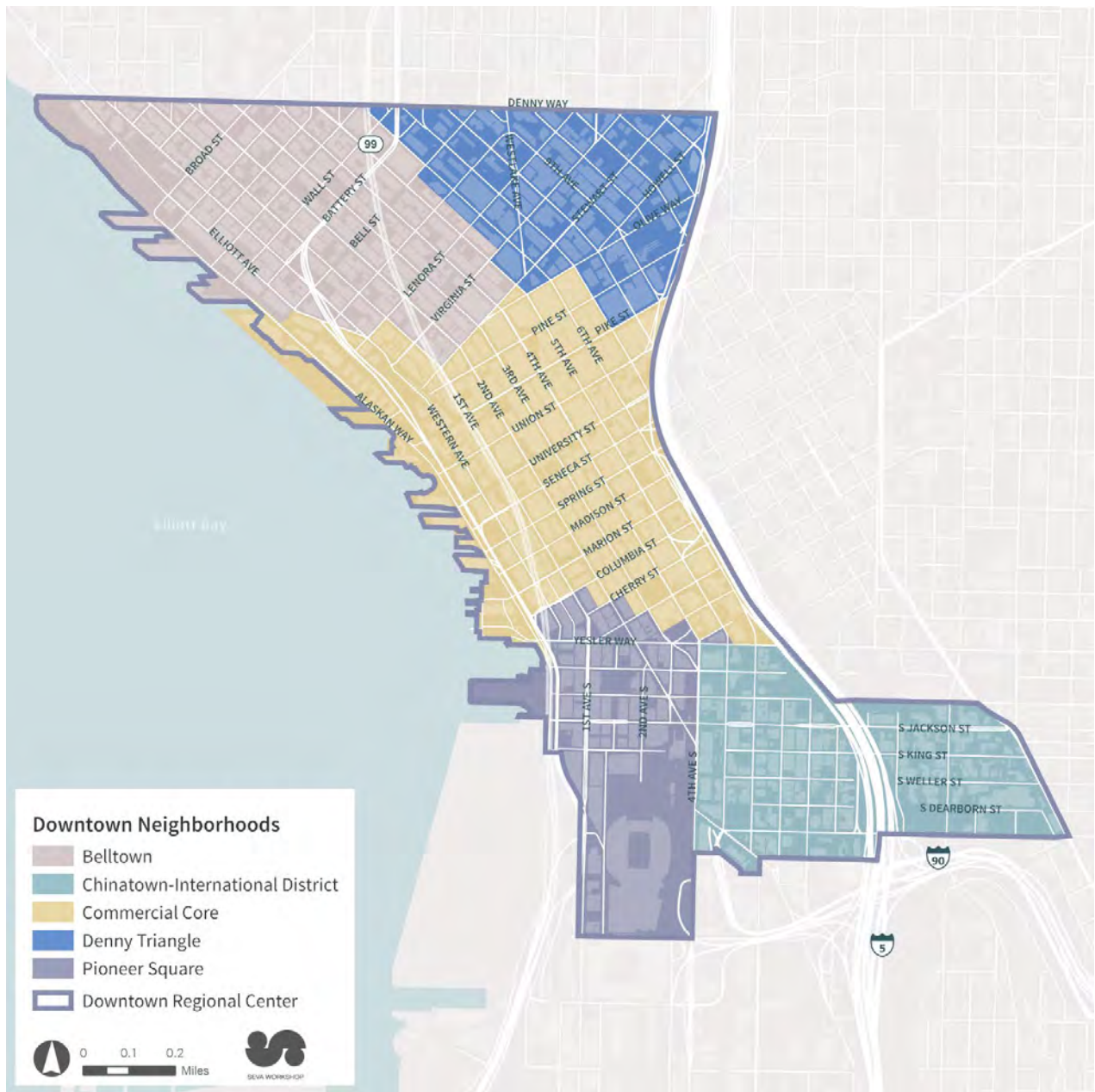
Activity Unit Density: **252 au/acre**

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

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

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

Exhibit 4: Downtown Map with Neighborhoods.



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

Planning Framework

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

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



Image Source: PSRC, 2024.

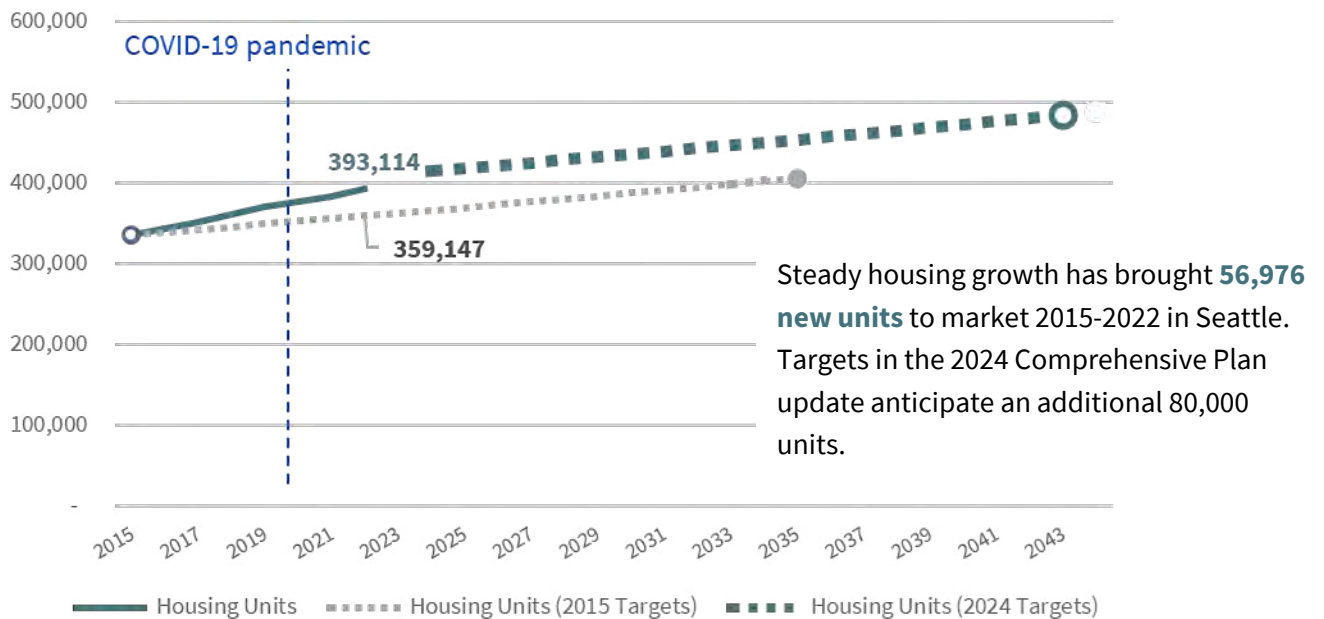
Downtown Seattle is a critical component of success for PSRC’s 65/75 goal. A cornerstone of achieving the greenhouse gas (GHG) targets established in VISION 2050 is for 65% of population growth and 75% of employment growth to occur within walkable access to high-capacity transit

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

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

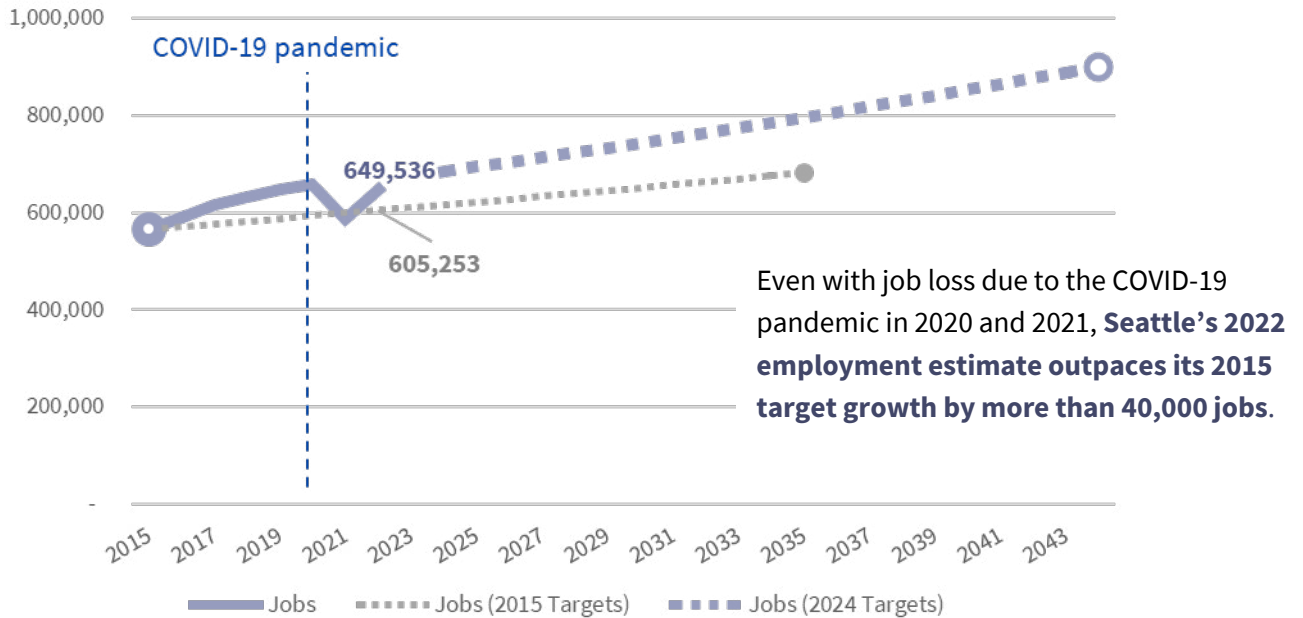
Seattle has outpaced its growth targets from the 2015 Comprehensive Plan. For both housing and jobs, Seattle has been growing at a faster rate than anticipated in 2015. Much of this exponential growth can be attributed to the explosion of the tech sector in South Lake Union. The 2024 Comprehensive Plan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

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



Note: Pace of growth from 2015 housing targets set based on a consistent CAGR to achieve 2035 targets.
 Sources: City of Seattle “UCUV Housing Growth Report”, 2023; Seva Workshop, 2024.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

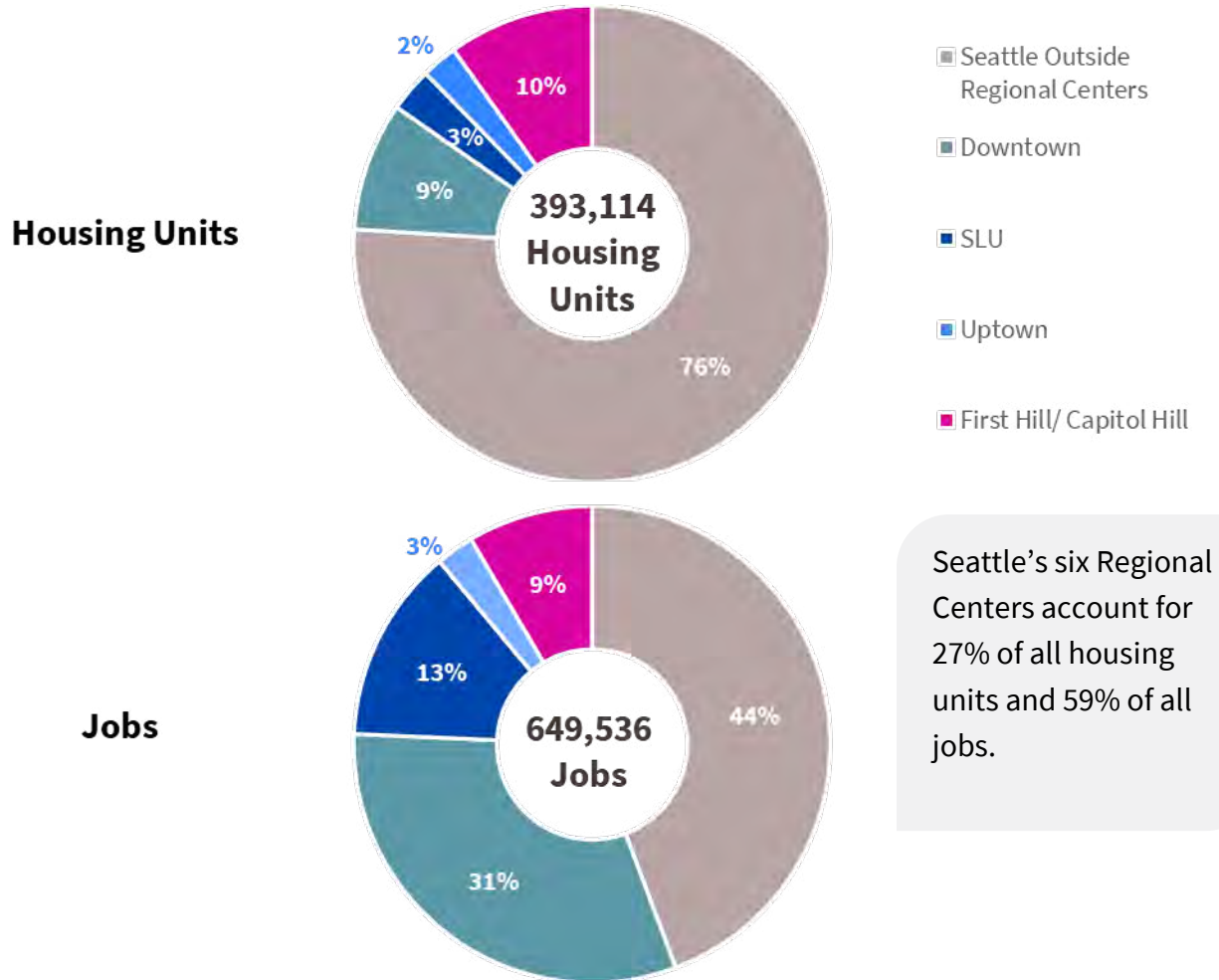
Exhibit 9: Jobs in Seattle and by Regional Center, 2015-2022.

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

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

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

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



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

Exhibit 11: Seattle’s Urban Villages, 2023.

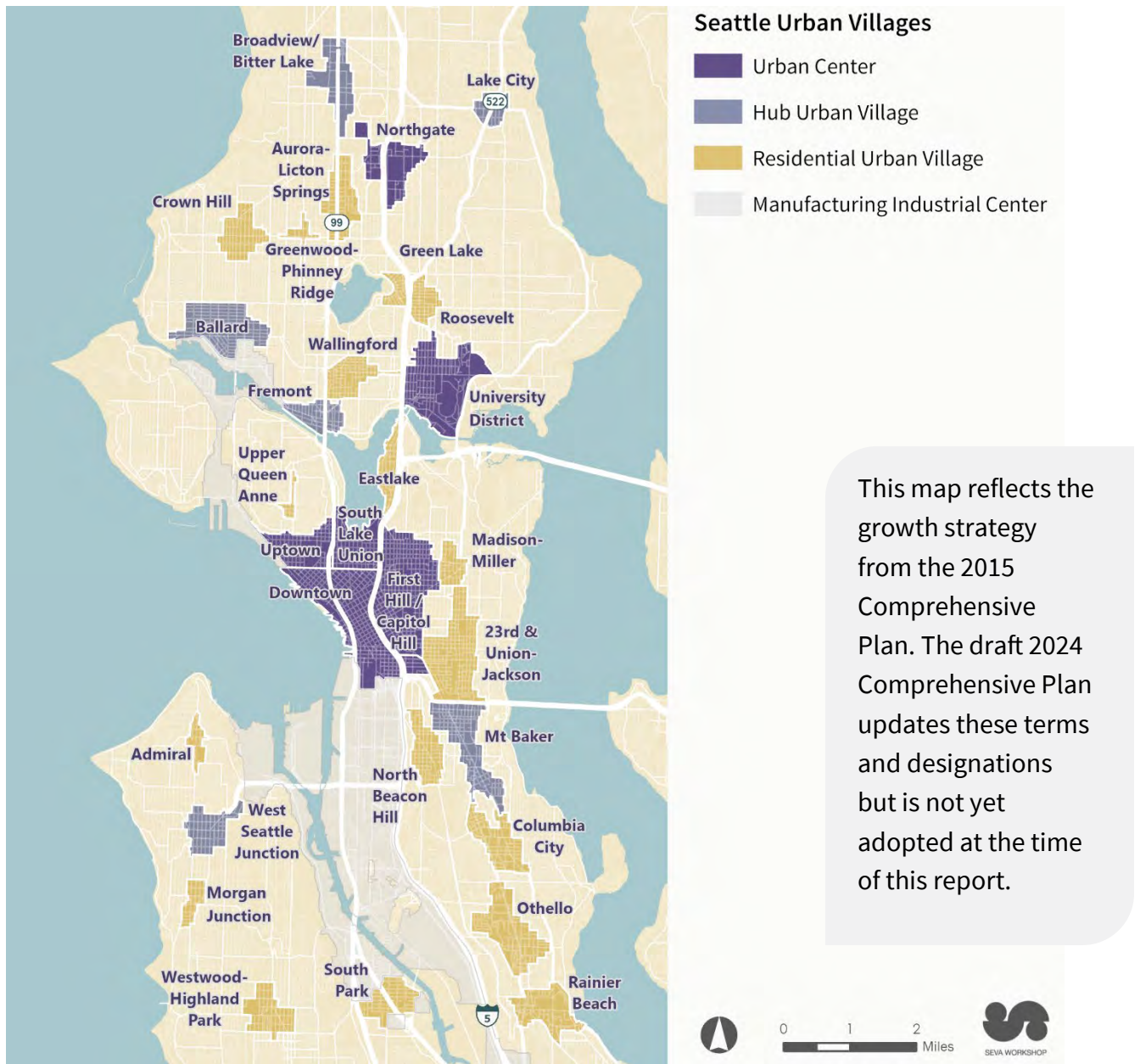


Image Source: Seattle OPCD; Seva Workshop

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

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

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

Previous and Concurrent Planning Efforts

Waterfront Redesign

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

Seattle Transportation Plan Update & EIS

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

Light Rail Expansion Plans (ST3)

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

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

CID Neighborhood Strategic Plan

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

Little Sài Gòn Action Plan

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

Pike Place Master Plan

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

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

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

Industrial-Maritime Strategy

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

Third Avenue Strategic Forum

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

The Downtown Activation Plan (DAP)

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

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

King County Civic Campus Plan

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

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

LAND USE AND ZONING

Citywide Future Land Use

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

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

Exhibit 12: FLUM and Implementing Zones, 2023.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Exhibit 13: Citywide Future Land Use Designations

Future Land Use Map, Figure 2

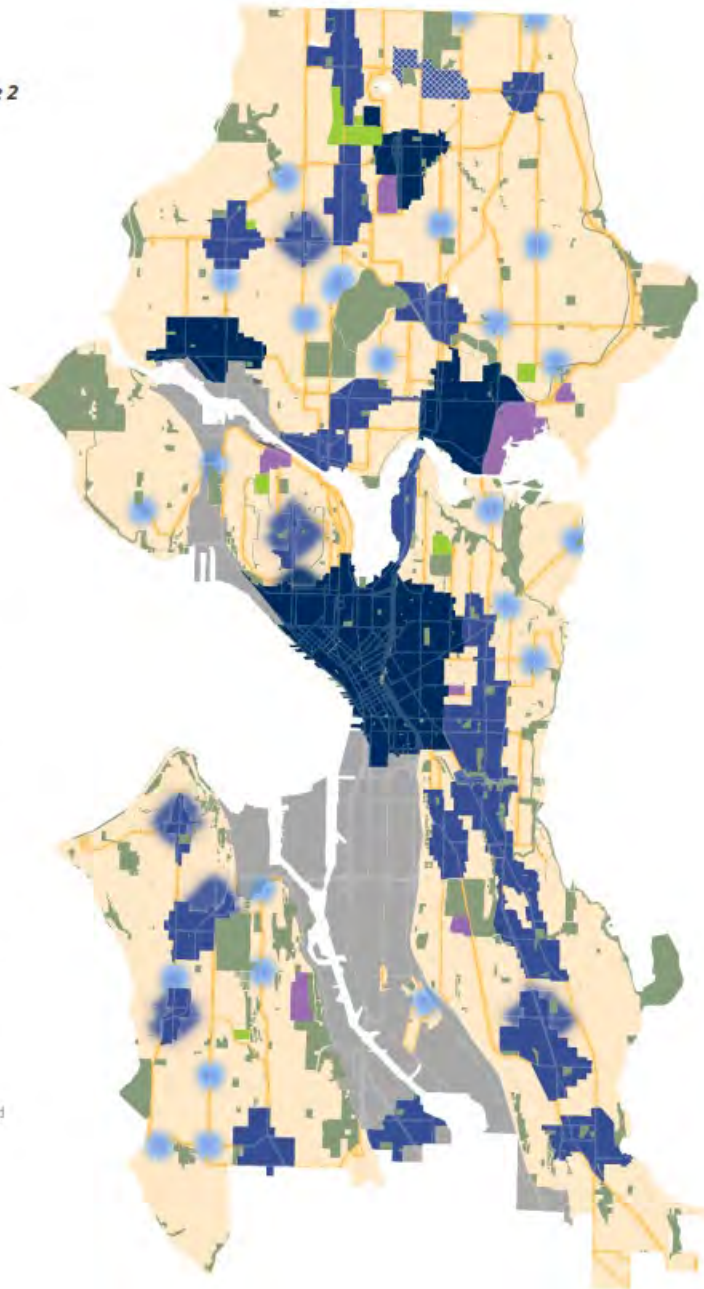
Place types

-  Regional Center
-  Urban Center
-  Neighborhood Center
-  Manufacturing & Industrial Center
-  Urban Neighborhood
-  Expanded Regional or Urban Center
-  New Urban Center

Other areas

-  Industrial outside Manufacturing & Industrial Centers
-  Major Institution
-  Parks and open space
-  Cemetery

-  Frequent transit route
Frequent transit network, existing and future, along which zoning for higher density housing will be considered



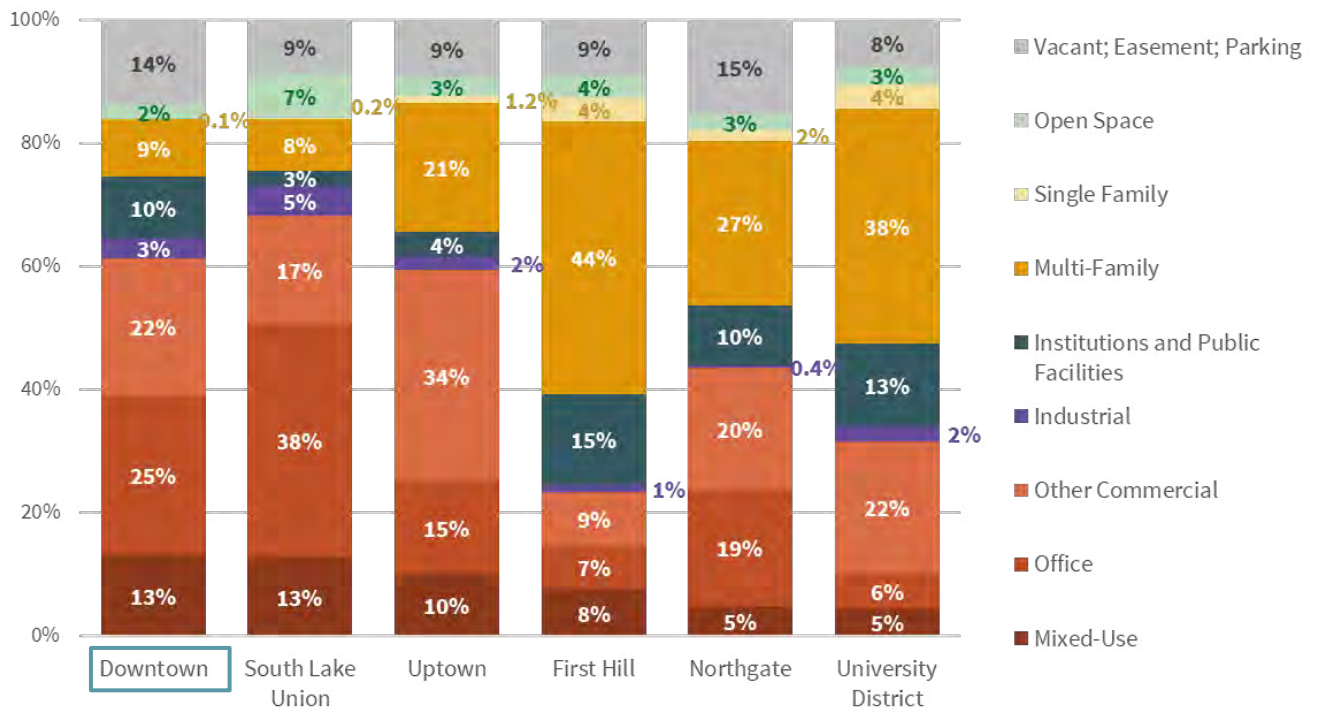
Sources: City of Seattle “One Seattle” Draft Plan, 2024.

Existing Land Use for Urban Centers

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

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

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

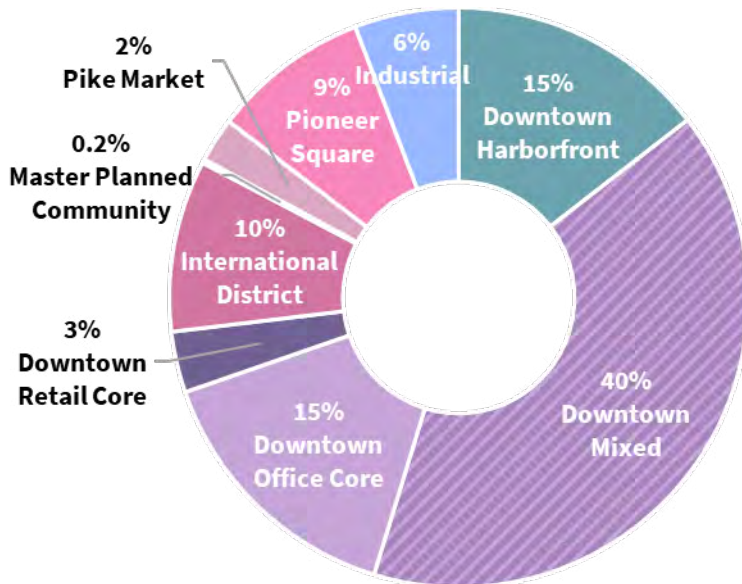


Sources: King County Assessor as organized by City of Seattle, 2023; Seva Workshop, 2024

Existing Zoning Downtown¹¹

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

Exhibit 15: Downtown Land Acreage, by Zone.



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

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

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

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

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

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

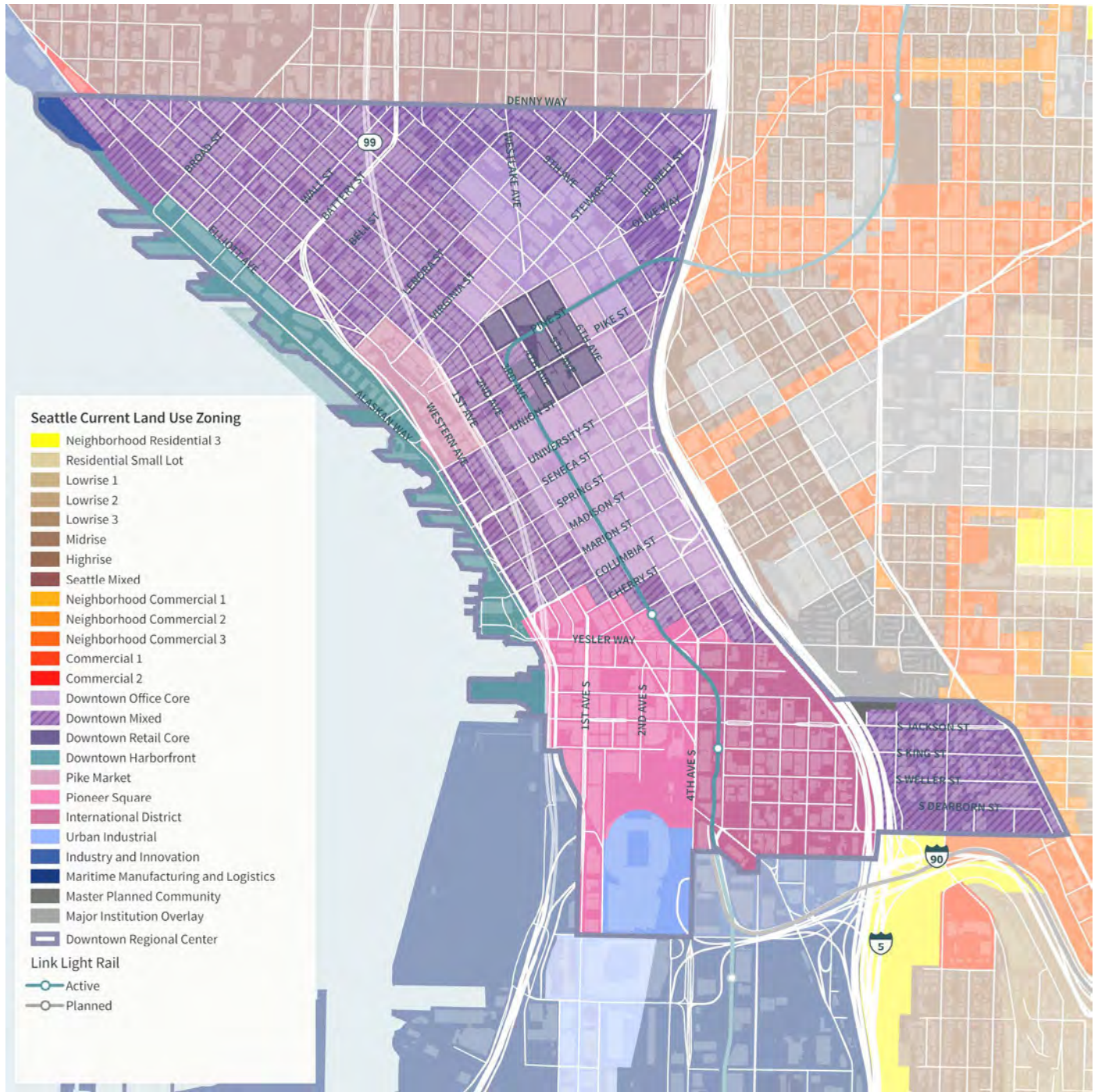
¹³ A full list of prohibited uses can be found in [SMC 23.49.044](#)

¹⁴ SMC 23.66.302

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

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

Exhibit 16: Downtown Seattle Zoning Map, 2023.



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

Special Design Districts¹⁵

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

Pioneer Square Preservation District

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

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

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

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

¹⁶ [SMC 23.49.007](#)

Exhibit 17: Pioneer Square Historic District Map.



Pike Place Market Historical District

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

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

International Special Review District

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

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

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

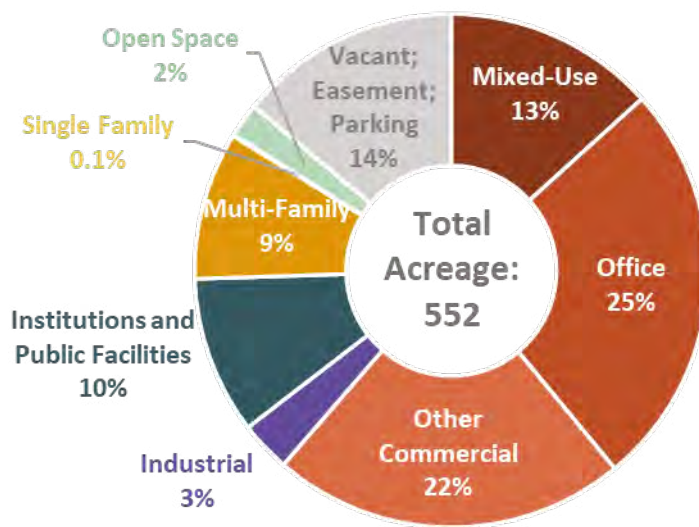
Exhibit 18: International Historic District Map.



Existing Land Use Downtown

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

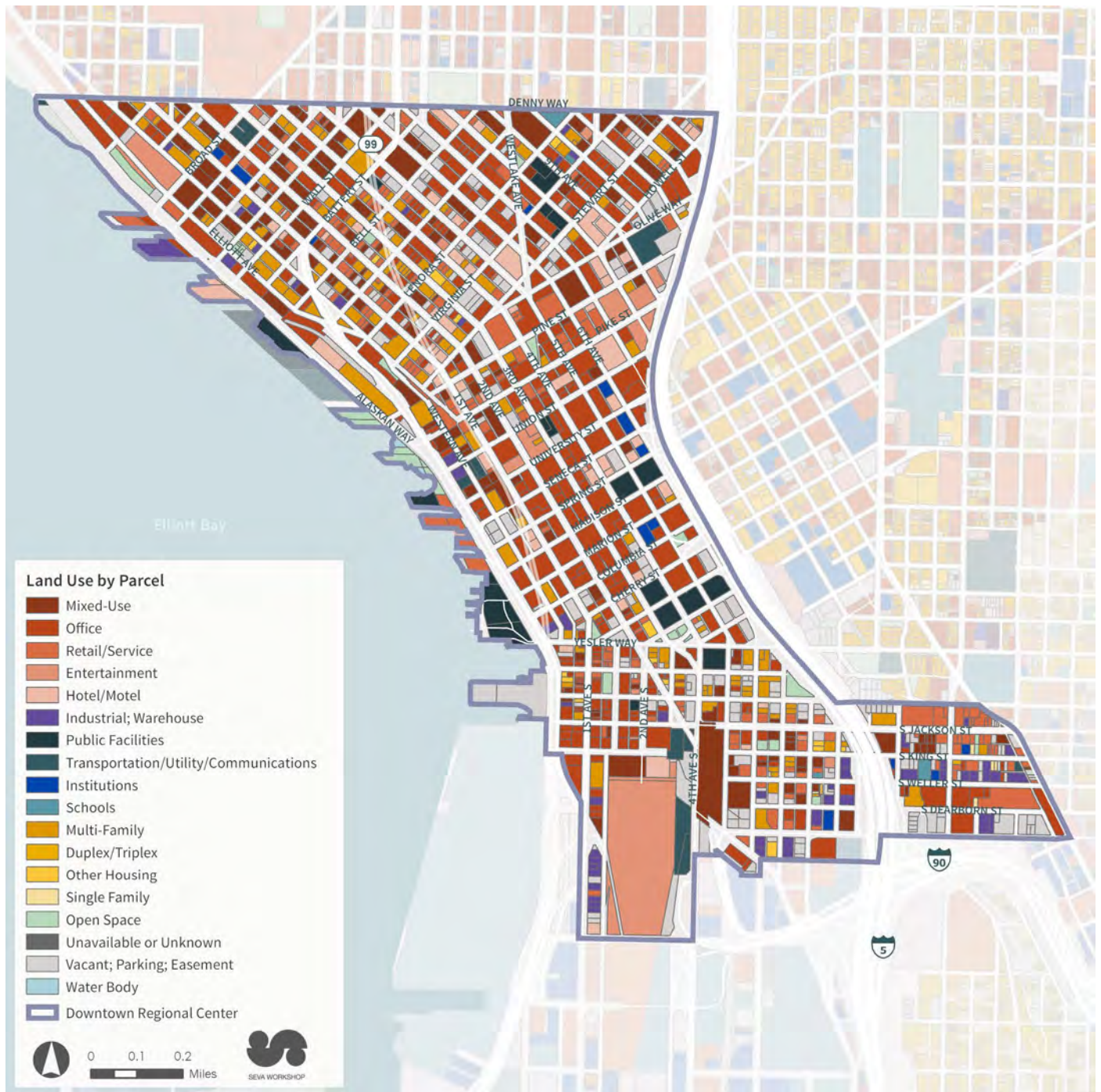
Exhibit 19: Downtown Land Use by Acreage, 2023.



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

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

Exhibit 20: Downtown Land Use, 2023.



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

Mixed Use

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

Exhibit 21: Downtown Mixed-Use Properties, 2023.

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

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



Pike Place Market

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

Office

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

Exhibit 22: Downtown Office Properties, 2023.

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

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

Image source (right): The Seattle Times



Columbia Center

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

Retail/Other Commercial

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



Exhibit 23: Downtown Other Commercial Properties, 2023.

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

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

¹⁷ See map of street-level use areas [here](#), Map 1G. Full list of allowed uses found in [SMC 23.49.009](#).

¹⁸ See [SMC 23.49.090](#) for details of all requirements in DRC zones and [SMC 23.49.009\(B\)\(2\)](#) for street-level restrictions beyond other areas in the 1G map.

Multifamily

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

Exhibit 24: Downtown Multifamily Properties, 2023.

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

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

Institutions and Public Facilities

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

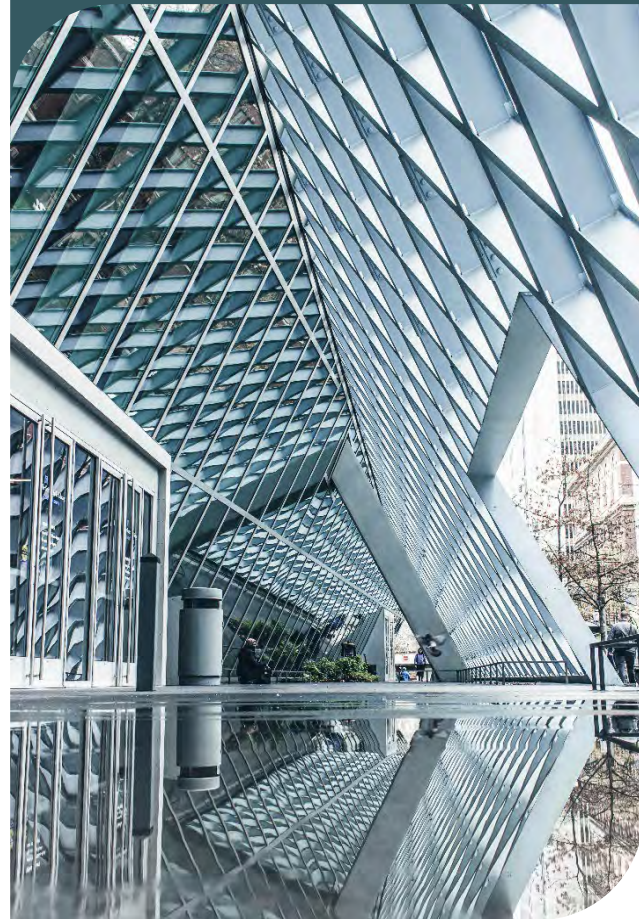
Exhibit 25: Downtown Institutions and Public Facilities Properties, 2023.

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

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

Seattle Public Library

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



¹⁹ [The Seattle Time, 2022](#)

Vacant/Parking Lots

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

Exhibit 26: Downtown Vacant/Parking Properties, 2023.

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

Note: ‘Building Square Footage’ for this category is predominantly parking structures, as well as interior space of vacant buildings.

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

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

- At 3rd and Cherry, a 1.3-acre vacant site has experienced stalled construction timelines since its demolition in 2005, with dreams of redevelopment as a Civic Square.²⁰ It is a key site, located right at the Pioneer Square light rail station. The project has faced many delays and setbacks but current plans show a 57-story tower with condominium residences, ground floor retail, and a maintained vision for a 25,000 square foot public plaza at the street level.²¹
- A 5-acre parcel between Lumen Field and the waterfront, and just outside the Regional Center boundary, is commonly known as the “WOSCA” site and has a highly debated future. Its vision is being set as part of a [separate planning process](#). Temporary uses are being considered in connection with the 2026 World Cup Games but long-term plans are not set.

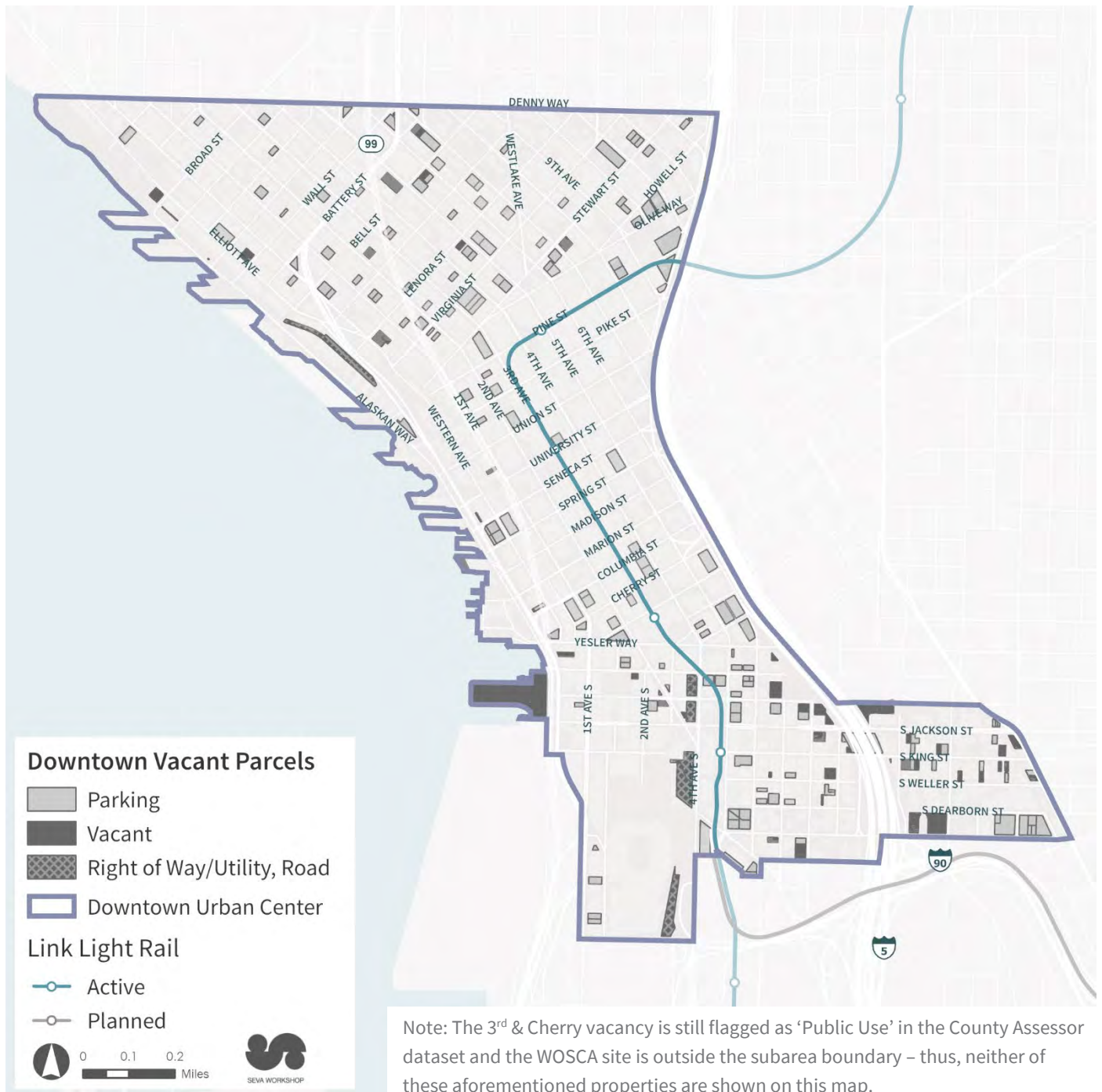
Pier 48

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

²⁰ [Seattle Times, 2007](#)

²¹ <https://bosadevelopment.com/project/339-cherry-street/>

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



Note: The 3rd & Cherry vacancy is still flagged as ‘Public Use’ in the County Assessor dataset and the WOSCA site is outside the subarea boundary – thus, neither of these aforementioned properties are shown on this map.

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

Patterns of Ownership²²

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

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

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

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

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

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

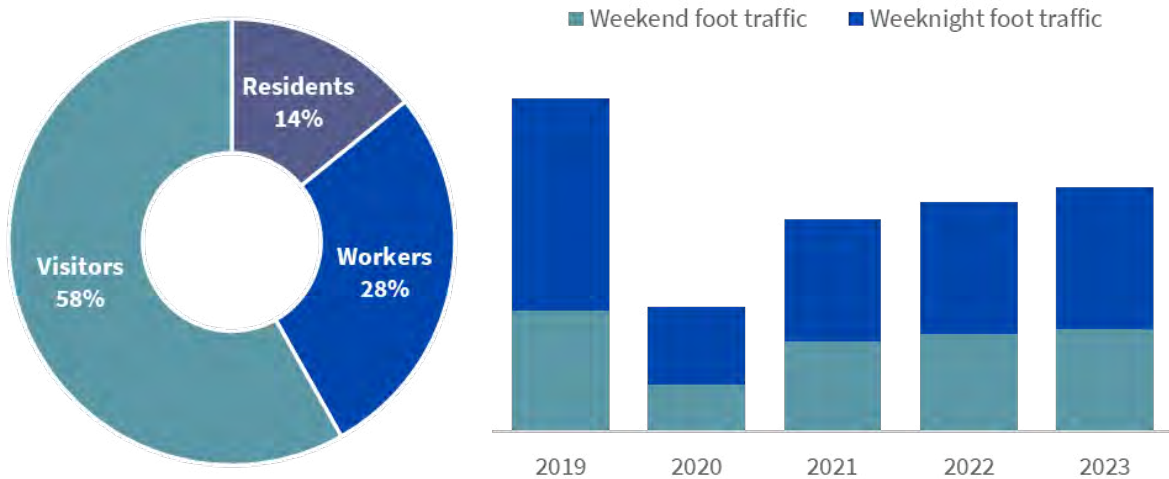
Note: These figures capture acreage and exclude the right-of-way.

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

Street Life and Cultural Space

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

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



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

77 PUBLIC ART PIECES
206 CULTURAL SPACES
122 LANDMARKS

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

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



CHINATOWN-INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT

LIVING HERITAGE
ALLEYWAYS
IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEURSHIP
HIDDEN GEMS



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

LANDMARKS

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

CULTURAL SPACES

- 8** Arts/Cultural Education or Training Spaces

PUBLIC ART

- 5** Public Art Installations

PIONEER SQUARE

HISTORIC SMALL BUSINESS GALLERIES



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

LANDMARKS

2

Official Landmarks

A

Flat Iron Building

B

Smith Tower

CULTURAL SPACES

51

Visual Art Spaces

41

Other
Cultural Spaces

PUBLIC ART

13

Public Art
Installations



COMMERCIAL CORE

INSTITUTIONAL
WATERFRONT
LIVE ENTERTAINMENT



Key areas of cultural activation in this neighborhood include the waterfront and 1st Avenue, connected with a pedestrian parkway along University Street. This area includes highlights such as the Seattle Art Museum, The Showbox music venue, Post Alley, and activations on the piers.

LANDMARKS

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

CULTURAL SPACES

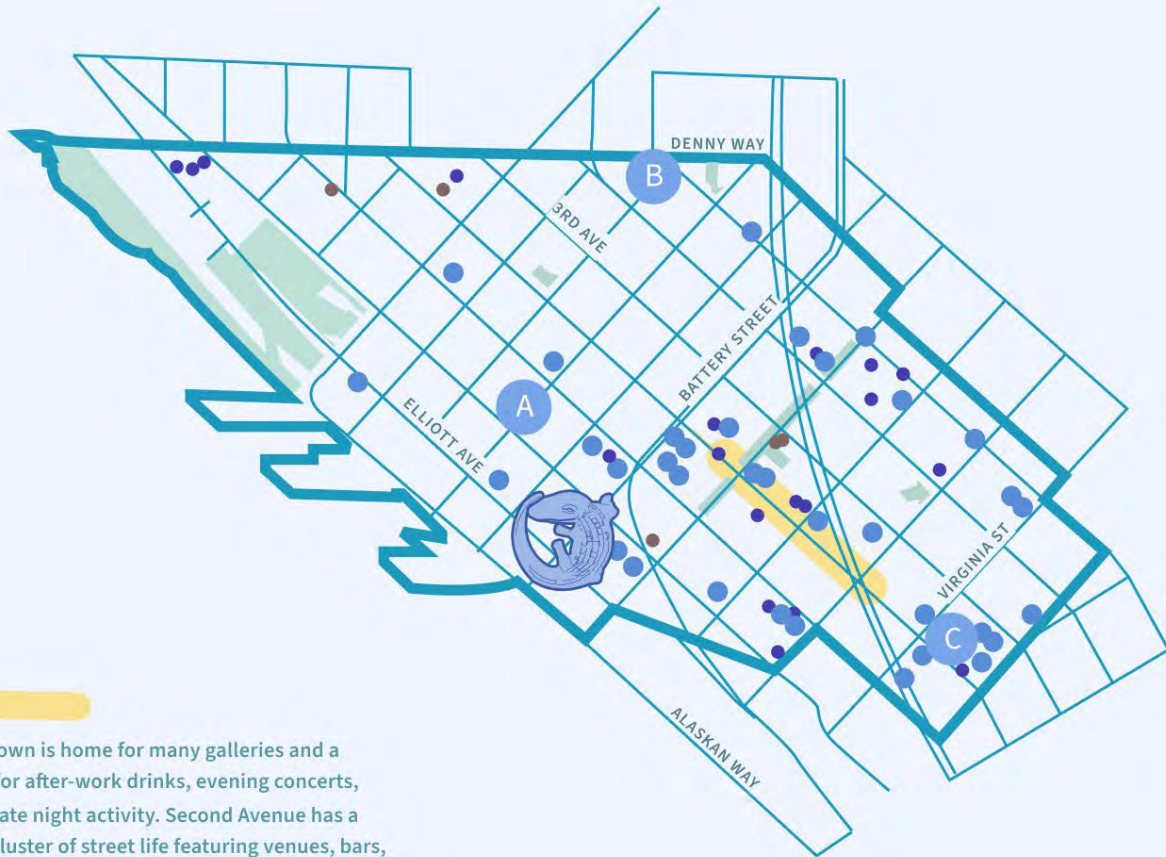
- 20 Art Galleries
- 7 Performance Venues
- 27 Other Cultural Spaces

PUBLIC ART

- 50 Public Art Installations

BELLTOWN

HAPPY HOUR
CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE
ARTS COLLECTIVES



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

LANDMARKS

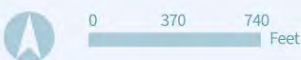
- 38 Official Landmarks
- A Ace Hotel
- B Chief Seattle Statue
- C Moore Theater

CULTURAL SPACES

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

PUBLIC ART

- 8 Public Art Installations



DENNY TRIANGLE

STUDENTS
UNDER CONSTRUCTION
LUNCH BREAK ARTS



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

LANDMARKS

- 68 Official Landmarks
 - A Paramount Theater and Building
 - B Elephant Car Wash Sign
 - C Camlin Hotel

CULTURAL SPACES

- 6 Education Buildings
- 5 Other Cultural Spaces

PUBLIC ART

- 1 Public Art Installations

The CID

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

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

Pioneer Square

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

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

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

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

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

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

Commercial Core

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

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

Belltown

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

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

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

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

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

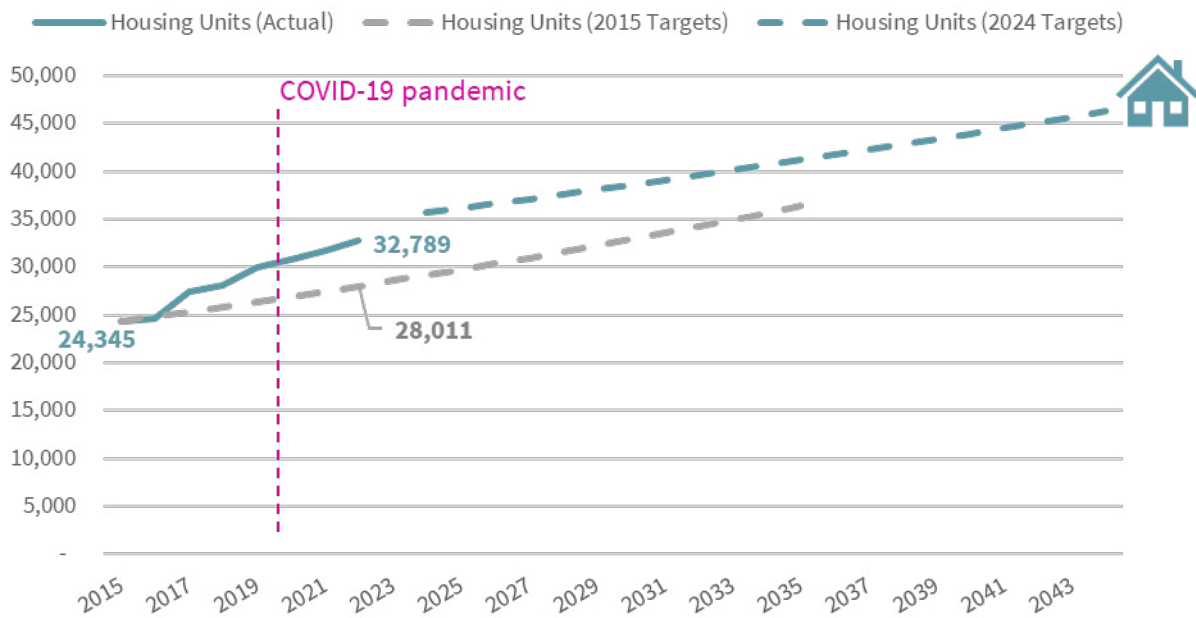
FUTURE GROWTH

Population and Employment, Growth and Targets

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

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

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

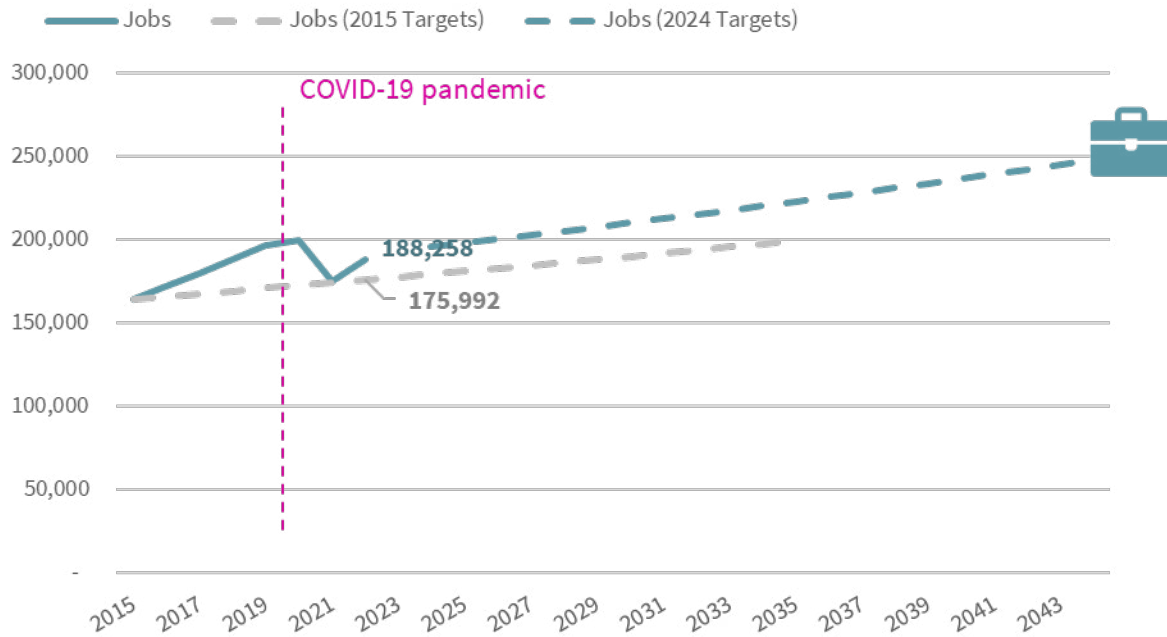


Sources: City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan Updates, 2015 & 2024; City of Seattle permit data in “UCUV Growth Report,” 2023; Seva Workshop, 2024.

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

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

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



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

Land Use Capacity

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

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

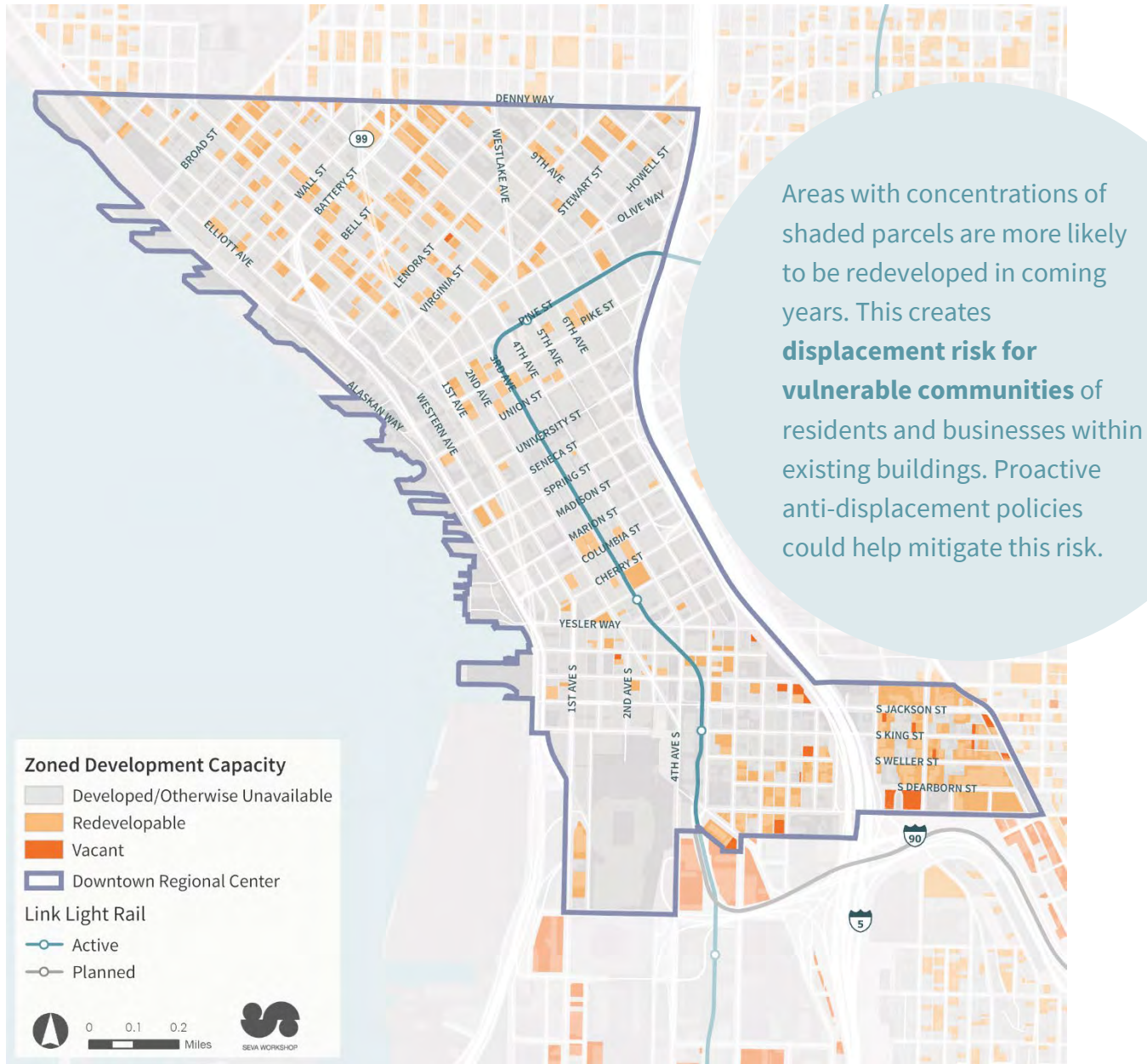
Exhibit 31: Downtown Housing and Job Capacity and Targets.

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

Note: Capacity shown for vacant or redevelopable parcels.

Sources: City of Seattle, 2022; One Seattle Comprehensive Plan for Growth Targets; Seva Workshop, 2024.

Exhibit 32: Development Capacity in Downtown, 2022.



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

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Opportunities and Constraints

Key Opportunities

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

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

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

Key Constraints

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

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

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

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

Connections to Project Outcomes

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

Key Supports:

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

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

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

Key Barriers:

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



Public Facilities & Services Technical Report

Date: December 19, 2025

Prepared for: Seattle Downtown Regional
Center Plan

Prepared by: BAE Urban Economics

Downtown Seattle Regional Center Plan

DRAFT Public Facilities and Services Analysis

Prepared for: City of Seattle

Prepared by: BAE

Thursday, December 11, 2025

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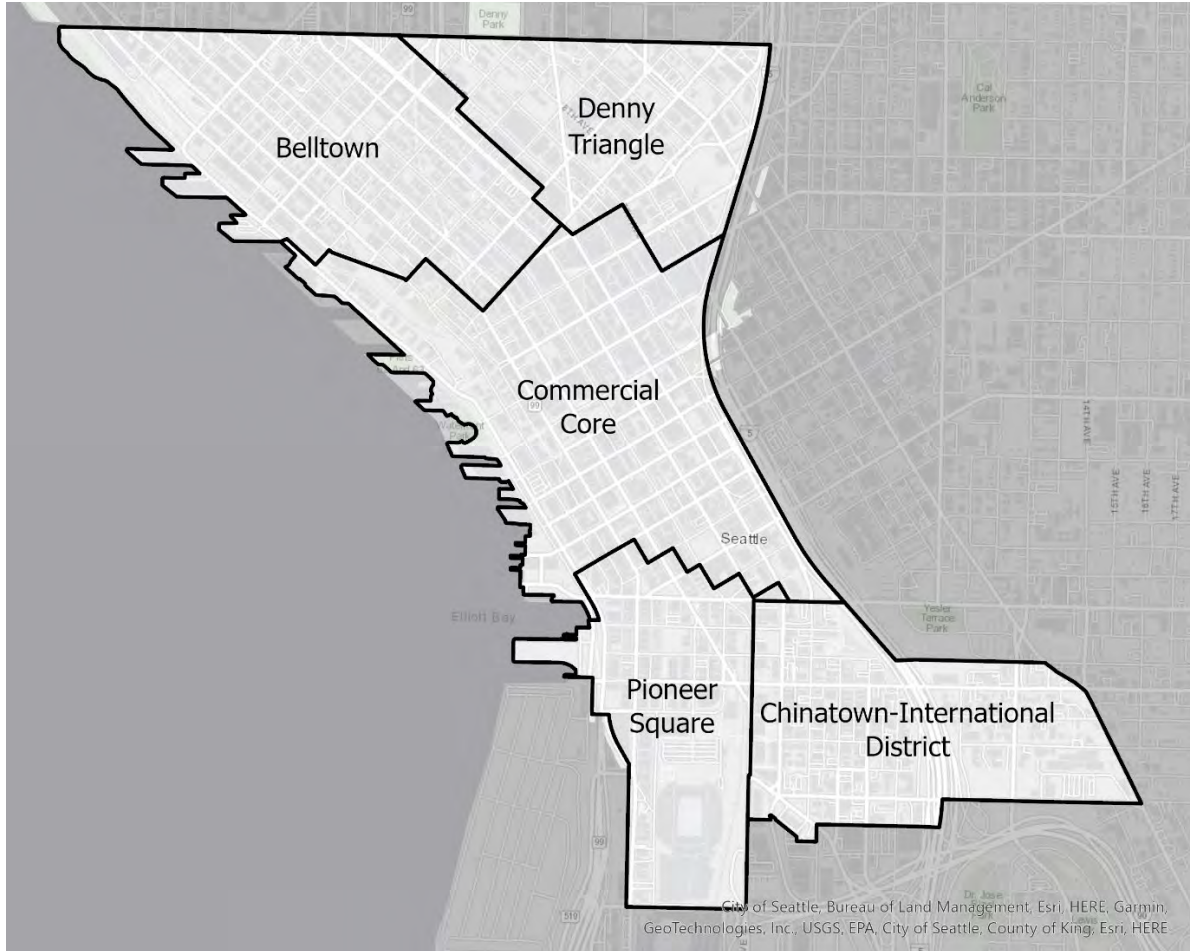
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Introduction

Downtown Seattle has long been the most important economic and cultural hub in the Puget Sound region, and over the next two decades it is projected that Downtown will also become Seattle's largest residential neighborhood. The City's Draft One Seattle Comprehensive Plan anticipates that this growth will continue, adding 60,000 jobs and 13,500 new housing units Downtown between 2024 and 2044. As noted in the 2024 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), housing and job growth will increase the demand for public facilities and services.

In support of the Downtown Regional Center Plan, this Public Facilities and Services Analysis provides an analysis of Downtown's existing public facilities and services and capital investment programs for planned projects that will serve the area, as well as the area's ability to accommodate future growth. Public facilities and services included in this report are categorized as follows: culture and recreation, utilities, public health and safety, and education. Furthermore, this report analyzes the distribution of public facilities across Downtown's five neighborhoods, Belltown, Denny Triangle, Commercial Core, Pioneer Square, and Chinatown- International District (CID). Downtown Seattle, the study area for this analysis, and its neighborhoods are displayed below in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Study Area

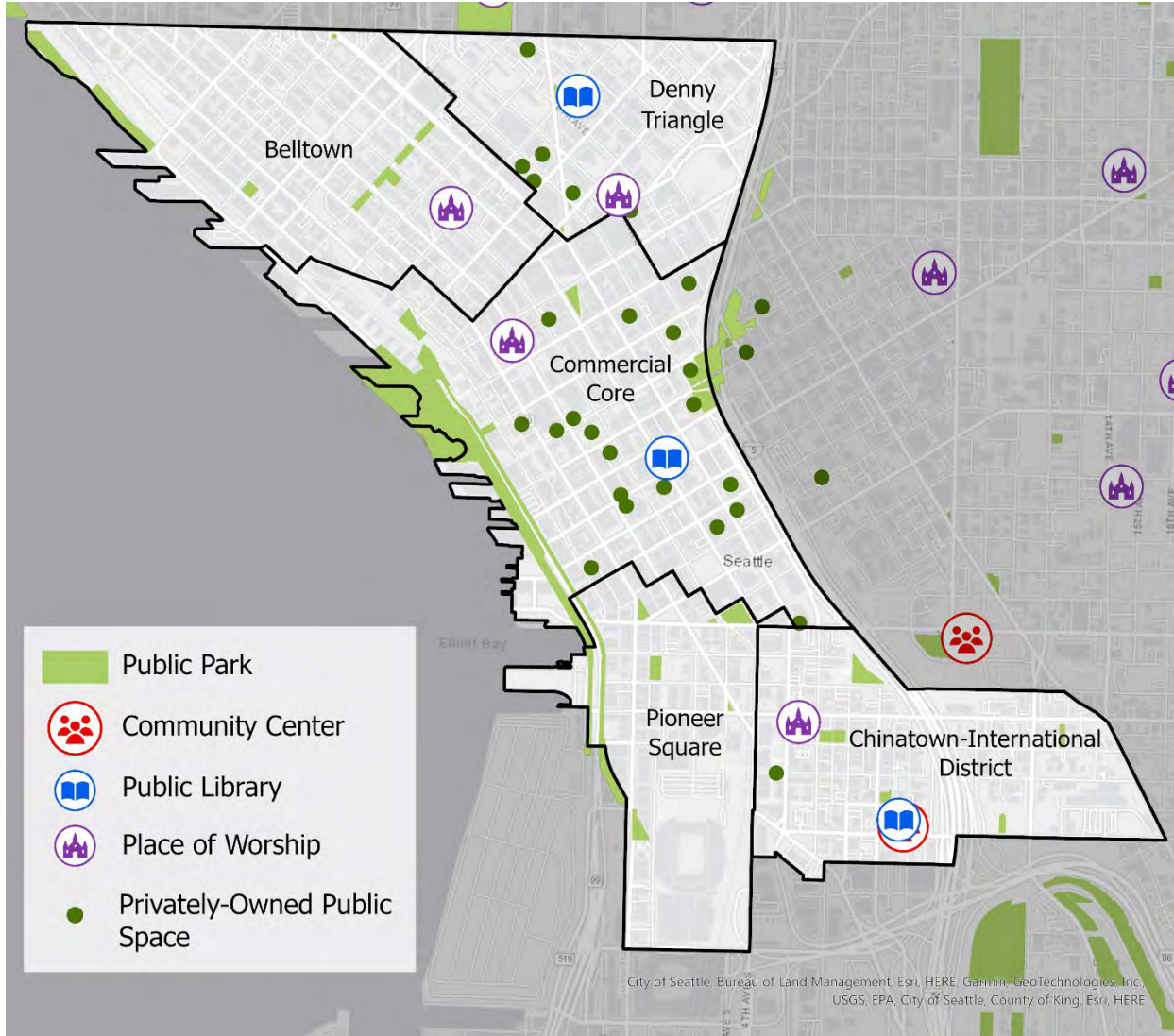


Source: City of Seattle, BAE, 2024.

Culture and Recreation

Local culture and recreation facilities – parks, libraries, public spaces, community centers, public art, and places of worship – contribute to community members’ quality of life by providing opportunities for social interaction, physical activity, environmental conservation, and community pride. While Downtown is home to several major tourist attractions, namely Lumen Field, Pike Place Market, and the Seattle Aquarium, this analysis investigates smaller-scale facilities, primarily those managed by the City of Seattle, and their distribution across Downtown neighborhoods. Local culture and recreation facilities in Downtown are offered by the Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) Department, the Seattle Office of Arts & Culture (ARTS), the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), and the Seattle Public Library (SPL), as well as private and non-profit entities. Figure 2 displays Downtown’s distribution of the following culture and recreation facilities: public parks, community centers, public libraries, places of worship, and privately-owned public spaces.

Figure 2. Culture and Recreation Facilities



Notes:

(a) This data originates from the City of Seattle’s public geospatial data portal, SeattleGeoData, and King County’s public geospatial data portal, the KCGIS Center. This data may not be inclusive of all culture and recreational facilities. This map displays community centers managed by SPR and libraries managed by SPL only.

(b) Places of Worship are included in this map only to illustrate their proximity to other facilities; The report does not evaluate Places of Worship in more detail.

Source: City of Seattle, King County, BAE, 2024.

Community Center

Downtown Seattle has one SPR- managed community center, the International District/Chinatown Community Center, located next door to the International District/Chinatown Branch of SPL. The community center was built in 2004 and has a variety of facilities including a gym, kitchen, basketball court, music room, and meeting rooms. The community center offers recreational sports, teen programs, and

a monthly community meal. Additionally, Downtown Seattle has a senior community center at Pike Place Market, the Pike Market Senior Center and Food Bank. The Pike Market Senior Center and Food Bank is a nonprofit organization that provides programming, services, and meals to people aged 55 and up, as well as a food bank for people of all ages. This organization is supported by Seattle Human Services; the Pike Place Market Foundation; the King County Veterans, Senior, and Human Services Levy; the Pike Place Market Public Market Center; and, United Way of King County.

Public Art

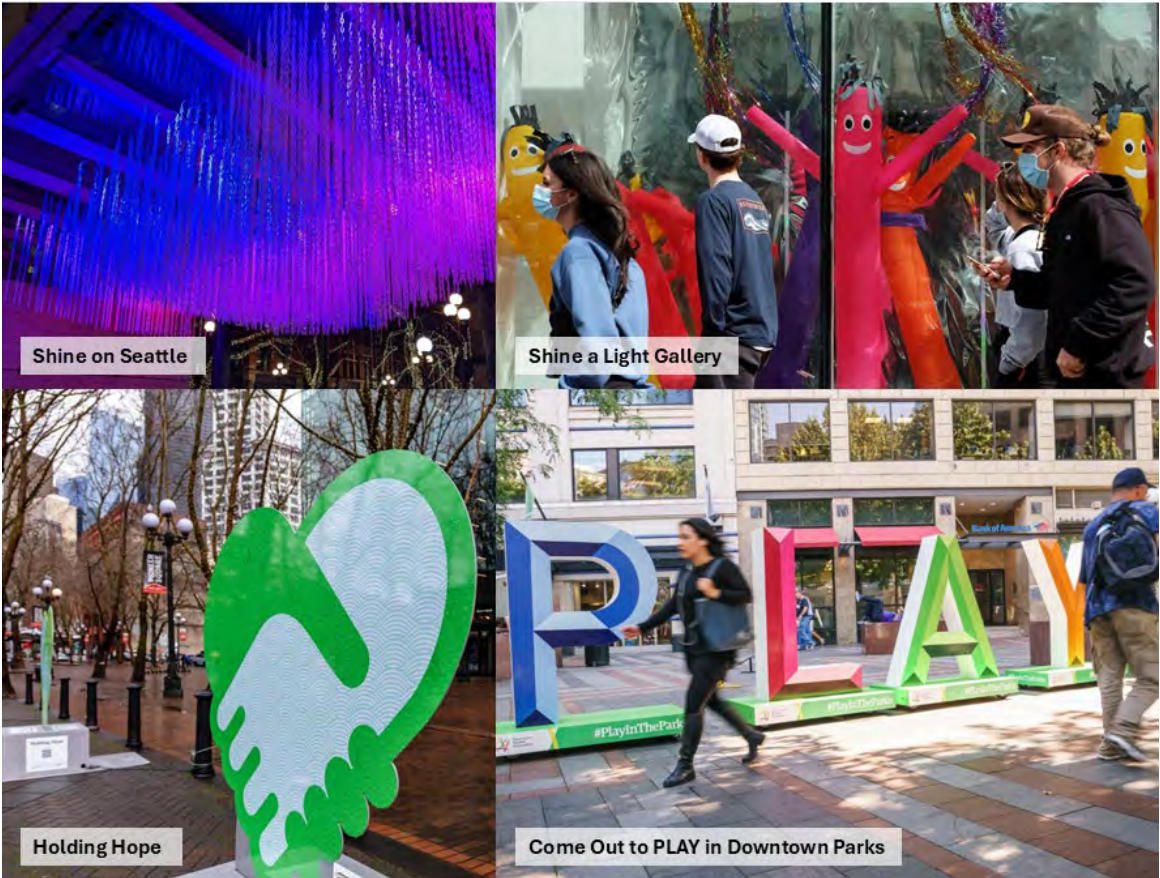
Downtown Seattle is home to numerous art installments provided through a variety of programs and organizations. Between Downtown Seattle, the Seattle Center, and South Lake Union there are over 200 public art installments spread across all neighborhoods. Temporary and permanent art installations in Downtown Seattle are coordinated by ARTS, King County, the Seattle Art Museum (SAM), and other organizations and public agencies. Recent temporary art projects listed on Downtown Seattle Association's (DSA) website are listed in Figure 3.

The City of Seattle's Public Art program, managed by ARTS, integrates artworks into public spaces. Implemented in 1973, the Public Art program mandates that one percent of eligible city capital improvement project funds are allocated to purchase and install art in parks, libraries, community centers, on public roadways, and other venues. ART provides guides and maps to encourage exploration of art installments by the public.

4Culture is the cultural funding agency for King County. 4Culture commissions artwork for public spaces in King County, manages the King County Public Art Commission, and provides consulting services to developers to integrate artwork into projects. To do so, 4Culture receives funding from Doors Open, a 0.1 percent sales tax; King County's One Percent for Art Ordinance; and a lodging tax.

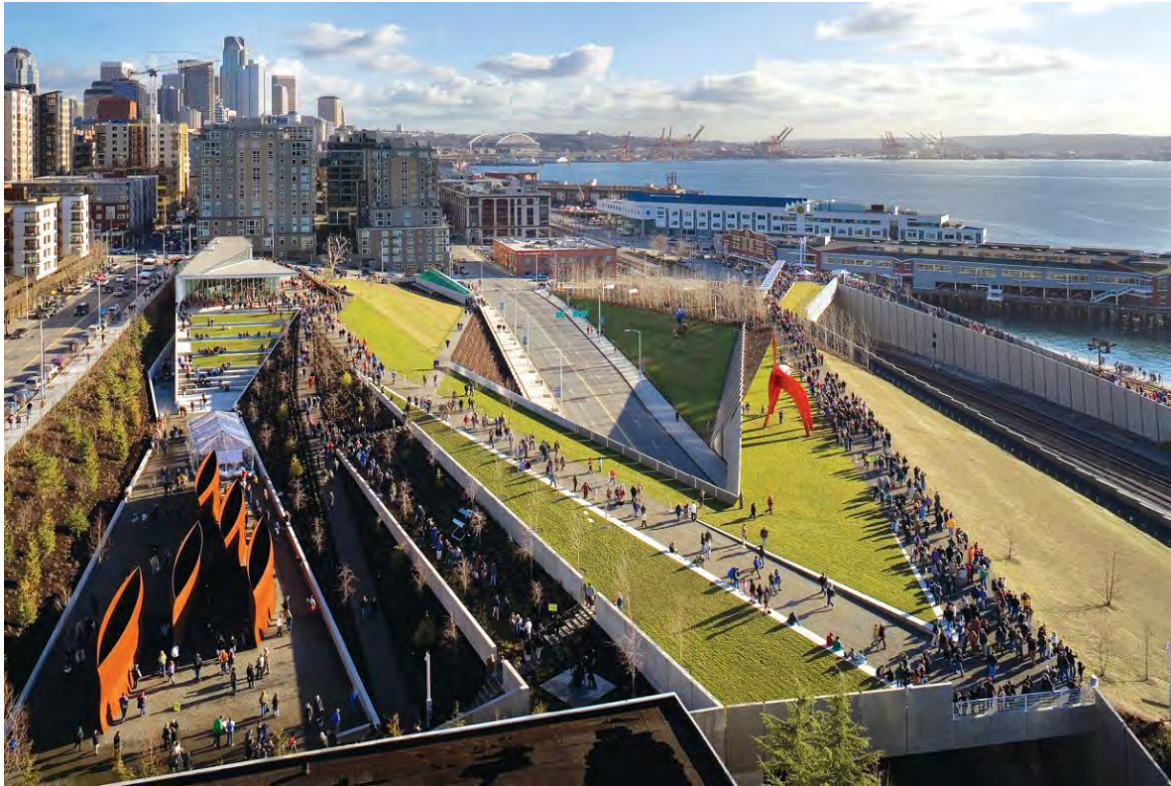
SAM is a key contributor to Downtown Seattle's art scene. SAM offers two major attractions Downtown, the main museum in the Commercial Core and a collection of sculptures in Olympic Sculpture Park in Belltown (Figure 4).

Figure 3. Temporary Public Art Installations



Source: Downtown Seattle Association, BAE, 2024.

Figure 4. Olympic Sculpture Park



Source: Weiss/Manfredi, 2025.

Parks and Outdoor Public Spaces

According to geospatial data from SPR, Downtown has approximately 29 public parks, ranging from neighborhood pocket parks to multiple-acre outdoor spaces and including both parks owned by SPR and those not owned by SPR

In recent years, the City of Seattle has invested in the Waterfront Park, a variety of parks and public space projects near the Elliot Bay Waterfront. This includes the Park Promenade, an overlook walk, Pier 58, and Pier 62. These projects are led by the City's Office of Waterfront and Civic Projects (Waterfront Seattle), a unit of SDOT.

Waterfront Seattle's park and public space projects are integrated with other City investments in transportation infrastructure and seawall upgrades. The purpose of these projects is to improve connectivity and walkability, as well as increase greenspace in the area. Waterfront Park compliments and connects to other existing parks along the Elliot Bay Waterfront, including Olympic Sculpture Park and Myrtle Edwards Park.

The Park Promenade is the core of new waterfront public space improvements. This project features a linear park between S King Street and Pier 62 with a two-way bike path, boardwalk accessibility, native vegetation, all gender restrooms, play equipment, and art installations. The two-way bike path, led by a public-private partnership called Elliot Bay Connections, connects Waterfront Park to Olympic Sculpture Park. In addition to the Park Promenade, Waterfront Seattle's recent projects include an overlook walk, a pedestrian bridge, a habitat beach, and pier redevelopment, as well as various streetscape and traffic calming projects.

Outside of Downtown's waterfront area, other major public spaces include Jim Ellis Freeway Park and Kobe Terrace Park, located on the eastern boundary of Downtown's commercial core, and the Kobe Terrace Park and Garden, located in the Chinatown-International District neighborhood. Suspended over Interstate 5, Jim Ellis Freeway Park was built in 1976 to restore pedestrian access between Downtown, Capitol Hill, and First Hill neighborhoods. Freeway Park is approximately five acres and offers unique architecture, fountains, plazas, and pathways. Kobe Terrace is a one-acre park featuring Mt. Fuji cherry trees and 200-year-old Yukimidoro stone lantern, a gift from Seattle's sister city, Kobe, Japan.

In addition to publicly-owned public spaces, Downtown has a variety of privately-owned public spaces (POPS) (Figure 2), most of which are concentrated in the Commercial Core and Denny Triangle neighborhoods. For the past couple of decades, The City's land use code has provided incentives for developers and landowners to integrate POPS into new development. This includes the City's Incentive Zoning program which grants developers additional floor area or building height in exchange for developer provision of public amenities such as public open space. There are approximately 44 private-owned public spaces in the city, 29 of which are located Downtown. These spaces are primarily managed by land or building owners and include plazas, arcades, atriums, hill climbs, and green streets. Figure 5 below displays three different POPS in Downtown. Not all plazas or similar spaces are a POPS and some spaces may be reserved for building tenants and guests only. Dedicated signage exists to indicate which spaces are open to the public (Figure 5-D).

Figure 5. Privately- Owned Public Spaces



Source: SiteWorkshop, Visit Seattle, Park Preview, Gate to Adventures, BAE, 2024.

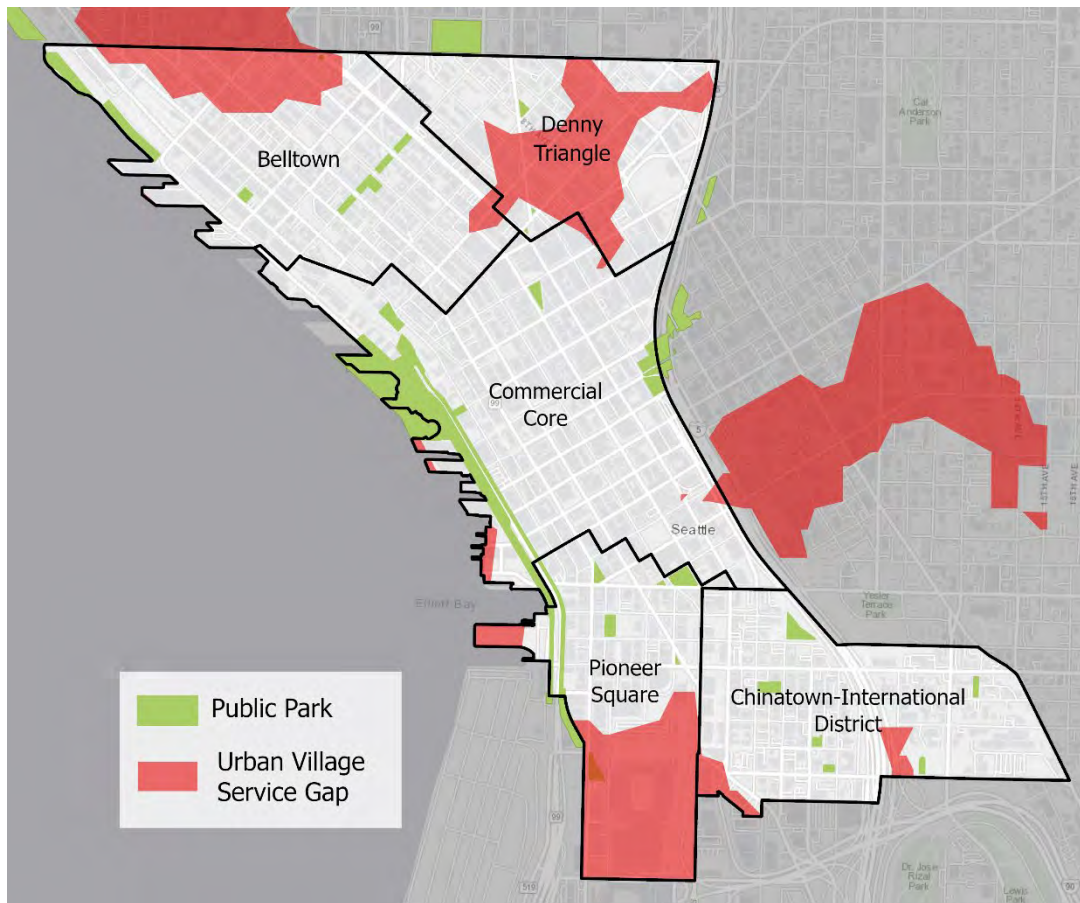
The City of Seattle has assessed service gaps, needs, and priority areas for parks and open space facilities through multiple evaluation methods. Historically, SPR assessed the park system’s level of service based on the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) guidelines, which recommend criteria for park acreage per thousand residents. The DEIS considered SPR’s level of service documented in the 2017 Parks and Open Space Plan, eight acres of park space per 1,000 people, to evaluate park and open space needs. The DEIS found that additional park space is needed for the City’s of Seattle to maintain a goal of providing eight acres of park space per 1,000 people.

In recent years, SPR has transitioned to a system - based approach to evaluate park needs. The 2024 Parks and Open Space Plan uses a geographic information system gap analysis that incorporates measures of walkability, equity and health, and income

and poverty to evaluate park needs. This analysis identifies service gap areas that are more than a 10- minute walk away from a park facility for areas outside an urban village or more than a 5- minute walk away from a park facility for areas inside an urban village. The 2024 Parks and Open Space Plan found that 95 percent of the population is within a 10- minute walk from a park and 70 percent of the population within urban villages is within a 5- minute walk from a park facility.

Service gap areas in Downtown Seattle are shown in Figure 6. Park and open space service gaps exist across all neighborhoods, with the most significant coverage in Belltown, Denny Triangle, and Pioneer Square. SPR’s 2024 gap analysis further overlays service gaps with the following spatial data: a race and social equity index, the share of population below the poverty line, and density. The service gap in Pioneer Square corresponds with an area defined as the second highest racial and social equity priority.

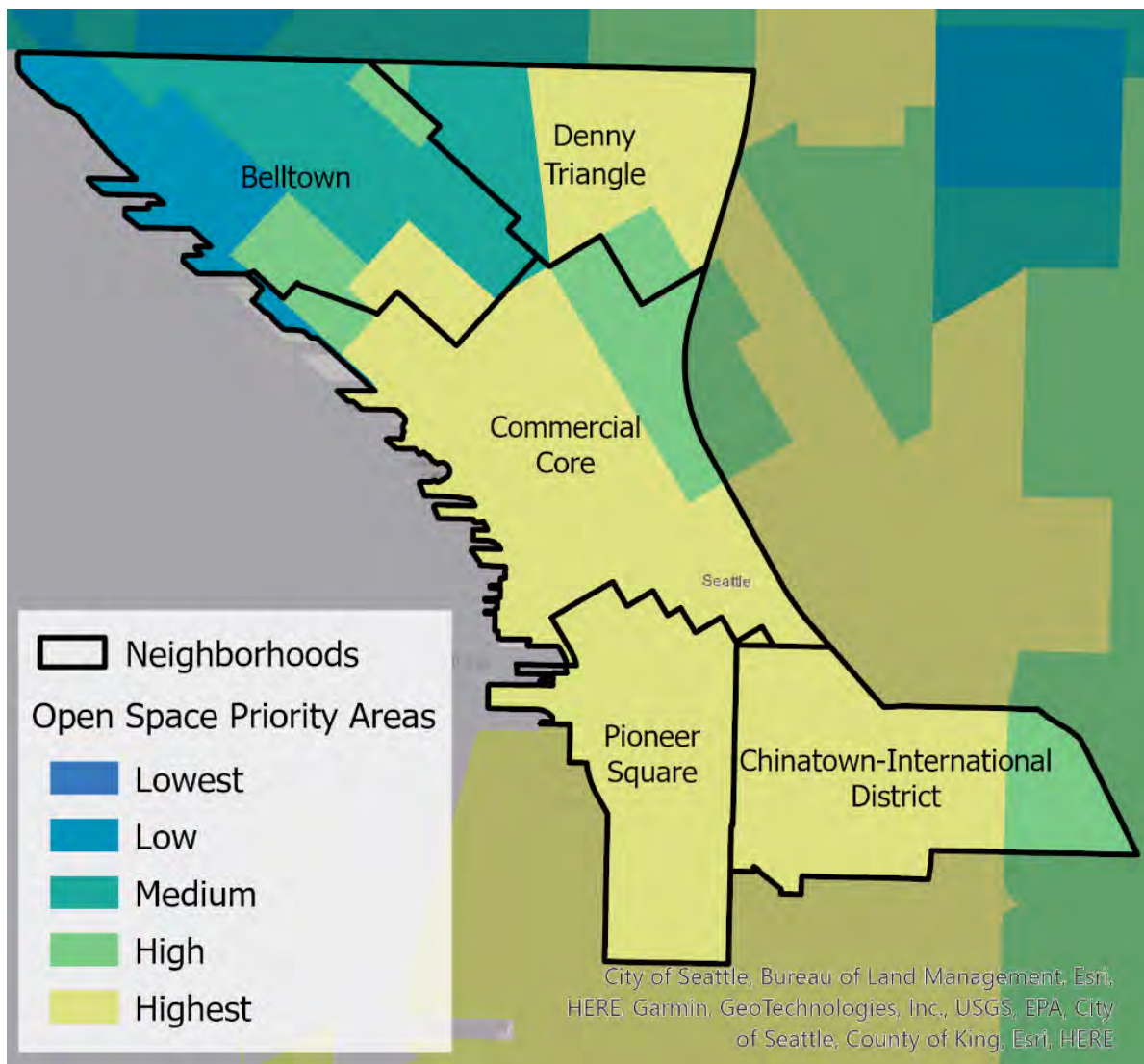
Figure 6. Park and Open Space Walkability Service Gaps



Source: Seattle Parks and Recreation, 2024; BAE, 2025.

The Office of Planning and Community Development’s (OPCD) Outside Citywide initiative also uses geospatial analysis to identify priority areas for public investment in parks and open space. According to findings from Outside Citywide, a majority of Downtown is categorized as the highest priority for City investments in public space improvements. Outside Citywide’s priority areas map (Figure 7) identifies priority areas based on existing public space access, the City’s Race and Social Equity Index, and park pressure, which refers to the ratio between neighborhood population and the total acres of public spaces within a 10- minute walk of that neighborhood. Within Downtown, Outside Citywide categorizes all of Pioneer Square as the highest priority for public space improvements, and all of Chinatown- International District as the highest priority or a high priority.

Figure 7. Open Space Priority Areas



Source: Outside Citywide, BAE 2024.

Parks and Recreation Capital Planning

SPR oversees a system of parks, natural areas, community centers, trails, athletic fields, and other recreational facilities throughout the city. According to the 2025-2030 Capital Improvement Program (CIP), the SPR budget is 81 million for 2025. SPR utilizes an Asset Management Plan to identify priorities for capital projects. Each project is evaluated by the following criteria: safety, asset preservation, race and social justice, legal obligation, and improvements in efficiency. The 2025-2030 CIP notes that SPR, similar to other City departments, is burdened by significant cost increases resulting from the post-pandemic economy. Both inflation and the reinstatement of capital projects put on hold during the pandemic are contributing to budget shortfalls.

The two primary funding sources for the SPR CIP include the Seattle Park District and Real Estate Excise Taxes (REET). Fifty-seven percent of SPR CIP funds originate from the Seattle Park District, which collects city-wide property taxes to fund the operation and maintenance of SPR facilities, as well as the development of new facilities. The Seattle Park District is in its second six-year funding Cycle (Cycle 2). Cycle 2's funding priorities are foundational maintenance needs and climate resiliency, as well as ensuring parks facilities are clean, safe, and open. SPR uses REET funding for asset preservation activities and new parks or facilities. In addition to the Seattle Park District and REET, the SPR CIP includes funding from Community Development Block Grants, the Central Waterfront Improvement Fund, Payroll Expense Tax, the King County Levy, and other sources.

The 2025-2030 CIP identifies a variety of SPR capital investments in Downtown Seattle shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Seattle Parks and Recreation Capital Projects, Downtown Seattle, 2025

Project	Project Activities
Pier 59 Piling Replacement and Aquarium Development Debt Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debt service payments for the replacement of the pier piling system, interior infrastructure improvements, and development of portions of the Aquarium. • Aquarium interior infrastructure improvements.
Aquarium Expansion, Aquarium Expansion Debt Service, Aquarium Major Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of Aquarium's footprint. • New programming and visitor capacity. • New Ocean Pavilion that will integrate with other waterfront infrastructure improvements lead by Waterfront Seattle. • Improvements to Pier 59 and 60 to support exhibit space and operations efficiency.
Freeway Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electrical, lighting, utility, and storm water upgrades. • Renovations of site entries, restrooms, and furnishings. • Wayfinding improvements.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programming and activation improvements.
Park Central Waterfront Piers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seismic upgrades. • Access improvements to Waterfront Park.
Victor Seinbrueck	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrades to park seating, paths, landscaping, lighting, signage, and other similar features. • Repairing storm water and drainage between the park and the Unico parking garage.
Yesler Crescent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements City Hall Park and Prefontaine fountain to enhance circulation, activation, and preservation, including upgrades to pathways, furnishings, lighting, and irrigation.

Source: 2025- 2030 Parks and Recreation Capital Improvement Program, BAE, 2025

Best Practices for Management of Public Spaces

The quality and accessibility of public spaces vary greatly across Downtown Seattle’s diverse neighborhoods. For employees, visitors and the growing residential population alike, best management practices for public spaces will be required to ensure that these spaces are successful over the long term. These practices include providing public spaces with ongoing funding and maintenance after implementation, as well as promoting space activation and accessibility. A majority of publicly- owned public spaces in Downtown are currently maintained by SPR, while others are maintained by SDOT or the City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods (DON). POPs are maintained by their respective property owners in accordance with the Downtown Amenity Standards in the City’s Land Use Code. More specifically, these standards require that property owners ensure landscaping, seating, lighting, and other space elements are kept in a safe and clean condition.

Public spaces require ongoing funding to ensure these areas are properly and maintained and remain accessible. While publicly- owned public spaces are allocated operation and maintenance funding in the CIP, many spaces also require funding in excess of CIP allowances. In these instances, the City of Seattle should collaborate with other public and private stakeholders to create local entities tasked with identifying and managing additional revenue for public spaces. The type or structure of the entity can be designed to meet the needs and characteristics of a given public space. For example, if there is local public interest, public space entities can consist of volunteer- based, grassroots, non- profit organizations that acquire funds through organizing fundraising initiatives and obtaining grants. If the success of a public space is tied to local business or corporate interests, the creation of an entity based on public- private partnerships can allow a public space to tap into new sources of capital. In addition to acquiring new funding for space operation and maintenance, a public space entity can encourage park activation and programming. This includes hosting events, such as markets that showcase local vendors, and other recreational activities.

As mentioned previously, the City's Downtown Amenity Standards require that property owners maintain POPs to a safe and clean condition. To encourage enforcement of this requirement, the City of Seattle could open lines of communication that allow visitors to submit concerns, comments, and questions regarding POPs. Communication lines can occur in a variety of formats, such as a hotline phone number or online survey. POPs visitors could be directed to a communication line through the City's website or POPs signage. Additionally, to improve transparency with property owners, the City could revise and expand its Downtown Amenity Standards to include more specific expectations for POPs operation and maintenance.

Public Space Management

The practice of creating or engaging with local entities to support public space funding, management, and activation has been implemented in parts of Downtown. The City leverages partnerships with local entities for the management of Westlake Park, Occidental Square, Waterfront Park, and other public spaces.

The Downtown Seattle Association and Metropolitan Improvement District work in partnership with SPR to provide staffing, activation, and programming for Westlake Park and Occidental Square. In 2016, DSA entered into an agreement with SPR to manage Westlake Park and Occidental Square. Since the creation of this partnership, DSA has raised \$6.67 in private revenue for every \$1 of allocated SPR revenue. Moreover, between July 2022 and June 2023, DSA led over 9,500 hours of park programming and activation. In 2023, Seattle City Council voted to renew its agreement with DSA for an additional six years, as well as expand DSA's responsibilities to include Bell Street Park and Pioneer Park. BAE recommends that this practice is expanded to other public spaces in Downtown to promote their success.

As of 2023, SPR partnered with the Seattle Center and Friends of Waterfront Seattle to manage operations, maintenance, and public safety in Waterfront Park. The Seattle Center offers expertise in managing complex urban public spaces with large-scale events. Meanwhile, Friends of Waterfront Seattle, a non-profit partner, has been instrumental in raising funds for both the construction and ongoing maintenance of the park. The Seattle Center and Friends of Waterfront Seattle have a contract with the City, which outlines expectations for maintenance, public safety, and programming. This partnership has streamlined management efforts, ensuring that Waterfront Park is safe and accessible for all.

Library

SPL offers library services across the City of Seattle through 27 library locations, consisting of the Central Library and 26 library branches. Downtown Seattle has three library facilities (Figure 2), two of which are part of the SPL network, the Central Library and the International District- Chinatown Branch. Downtown's Central Library, located in the Commercial Core, serves as SPL's headquarters and a central hub of the library system. In 2004, the Central Library opened a 12- story and 360,000 square foot building with an auditorium, various reading or meeting spaces, a large computer lab, and an expansive book collection. The International District- Chinatown Branch opened its current building in 2005, which is co- located with 57 units of affordable family housing, a community center, and retail space. Downtown also is home to the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library, a program of the Washington State Library. Located in the Denny Triangle, this library provides library services to residents unable to read standard print material due to a disability or visual impairment.

Library Capital Planning

The City's libraries are intensely used public spaces that require significant investment in maintenance and upgrade activities. The new buildings for the Central Library and the International District- Chinatown Branch that opened in 2004 and 2005, respectively, were funded by the City's Libraries for All (LFA) initiative, a \$196.4 million bond measure passed in 1998, which resulted in an 80 percent increase in physical space for the library system. A 2012 to 2019 library levy funded operation and maintenance of new and upgraded library buildings that resulted from LFA. In 2019, the City passed an additional seven- year levy program to preserve its library assets. The library levy is SPL's primary funding source for its CIP, accounting for \$7.98 million in 2025. SPL also leverages REET to support projects that the library levy cannot fully fund.

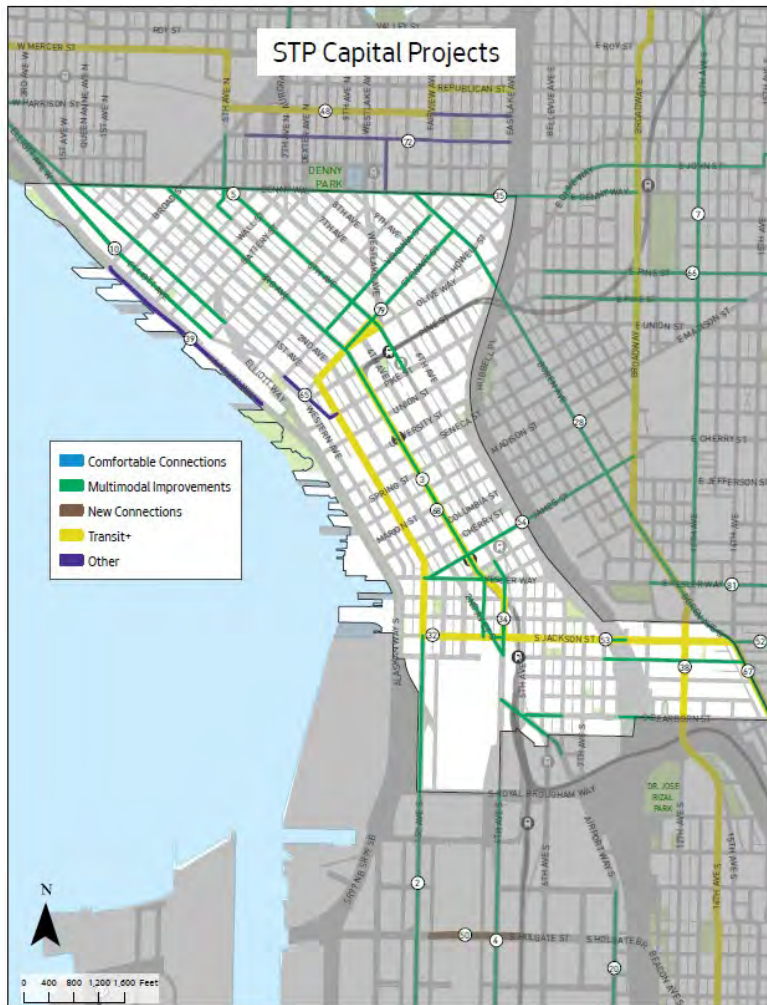
The primary goal of the Library's 2025- 2030 CIP is to extend the life of its facilities created out of LFA. Therefore, the CIP prioritizes projects within the following categories: asset preservation, operational efficiency, environmental stability, public service improvements, and safety and security. Major ongoing projects in the Library's 2025- 2030 CIP consist of multimillion dollar seismic retrofits at the University and Columbia branches and upgrades to information technology infrastructure. Additionally, maintenance of the Central Library is a significant expenditure in the 2025- 2030 CIP, due to the building's size, complexity, and popularity. SPL will require additional funding outside of the library levy to complete necessary mechanical and HVAC system upgrades at the Central Library to comply with City regulations.

Transportation

Downtown's transportation network includes roadways, bridges, bus and rail systems, ferry systems, sidewalks, and other infrastructure. SDOT, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), Sound Transit, King County, and other agencies, are responsible for Downtown's vast transportation network. In recent years, SDOT has pursued multiple planning efforts that identify transportation infrastructure gaps and outline programs and capital projects to support Downtown Seattle. This includes the 2024 Seattle Transportation Plan (STP) and the Downtown Existing Conditions: Transportation report.

The STP outlines what transportation will look like in the City of Seattle over the next 20 years and prioritizes investments that encourage safer, more equitable, reliable, sustainable, and affordable travel options. The STP highlights 81 large capital projects, estimated to cost over \$10 billion, that will advance the STP's transportation network vision. STP capital projects within Downtown are displayed in Figure 8.

Figure 8. STP Capital Projects



Source: SDOT, 2024.

Most capital projects planned for Downtown are classified as multimodal improvements and transit+. Multimodal improvements represent corridor improvements that rebuild the right-of-way to better serve the planned modal network. In Downtown, this refers to improving safety for active transportation users, adding public space, supporting reliable transit service, and improving freight mobility. Transit+ projects involve efforts to improve the quality, reliability, and efficiency of public transit. Within Downtown, this includes the Center City Connector, an effort to Join South Lake Union and First Hill Streetcar lines to service hundreds of destinations, such as Pike Place Market and Colman Dock. This also includes King County Metro’s upgrade of Route 7 to RapidRide, which connects Downtown through the Chinatown- International District to Rainier Valley.

To further refine transportation planning efforts in Downtown, SDOT is preparing a report, *Downtown Existing Conditions: Transportation*, which investigates the challenges and opportunities connected to Downtown’s transportation network. The key findings from SDOT’s report are highlighted below. For additional information, refer to the *Downtown Existing Conditions* report.

Downtown Transportation Network Challenges

- Downtown’s transportation network prioritizes vehicular use and vehicular storage, which poses public safety and pollution concerns, limits the use of active transportation modes, and constrains activated, public space.
- Communities of color have been displaced in Downtown Seattle due to development pressure, cost of housing, and limited transportation options.
- Transportation barriers, such as large arterials and railroad tracks at King Street Station, create neighborhood divides and obstruct access.
- The COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of remote work has contributed to a decline in public transit use.
- A street network of one-way and multiple-lane streets in Downtown leads to speeding and aggressive driving, posing safety risks to pedestrians and cyclists.

Downtown Transportation Network Opportunities

- Identify corridor-level and site-specific transformations to reallocate street space and redesign streets to create more space for active forms of transportation.
- Implement green street solutions, such as increased tree canopy coverage and storm water infrastructure, in public spaces to advance public health.
- Influence commuters to shift from vehicular transportation modes to more efficient and sustainable options.
- Encourage population and job growth around areas with high-capacity transit.
- Reduce disparities between neighborhoods in the quality of streets, sidewalks, public spaces, and bridges.

Utilities

Future housing and job growth in Downtown will increase the demand for utility services. The DEIS found that there is sufficient capacity across all utility systems to accommodate growth in the near term. However, local utility systems that are categorized as capacity constrained may limit the overall number of housing units that can be developed in each area. Continuing ongoing systems planning and maintenance is important to ensuring the City of Seattle can accommodate future growth. This section reviews existing facilities and capital planning for storm water and wastewater collection, water supply, and electricity in Downtown.

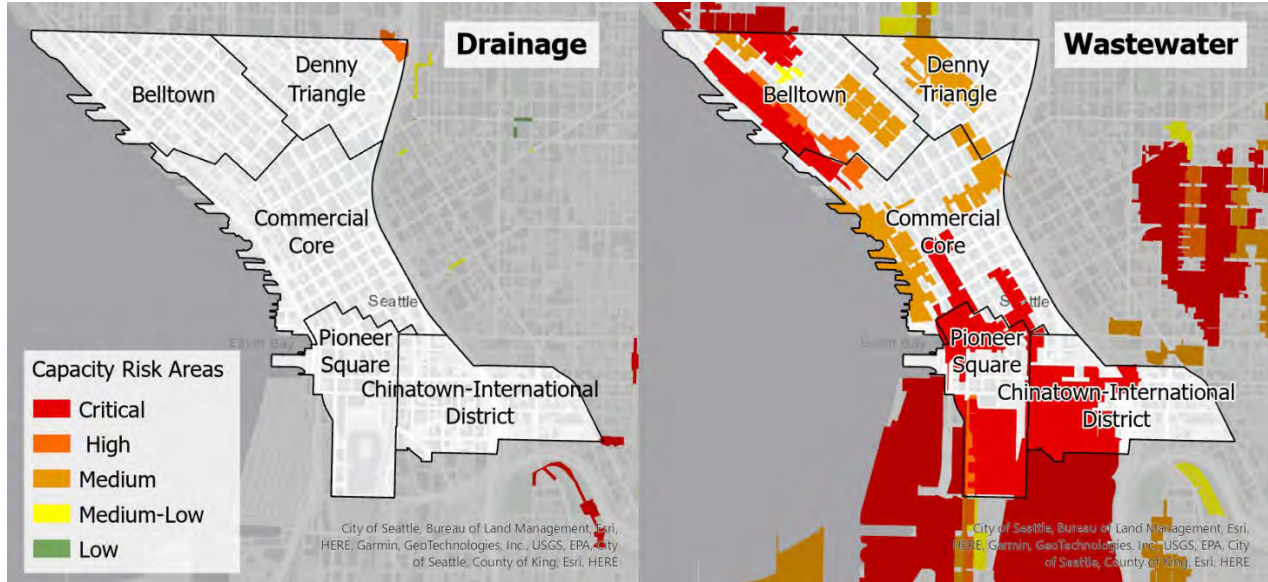
Drainage and Wastewater

Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) manages wastewater and storm water systems in the city. A majority of Downtown is served by a combined sewer system where wastewater and storm water are held in the same pipes and conveyed to a wastewater treatment plant. While combined systems allow both storm water and wastewater to be treated, heavy rain events can cause combined sewer overflows, which can result in negative public health and environmental impacts, as untreated sewage is discharged into the local watershed. Portions of Downtown, including areas along the waterfront and inland areas within the Commercial Core, are served by a partially separated sewer system. Partially separated systems were historically built as combined sewer systems; however, SPU has executed separation projects, which resulted in separate storm drains. In these areas, storm water drainage from the streets is conveyed in a separate drainage system to drainage outlets. Storm water from roof gutters and wastewater from homes and businesses are conveyed together to treatment plants.

In addition to utilizing traditional, grey infrastructure storm water solutions, the City of Seattle invests in nature-based, green infrastructure projects. Green storm water infrastructure (GSI) projects reduce the velocity and quantity of storm water runoff, encourage groundwater infiltration and runoff filtration, and reduce pressure on conveyance systems. GSI involves the capture of storm water with natural vegetation, such as rain gardens, bioretention basins, trees, permeable pavement, green roofs, and storm water ponds. To promote GSI applications, SPU builds and maintains GSI projects through their capital program; collaborates with the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections to enforce the Storm water Code to ensure storm water best management practices are implemented when parcels are redeveloped; and develops partnerships that integrate GSI into the built environment. According to City of Seattle geospatial data, there are approximately 1,795 GSI projects in Downtown.

Between 2019 and 2020, the SPU completed analyses to evaluate capacity of drainage and wastewater systems as part of the Shape Our Water Plan. The 2020 Drainage System Analysis (DSA) evaluated the risks of flooding, climate change, and water quality issues to prioritize drainage system capacity risk areas. The 2019 Wastewater System Analysis (WSA) identified and prioritized wastewater system needs and evaluated capacity risk areas, utilizing hydrologic and hydraulic models and community feedback. Figure 9 displays the drainage and wastewater capacity risk areas, identified as part of the DSA and WSA efforts. Nearly all of Downtown is outside of a drainage capacity risk area. However, Downtown has extensive critical, high, and medium wastewater capacity risk areas.

Figure 9. Wastewater and Drainage Capacity Risk Areas



Source: Seattle Public Utilities, BAE, 2024.

Utilizing the WSA and DSA, the DEIS evaluated impacts to wastewater and drainage resulting from the implementation of different alternatives to provide more housing options in Seattle. Across all alternatives, higher concentrations of residential dwellings in the city will increase the demand for wastewater and drainage systems, as well as result in increases in impervious surface area. Additionally, areas with capacity constrained wastewater and drainage systems are at higher risk to experience system stress due to new development. However, none of the alternatives evaluated by the DEIS are anticipated to cause significant adverse impacts to wastewater or drainage systems, provided the City finalizes planned capital improvements and new development is compliant with the City’s code and storm water manual.

Drinking Water

SPU supplies water to all of Seattle and 18 surrounding cities and water districts, as well as the Cascade Water Alliance. The Cedar River provides 60 to 70 percent of SPU’s water supply, and the South Fork Tolt River provides the remainder. Water supply infrastructure includes groundwater wells, water treatment plants, water storage facilities, pump stations, transmission and distribution pipelines, meters and service connections, monitoring equipment, and other service facilities.

SPU’s 2019 Water System Plan found that water usage has decreased by 28 percent since 1990 despite population growth. SPU’s water demand forecast and yield estimates indicate that no new water supply sources are needed prior to 2060. With

respect to water quality, the 2019 Water System Plan specifies that SPU continues to meet drinking water quality regulations and other aesthetic criteria.

In previous decades SPU's capital planning was focused on investment in major regional facilities. SPU's 2019 Water System Plan notes the investment priority has shifted to the rehabilitation of distribution systems and improvements to system performance after an earthquake. The DEIS notes that with City's ongoing capital projects none of the proposed alternatives are anticipated to adversely impact the City's water supply.

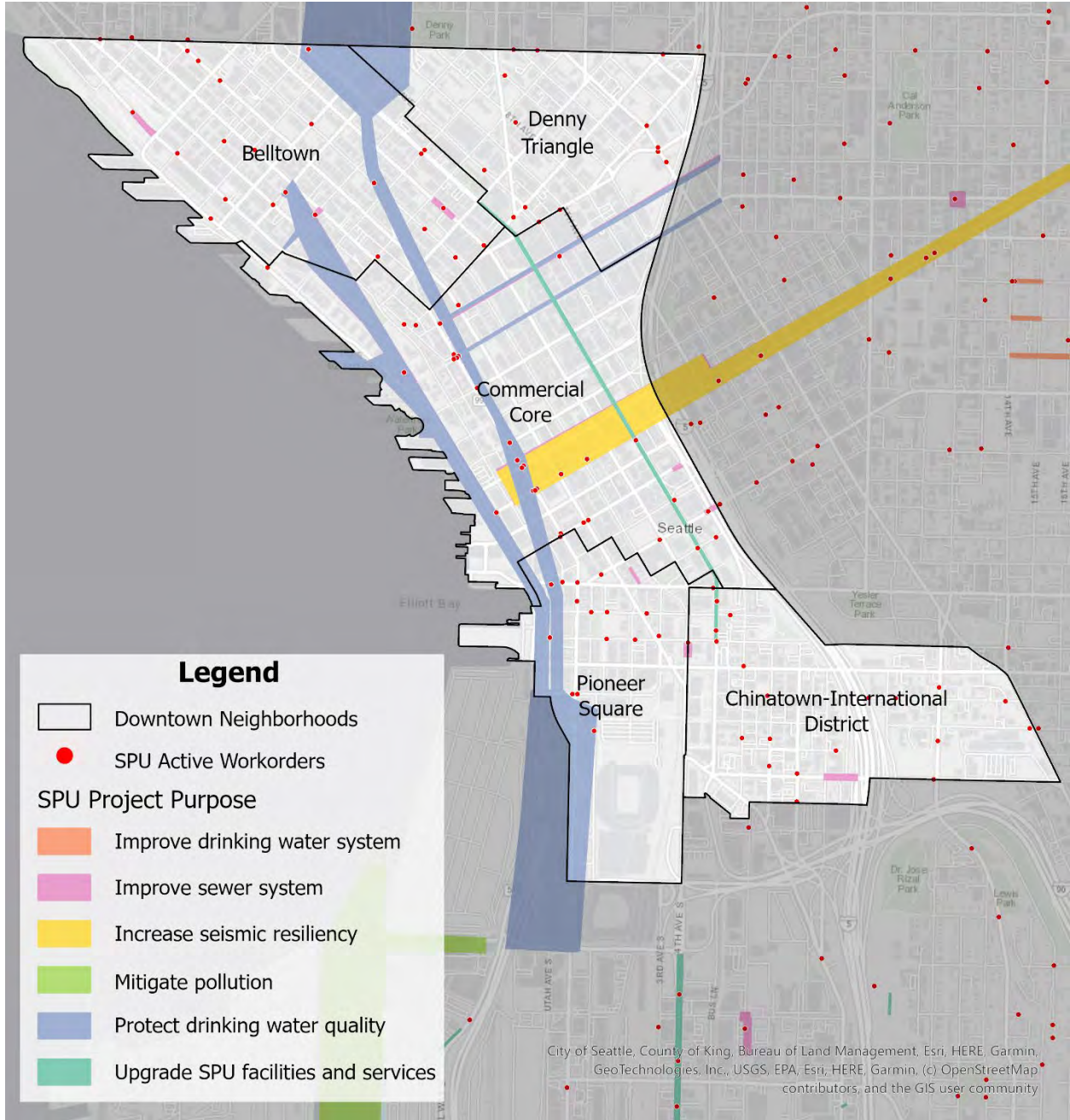
Stormwater, Wastewater, and Drinking Water Capital Planning

Over the next six years, SPU's 2025- 2030 Drainage and Wastewater (DWF) CIP plans for 1.54 billion in spending. Revenue sources to fund capital projects include revenue bonds, state and federal low interest loans, operating cash, and capital grants or in-kind contributions. The goal of the DWF CIP is to replace failing assets, construct new facilities to reduce flooding and sewer overflows, improve water quality and habitat, and provide adequate facilities for SPU's workforce and operations. The DWF CIP prioritizes projects based on the following criteria: public health, safety, and environment; infrastructure reliability and risk; regulatory, mandates, and legal agreements; and external drivers and opportunities.

SPU's 2025- 2030 Water CIP plans for \$1,030 million in spending over the next six years. Capital water projects are primarily funded through water ratepayers. SPU also receives funding through grants, low interest loans, and developer tap fees. The goal of SPU's Water CIP is to ensure their system is properly maintained, upgraded, and expanded to provide quality drinking water to customers, as well as protect the environment and ensure regulatory compliance. The Water CIP prioritizes projects using the following criteria: regulatory mandates and legal agreements; external drivers; infrastructure conditions and vulnerabilities; level of service; and other factors.

Figure 10 displays the project boundaries and work order locations of SPU's ongoing capital improvement projects. The work orders correspond with various repairs, upgrades, and inspections to drainage, water supply, and wastewater facilities. The project boundaries primarily consist of drainage, water supply, and wastewater utility projects that accompany transportation projects led by SDOT and WSDOT. This includes drinking water system improvements related to the Alaska Way Viaduct and other Waterfront Seattle projects.

Figure 10. Active SPU Capital Projects



Source: City of Seattle, BAE, 2024.

Electricity and Gas

Seattle City Light, an electric utility owned by the City, serves the City of Seattle and multiple adjacent jurisdictions. Seattle City Light's facilities include a power generation system, consisting of seven hydroelectric plants, 667 miles of high-voltage transmission lines, a distribution system with 16 major substations, a systems operations center, and billing and metering technology. In 2018, Seattle City Light energized the Denny Substation which serves Downtown. This substation is designed to last 50 to 100 years and accommodate future growth in the area. The DEIS states that population and job growth will increase demand on the City's electrical system; However, significant adverse impacts are not anticipated.

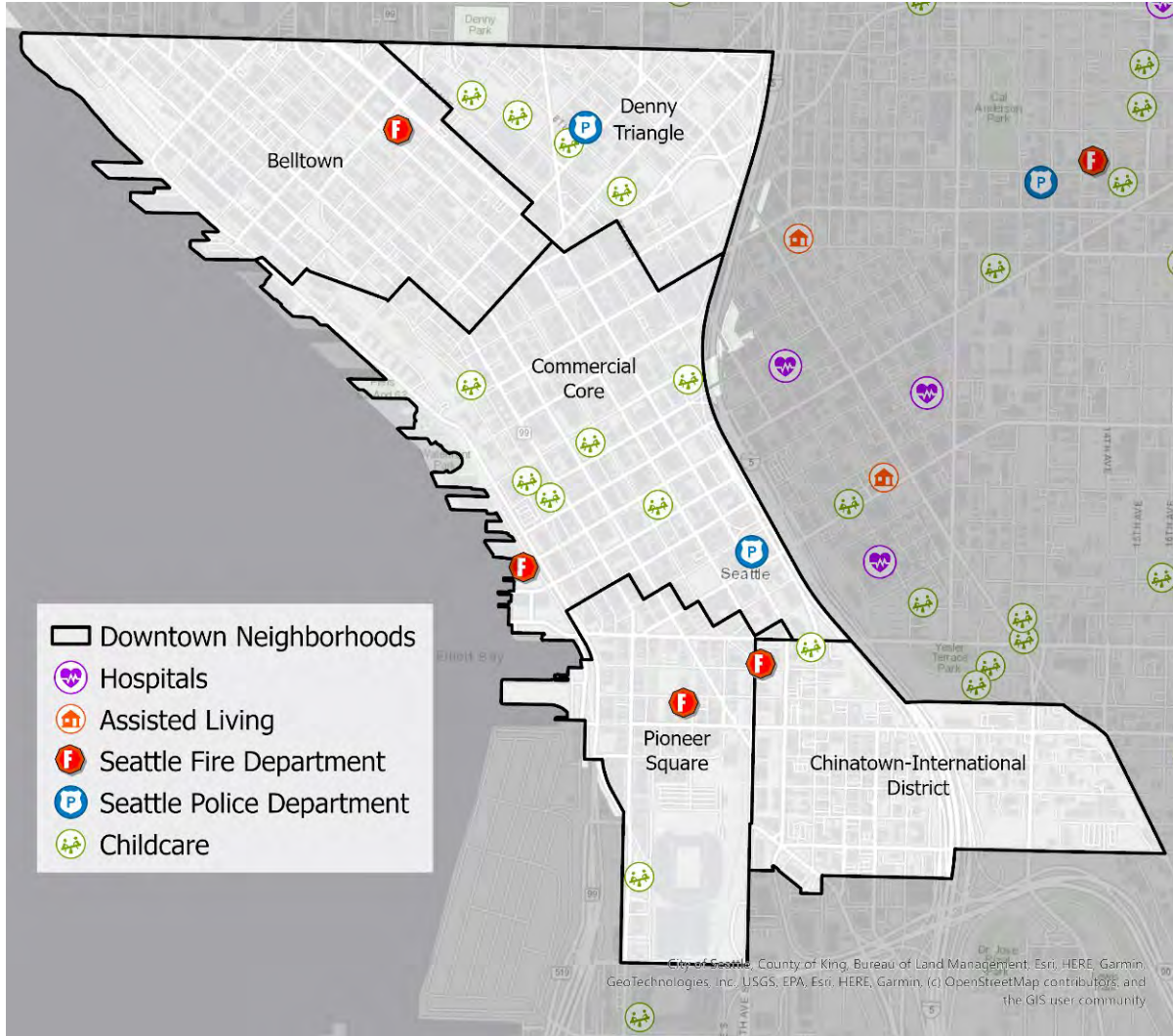
The 2025-2030 Seattle City Light CIP anticipates \$3 billion in spending over the next six years for initiatives such as safety improvements, mitigation activities, and licensing requirements. These capital improvements are primarily funded by retail electricity sales, surplus power sales on the wholesale market, customer connection fees, and revenue bond sales, as well as anticipated federal and state grant funding. The CIP lists multiple projects relevant to Downtown Seattle including the following: ongoing work to increase the Union Street Substation network capacity; electrification of Centrio which delivers steam for heating of buildings Downtown; and upgrades to the Utility Self Service Portal, Seattle City Light's customer information system.

Electricity in downtown is also provided by CenTrio, a district energy system. PSE provides natural gas for Downtown Seattle.

Public Health and Safety

Institutions that support public health and safety are provided by both public and private entities. Seattle Police Department (SPD) and Seattle Fire Department (SFD) provide police and fire services for Downtown. The DEIS notes that housing and job growth will increase the demand for police services and fire protection staffing and trucks. This section reviews existing facilities, conditions, and capital planning for SFD and SPD. Additionally, this section investigates the presence of hospitals, assisted living facilities, and childcare facilities in Downtown. While these services are not operated by the City of Seattle, access to these services is crucial to ensuring positive public health outcomes in Downtown. Locations of various public health and safety facilities are displayed in Figure 11.

Figure 11. Public Health and Safety Facilities



Source: City of Seattle, BAE, 2024.

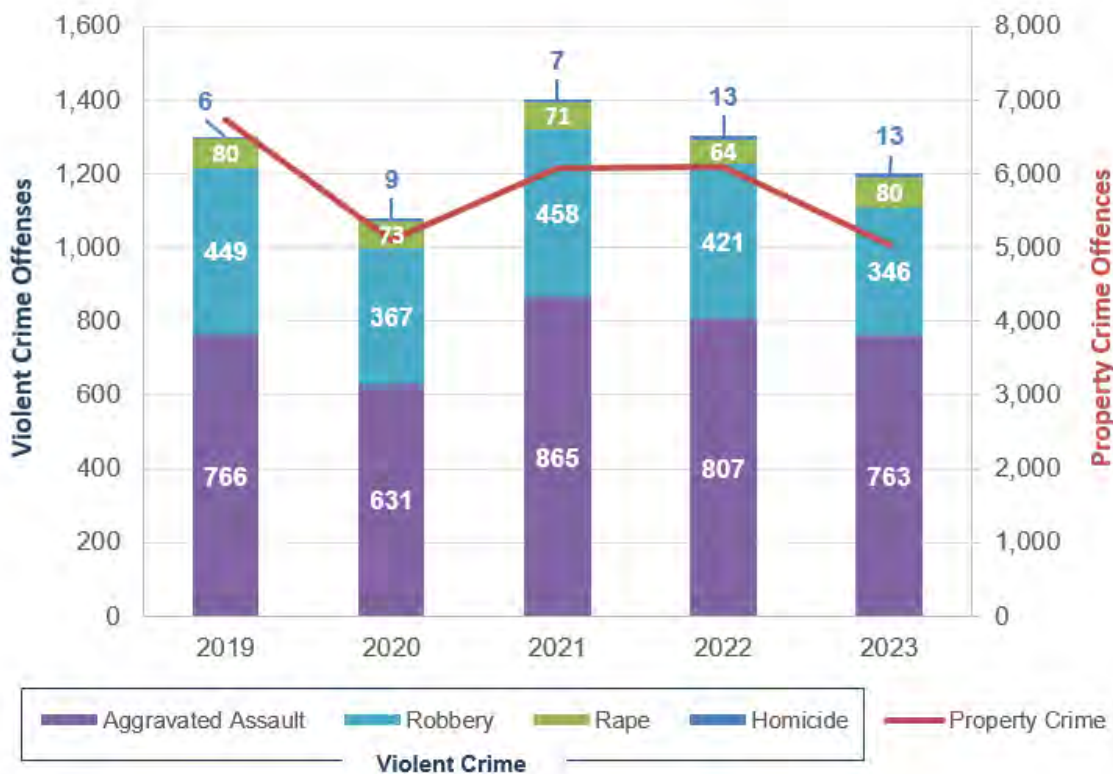
Police

SPD provides police services for the City of Seattle with approximately 1,200 full time equivalent sworn officers and 631 civilian employees. Police services consist of patrols, 911 call responses, investigation, traffic and parking enforcement, and homeland security, as well as services from specialty units including special weapons and tactics, gang, bomb/arson, and canine units. SPD has five precincts, each affiliated with a base police station that serves as the center for precinct operations. The West Precinct serves Downtown Seattle, as well as the Queen Anne and Magnolia neighborhoods. The West Precinct police station is located off the intersection of 8th Avenue and Virginia Street in Denny Triangle. The West Precinct building was built in 1999 and is 46,231 square feet. The building is at full capacity with 140 sworn officers

and 82 additional staff members. SPD Headquarters are also located in Downtown Seattle in the Commercial Core.

SPD’s crime dashboard provides data on annual occurrences of violent and property crime by Seattle neighborhood.¹ In the past five years, the number of reported crime offenses in Downtown Seattle has decreased while the number of crime offenses in the City of Seattle has increased. Between 2019 and 2023, city- wide annual reported property crime offences increased by 7 percent and violent crime offences increased by 14 percent. During this same time frame, property and violent crime in Downtown Seattle decreased by 25 and 8 percent, respectively. In 2023, approximately 80 percent of reported offenses in Downtown Seattle were classified as property crime offences, which include larceny- theft, burglary, motor vehicle theft, and arson. Figure 12 displays annual violent and property crime occurrences for Downtown Seattle.

Figure 12. Violent and Property Crime Offenses in Downtown Seattle

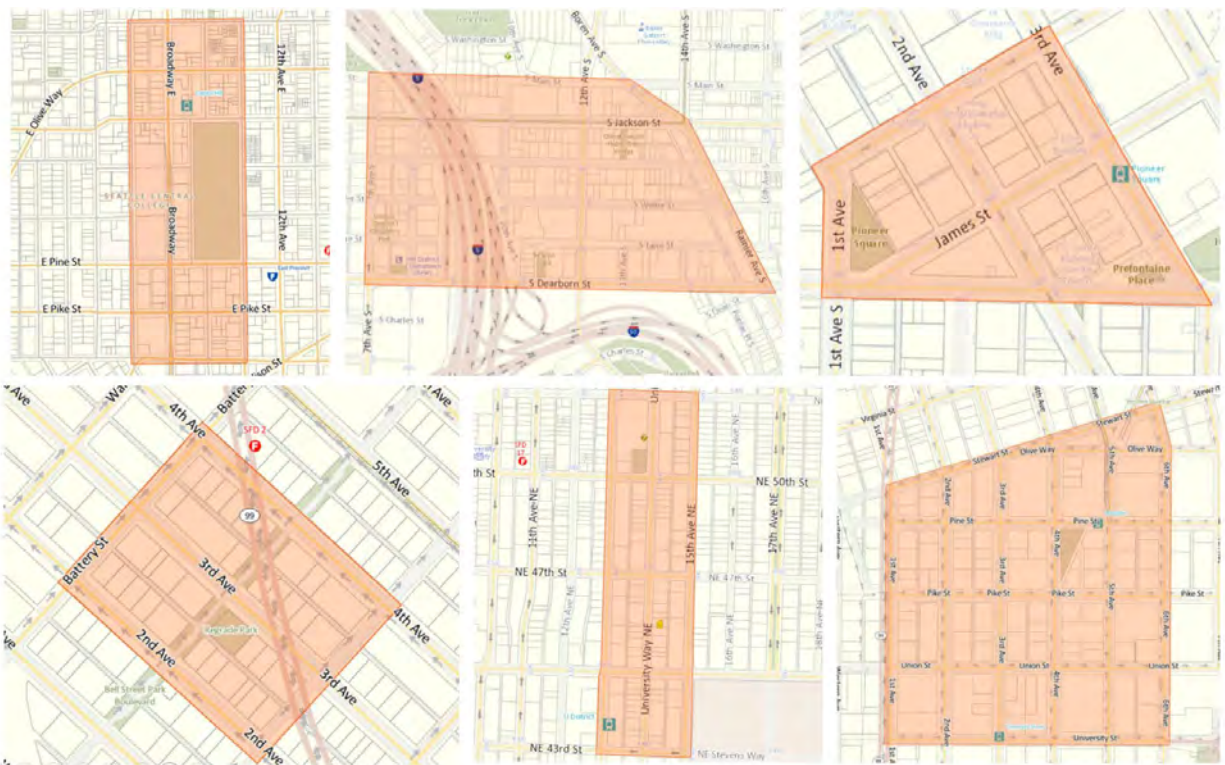


Source: Seattle Police Department, BAE, 2024.

¹ SPD’s neighborhood geographical boundaries are slightly different than the boundaries specified for this study. Downtown crime occurrences are from the following neighborhoods: Belltown, SLU/Cascade, Commercial Core, Pioneer Square, and Chinatown- International District.

In September 2024, Seattle City Council passed legislation targeting prostitution and drug use in areas with high concentrations of these crimes. This new legislation created multiple Stay Out of Drug Areas (SODA) zones and a single Stay out of Area of Prostitution (SOAP) zone. SODA zones allow the courts to prohibit defendants from reentering these zones if they have committed a drug- related offense in that zone. Similarly, the courts have the authority to prohibit people from reentering the SOAP zone if they have committed a prostitution- related offense in that zone. The SOAP zone is located on Aurora Avenue in the North Seattle Area. A majority of the SODA zones are located in Downtown. SODA zone boundaries are displayed in Figure 13.

Figure 13. Stay Out of Drug Areas



Source: Cascade Public Media, 2024.

Fire and Emergency Medical Services

The Seattle Fire Department (SFD) administers city- wide services including fire and rescue response, fire prevention, fire investigation, emergency medical services, and public education. SFD also provides specialty services such as technical and heavy rescue, dive rescue, tunnel rescue, marine response, and hazardous materials response. SFD operates five battalions with 33 fire stations strategically located to optimize area coverage and response times. As of 2021, SFD employed 963 uniformed personnel and 81 civilian personnel. At all times, there are 220 uniformed personnel

on the clock, providing fire and rescue services for approximately 391,394 housing units. Areas of Downtown are either served by Battalion 2, Battalion 5, or Battalion 7. As shown in Figure 11, there are three fire stations in Downtown Seattle: Station 2 in Belltown, Station 5 in the Commercial Core, and Station 10 in Chinatown-International District. With two fire boats and a rescue boat, Station 5 is also tasked with responding to offshore emergencies within Puget Sound. SFD Headquarters are located in Pioneer Square. SFD Headquarters operate the Health One program, an integrated health response unit that responds to physical and mental health crises and provides social services as needed.

In addition to SPD and SFD, the Community Assisted Response and Engagement (CARE) department is a third branch of public safety in the City of Seattle. CARE operates the 9-1-1 Communications Center and the Community Crisis Responder Team.

Police and Fire Capital Planning

The 2025-2030 Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) CIP sets the framework for planning, replacing, maintaining, and upgrading FAS-managed facilities – including police and fire building space – and IT infrastructure. The FAS CIP states that SFD and SPD use the following criteria to prioritize capital projects: life and safety issues; regulatory compliance; race and social justice initiatives; sustainability; and asset preservation. Funding for the FIS CIP originates from limited tax general obligation bonds, REET I, and space rent charges paid by City departments. The 2025-2030 FAS CIP provides ongoing maintenance, operation, and rehabilitation funding for city-wide police and fire facilities, among other municipal buildings.

The 2024-2029 FAS CIP allocated funding for a project that provided seismic and mechanical system upgrades to Fire Station 5 in Downtown. The project has been completed, and no further funding is allocated for it in the 2025-2030 CIP. The 2025-2030 FAS CIP allocates funding for general upgrades and repairs and fleet electrification across various municipal facilities; However, there are no projects specifically focused on Downtown police and fire facilities.

Services for the Unhoused

The number of Seattle residents living without shelter or housing is a high priority issue for the area. As highlighted in the existing conditions report, the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in King County increased by 23 percent between 2022 and 2024. Since taking office, Mayor Bruce Harrell has supported two

initiatives to reduce homelessness in Downtown: the King County Regional Homelessness Authority's Partnership for Zero; and, the Third Avenue Project. These initiatives seek to reduce homelessness by connecting people experiencing homelessness to shelter or permanent housing, as well as social services.

In 2022, the King County Regional Homelessness Authority launched Partnership for Zero. Operating under the premise that housing is a basic human right, this organization sought to reduce homelessness in Downtown. Partnership for Zero's work included improving information management, streamlining housing placement systems, and training case managers. Before ending in 2023, this program resolved six long-standing encampments and identified housing for 231 people. The Third Avenue Project, also formed in 2022, is a coalition of outreach workers, social services providers, and community advocates. This coalition focuses on reducing homelessness and deterring crime in Downtown with an approach that emphasizes relationship building and community outreach.

While initiatives such as Partnership for Zero and the Third Avenue Project have made valuable achievements, more work needs to be done to improve the response to homelessness. A 2016 study prepared by Barbara Poppe and Associates (*Recommendations for the City of Seattle's Homelessness Investment Policy*) highlighted that there are numerous organizations and programs across Seattle that provide services for those experiencing homelessness. However, these initiatives lack sufficient coordination, resulting in inefficient delivery of services. To address this issue, the 2016 study recommends the implementation of a Navigation Center.

The Navigation Center program model is a best practice service delivery model that was first implemented in San Francisco. This model features a one-stop, low barrier, 24-hour facility that connects people experiencing homelessness to various services and provides basic needs, including hygiene, meals, and secure storage. Using harm reduction and housing first practices, a Navigation Center connects participants to housing, rehabilitation, employment, and other services in a centralized location. This model increases accessibility to services and can support coordination of service delivery among multiple providers.

Health Centers

There are no hospitals in Downtown; however, Downtown is proximate to three major hospitals located west of Interstate 5: Virginia Mason Medical Center, Swedish Medical Center, and Harborview Medical Center. There is one urgent care facility in Downtown, Zoom Care, which is located in the Commercial Core. CVS, Walgreens, One

Medical, and other providers offer health clinics in Downtown. The King County Downtown Public Health Center, located in Denny Triangle, provides a variety of health services for acute and chronic conditions, as well as screenings and vaccinations.

International Community Health Services (ICHS), a health care provider with a focus on providing culturally- and linguistically appropriate health and wellness services, has a significant presence in the Chinatown- International District with a variety of services offered across three different facilities. ICHS's headquarters, located off 8th Avenue and South Dearborn Street, provide a variety of community health services including medical, dental, and vision clinics, as well as acupuncture, nutrition counseling, women/infants/children (WIC) services, and a pharmacy. The ICHS Legacy House provides outpatient elderly care services, assisted living, and adult day services. The ICHS meal program, operating out of the Bush Asia Center, offers nutritious meals and group activities for elderly adults and adults with special needs.

Childcare and Assisted Living Facilities

According to FAS's business license database there are 14 childcare facilities in Downtown with two in Belltown, two in Denny Triangle, six in the Commercial Core, one in Pioneer Square, and one in Chinatown- International District. Seven of Downtown's childcare facilities are branches of Bright Horizons Children's Center.

FAS's business license database indicates there are no assisted living facilities in Downtown; However, google maps lists one facility, Nikkei Manor, in addition to ICHS Legacy House discussed in the previous section. Nikkei Manor, located in Chinatown- International District, offers assisted living, an adult day program, and respite services for seniors.

Education

Seattle Public Schools (SPS) provides education for children within the Seattle Schools District. The Seattle Schools District employs 5,955 educators and serves approximately 23,691 elementary, 11,001 middle, and 15,364 high school students. The Seattle Preschool Program (SPP) provides services in partnership with community-based providers and Seattle Public Schools. In 2022, SPP operated out of 87 program sites with 1,959 students enrolled. Across the Seattle School District, there are 63 elementary schools, 10 K- 8 schools, 12 middle schools, and 18 High Schools. There are no SPS or SPP locations in Downtown. There is one private school in Downtown, Spruce Street School. Spruce Street School is in Denny Triangle and

provides education for kindergarten through fourth grade students. With respect to public schools, a majority of Downtown is in the attendance areas of Bailey Gatzert Elementary School, Edmond S. Meany Middle School, and Garfield Highschool. These schools serve Belltown, Denny Triangle, Commercial Core, and portions of Pioneer Square and Chinatown- International District. Three elementary schools have attendance areas within Downtown, Lowell, Bailey Gatzert, and Beacon Hill. All of these elementary schools offer preschool programs. Public schools that serve Downtown are displayed in Figure 14. Table 2 displays student enrollment and enrollment capacity for public schools that serve Downtown. Garfield, Lowell, and Bailey Gatzert have the highest levels of enrollment and are close to reaching capacity.

While SPS projects a decline in overall enrollment, population growth in Downtown—an anticipated result of the One Seattle Plan—could drive an increase in student enrollment in the area. This growth may prompt SPS to adjust school boundaries, add classrooms, or open new schools to meet the rising demand.

Figure 14. Seattle Public Schools Serving Downtown

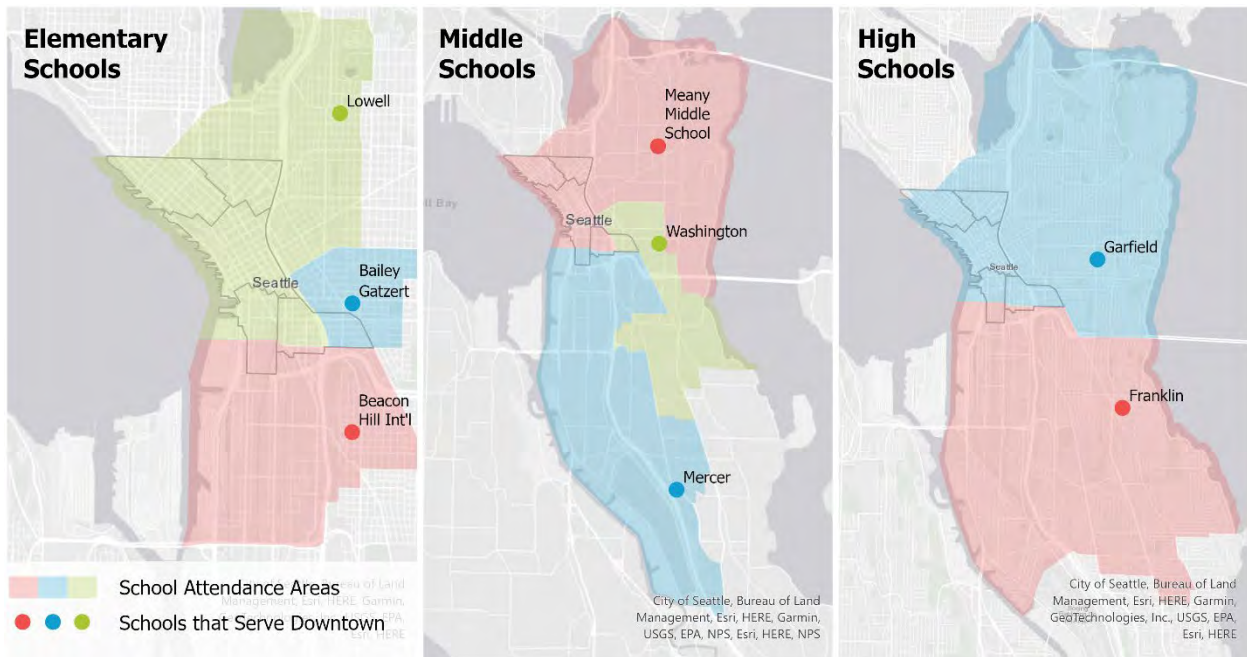


Table 2. Enrollment and Enrollment Capacity for Seattle Public Schools Serving Downtown, 2022- 2023

School	Student Enrollment	% of Capacity
Lowell Elementary School	322	97%
Bailey Gatzert Elementary School	1577	97%
Beacon Hill International School	344	85%
Edmonds S. Meany Middle School	512	60%
Mercer International Middle School	854	66%
Washington Middle School	555	70%
Garfield High School	1577	97%
Franklin High School	1174	84%

Sources: One Seattle DEIS, BAE, 2024.

Safe Routes to School

SDOT oversees the City’s Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program, an aimed at improving safety in areas around schools to enhance student’s ability to walk and bike to school. SRTS achieves this objective through safety improvements around schools – including but not limited to crosswalks, speed humps, greenways, signage, and curb bulbs – and public education. Because there are no public schools in Downtown, walking or biking to school is not feasible for many students that reside in the area. Additionally, the location of Interstate 5 restricts walkability on Downtown’s eastern border. However, six of eight schools with attendance areas in Downtown have implemented safety improvements that may benefit students who reside in Downtown and are in proximity to commute to school by walking or biking. Table 3 displays the safety improvements implemented at each school.

Table 3. Safe Routes to School Improvements by Public Schools Serving Downtown Students

School	Safety Improvement (School Year Implemented)
Lowell Elementary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood Greenway (2019- 2020).
Baily Gatzert Elementary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crossing Improvement (2015- 2016). • School Zone Signs or Beacons (2017- 2018). • Crossing Improvement (2017- 2018). • Crossing Improvement (2019- 2020).
Beacon Hill Elementary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Crossing Improvements (2016- 2017). • Traffic Calming (2017- 2018). • School Zone Signs or Beacons (2018- 2019).
Edmond S. Meany Middle School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood Greenway (2019- 2020).
Mercer International Middle School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walkway Improvement (2015- 2016). • Walkway Improvement (2015- 2016). • School Zone Signs or Beacons (2016- 2017). • Crossing Improvement (2017- 2018). • Crossing Improvement (2018- 2019), Crossing Improvement (2020- 2021).
Washington Middle School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crossing Improvement (2019- 2020).
Garfield High School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crossing Improvement (2017- 2018), Traffic Calming (2017- 2018), Crossing Improvement (2020- 2021).
Franklin High School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staircase Painting (2017- 2018). • Crossing Improvement (2020- 2021).

Source: Safe Routes to School 5 Year Action Plan 2021- 2025, Seattle Department of Transportation, BAE, 2024.

Education Capital Planning

Capital projects, such as school construction, upgrades, and improvements, are primarily funded by levies. Seattle residents vote on SPS levies every three years. SPS is currently in the planning process for its sixth Building Excellence Capital Levy (BEX VI). The planning process is an extensive process that involves an assessment of existing capital assets and future needs, community outreach, concept planning, and an Environment Impact Statement. After the planning process is finalized, BEX VI will be placed on the ballot in early 2025. Of the eight Seattle Public Schools with attendance areas in Downtown, only one, Mercer International Middle School, has an ongoing capital project to permanently increase capacity funded by the previous SPS levy, BEX V. This project involves demolition and replacement of the school building. The new school will be a 174,000 square foot multi-story building with outdoor learning spacing, a synthetic turf practice field, and sustainable design features. The new school building is under construction and is scheduled to open Fall 2025.

Conclusion

As Downtown Seattle absorbs new housing and jobs and transitions to a residential center, its local public infrastructure and services must grow and adapt to serve the needs of people living there. The following sections identify deficiencies in Downtown's public facilities and services that may be exacerbated by residential growth. Furthermore, the following sections provide recommendations for the City of Seattle to address infrastructure needs, which will improve Downtown's ability to accommodate new economic growth while minimizing negative externalities.

Public Facilities and Services Gaps

This analysis identified six primary public infrastructure and services gaps in Downtown Seattle, as detailed below.

- **Public Space** – Outside Citywide identified a majority of Downtown as the highest or a high priority for open space improvements. Deficiencies in public space access are most prevalent in the following neighborhoods listed from the lowest level of access to the highest level of access: Pioneer Square, Chinatown-International District, Commercial Core, Denny Triangle, and Belltown. New residential developments in Downtown will increase the demand for open space, green space, and public parks.
- **Wastewater** – A majority of Downtown is served by a combined sewer system where wastewater and storm water are held in the same pipes and conveyed to

a wastewater treatment plant. Heavy rain events can cause combined sewer overflows, which can result in negative public health and environmental impacts, as untreated sewage is discharged into the local watershed. SPU’s 2019 Wastewater System Analysis found that a majority of Downtown is in a capacity risk area. Pioneer Square and Chinatown- International District are particularly at risk. New developments in Downtown will increase the number of wastewater customers, as well as pressure on wastewater systems.

- **Services for the Homeless** – According to the City of Seattle, reducing homelessness in Downtown is a high priority issue. While many initiatives exist to improve access to shelter and housing, homelessness in King County has increased in recent years.
- **Public Safety and Crime** – While reported property and violent crime has decreased between 2019 and 2023 in Downtown, the perception of crime in the area remains high.
- **Urgent and primary care facilities** – While Downtown is proximate to major hospitals west of Interstate 5, there is a scarcity of urgent care and primary care facilities within Downtown’s boundaries. New residential development in the area is likely to increase the demand for health services.
- **Education and Childcare** – There are no public schools located within Downtown. Furthermore, five of the eight public schools serving Downtown are at 80 percent or higher enrollment capacity. Three of the schools serving Downtown, two elementary schools and one high school, are nearly full at 97 percent enrollment capacity. New residential development in Downtown is likely to increase the number of school- age children in the area, as well as the demand for public school education.

Recommendations

In order to address the public facilities and services gaps identified in the previous section, BAE proposes the recommendations listed in Table 4. Table 5 details a list of State and federal funding opportunities to support these recommendations.

Table 4. Public Facilities and Services Recommendations for Downtown Seattle

Recommendation	Implementation Steps
Improve Management Practices of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create or engage with local entities tasked with the management, funding, and activation of public spaces. For additional details, see the section titled Best Practices for Management of Public Spaces.

Existing Public Spaces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the Downtown Amenity Standards to include more specific requirements for operation and maintenance of POPs. • Improve lines of communication between public space victors and entities with jurisdiction over space operation and maintenance.
Improve Access to Public Green Spaces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with various city departments, including SPR, SPU, and SDOT, to utilize public rights- of- way and easements as temporary or permanent public green space. • Focus on connecting Downtown’s existing parks and public spaces with linear greenways. Ensure connectivity reaches communities with the low levels of green space access. • Continue to pair green infrastructure improvements with other public infrastructure improvements. Continue to encourage implementation of green infrastructure by private multi- family and commercial property owners. • Coordinate with SDOT to investigate the feasibility of temporarily or permanently prohibiting vehicle access, aside from emergency services, on public road proximate to green spaces to improve pedestrian and cyclist access.
Increase Wastewater System Capacity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with SPU to evaluate whether new capital investments have addressed capacity constraints identified in the 2019 Wastewater System Analysis. Consider updating the 2019 Wastewater System Analysis to reflect updated population growth trends in the Downtown area. • Prioritize system improvements in critical and high- capacity risk areas. • Continue to pair green infrastructure improvements with other public infrastructure improvements. Continue to encourage implementation of green infrastructure by private multi- family and commercial property owners.
Streamline Access to Resources and Services for the Unhoused Population.	<p>Improve service delivery and coordination among service providers through the implementation of a Navigation Center program model, as suggested by Barbara Poppe and Associates, Downtown.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a committee of local service providers, community leaders, housing experts, and other community stakeholders to evaluate the feasibility of a Navigation Center in Downtown. • Identify funding sources and a funding strategy to plan, implement, and sustain a Navigation Center.
Pursue Public Infrastructure Improvements that Encourage Neighborhood Safety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with SPS to evaluate how K- 12 students living Downtown commute to school. Coordinate with SRTS to ensure this program serves Downtown students and encourages safe commutes to school from this area. • Ensure public sidewalks, parks, plazas, and other spaces employ design principles that deter crime. This includes but is not limited to natural surveillance via lighting and landscaping, space activation, and space maintenance.
Improve Access to Urgent Care and Primary Health Care Providers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with developers to understand site selection and financial constraints for urgent care and primary health care clinics. Collaborate with OPCD to evaluate zoning regulations in Downtown and whether they need to be modified to attract health clinics. • Engage with the public health department for King County and local community stakeholders to identify areas in Downtown that are most underserved with respect to health care access. Prioritize attracting health care clinics in these areas.
Increase Public School Enrollment Capacity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with SPS to ensure projections and objectives of the One Seattle Plan are integrated into the BEX VI planning process.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with SPS to evaluate opportunities to increase enrollment capacity for public schools that serve Downtown.
Mitigate Displacement Pressure from Public Infrastructure Investment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New investment in Downtown neighborhoods can increase property values and gentrification pressure. Implementation actions for anti-displacement measures are included in BAE's Anti-Displacement Memo. Prioritize implementing anti-displacement measures for historically marginalized communities.
Align annual CIP planning process with the One Seattle Plan and subarea plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solicit input from City Budget Office staff throughout all city planning initiatives, including the One Seattle Plan and subarea plans. Develop plans that integrate financial constraints and opportunities. Collaborate with the City Budget Office to ensure the vision and priorities of city planning initiatives are reflected in the annual CIP planning process. Engage the City Budget Office to evaluate how funding priorities and project evaluation processes are established across each CIP and whether these priorities and processes are aligned with comprehensive plan objectives.

Sources: BAE, 2024.

Table 5. State and Federal Funding Opportunities for Public Facilities and Services

Source	Grantor	Eligible Uses	Funding Type
Parks and Recreation			
Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Grants Program	<p>National Parks Service Land and Water Conservation Fund</p> <p>Learn More: https://www.nps.gov/subjects/lwcf/outdoor-recreation-legacy-partnership-grants-program.htm</p>	<p>This program provides funding for park projects in underserved communities, specifically in urban areas without access to outdoor space, to create new outdoor recreation spaces and improve existing spaces. Funds can be used for the acquisition of land and the development of outdoor recreation spaces and parks.</p>	<p>Competitive Grants with 50 percent Cost- Sharing Requirement.</p> <p>2024 County award amounts in the State of Washington ranged from \$335,000 to over \$10 million.</p>
Drainage, Wastewater, and Drinking Water			
Water Quality Combined Funding Program	<p>State of Washington Department of Ecology</p> <p>Learn More: https://ecology.wa.gov/about-us/payments-contracts-grants-grants-loans/find-a-grant-or-loan/water-quality-combined</p>	<p>This is an integrated funding program for projects that improve and protect water quality, including wastewater, storm water, nonpoint sources activities, and on- site sewage systems.</p>	<p>Competitive loans and grants.</p> <p>Funding is provided from a variety of sources, including Clean Water Section 319 Grants, Centennial Clean Water Program Grants, Clean Water State Revolving Fund, Storm water Financial Assistance Program grants, and Storm water Community- Based Public- Private Partnerships. Funding amount is contingent on annual capital allocations from EPA. Awards are competitive, and projects are selected by readiness and their ability to improve and protect water quality. The type of funding offered can include grants, low- interest loans, and loan forgiveness.</p>
Drinking Water State Revolving Fund	<p>State of Washington Department of Ecology</p> <p>Learn More: https://doh.wa.gov/community-and-environment/drinking-water/water-system-assistance/drinking-water-state-revolving-fund-dwsrf</p>	<p>Funds can be used for infrastructure improvements for drinking water systems.</p>	<p>Competitive loans and grants.</p> <p>Projects are prioritized and selected on an annual basis. Funding amount is contingent on annual capital allocations from EPA. This program offers technical assistance, grants, and low- interest loans.</p>
WaterSMART	<p>U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Reclamation</p> <p>Learn More: https://www.usbr.gov/watersmart/index.html</p>	<p>Eligible projects include but are not limited to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water management improvements. • Planning and design activities. • Water reclamation and reuse. • Establishment and development of collaborative watershed groups. • Watershed management projects. • Habitat restoration and improved fish passage. • Drought planning. 	<p>Technical Assistance and Competitive Grants with Cost Sharing Requirements.</p> <p>WaterSMART includes grants from a variety of programs. Funding amount and requirements vary by program.</p>

Source	Grantor	Eligible Uses	Funding Type
Public Health and Safety			
FY25 Streets Outreach Program	<p>Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families</p> <p>Learn More: https://www.grants.gov/search-results-detail/355601</p>	<p>This program provides street-based services to homeless youth who are risk of human trafficking and abuse. Services should assist youth in making healthy choices and providing access to resources, including shelter, food, and hygiene.</p>	<p>Grants.</p> <p>This funding source is forecasted to be available February 28, 2025. Grant awards will range from \$90,000 to \$150,000.</p>
Education			
Early Learning Facilities Program	<p>Washington State Department of Commerce</p> <p>Learn More: https://www.commerce.wa.gov/capital-facilities/elf/</p>	<p>This funding supports the development of additional high quality early learning opportunities for children from low-income households. Eligible applicants include nonprofits, public entities, schools, school districts, and for-profit businesses. Projects must result in a licensed facility that increases early learning opportunities.</p>	<p>Grants to Reimburse Capital Project Expenses.</p> <p>Funding can be used to reimburse the following costs: acquisition, design, engineering, limited third-party construction management, construction, and capitalized equipment.</p>
Multiple Project Types			
Community Development Block Grant Program	<p>U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development</p> <p>Learn More: https://www.hud.gov/pr ogram_offices/comm_planning/cdbg</p>	<p>Funding is used to develop viable urban communities by providing housing and economic opportunities, primarily for low- and moderate-income households. Eligible uses include but are not limited to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquisition of real property. • Relocation and demolition. • Rehabilitation of residential and non-residential structures. • Construction of public facilities and improvements, including water and sewer, streets, neighborhood centers, and conservation of school buildings. • Public services. • Activities related to energy conservation and renewable energy. • Provision of assistance to for-profit businesses to carry out economic goals. 	<p>Grants are provided to states, cities, and counties on a formula basis.</p>

Sources: National Parks Service, State of Washington Department of Ecology, U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington State Department of Commerce, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, BAE, 2024.

Real Estate Financial Feasibility Technical Report

Date: March 25, 2025

Prepared for: Seattle Downtown Regional
Center Plan

Prepared by: BAE Urban Economics

Memorandum

To: Jesse London, Urban Centers Planner
Erica Bush, Urban Centers Planner

From: Matt Fairris, MCP, Vice President

Date: March 25, 2025

Re: REVISED DRAFT Downtown Seattle Regional Center Real Estate Development Financial Feasibility Analysis

INTRODUCTION

This memorandum provides an evaluation of the financial feasibility of four development prototypes in Downtown Seattle. These prototypes represent the types of development the City of Seattle is interested in supporting as part of the Urban Centers planning process, including high-rise residential apartments and mixed-use development, infill mass timber apartments, and commercial-to-residential conversion projects. BAE Urban Economics (BAE) defined these development prototypes in consultation with City Staff and a broader team of consultants, based on recent comparable projects in the city and region that would be representative of residential development types anticipated through the planning time horizon.

Following this introduction, the memorandum summarizes the feasibility of the four development prototypes under existing economic conditions, to inform the City of the current financial feasibility of typical development types. In addition, this analysis evaluates various sensitivities that influence the feasibility of the prototypes. This includes market factors, such as site acquisition costs, development costs, rental rates, and sale prices, as well as City policies that influence the development potential and project timeline. The intent of the sensitivity analysis is to inform the City of factors that can improve the feasibility of residential and mixed-use prototypes envisioned in the urban centers planning process. These factors may occur because of improving market conditions or specific actions the City takes to support the feasibility of future development in downtown.

FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS

Methodology

BAE selected the four development prototypes in consultation with City Staff, based on discussions of recent developments and project proposals in the downtown area and City of Seattle to understand what has been feasible and what would suit downtown neighborhoods in terms of scale and character. After establishing the prototypes, BAE interviewed developers with local experience to ascertain development costs for similar projects in recently completed downtown and to confirm revenue assumptions (i.e., asking rents, capitalization rates). Cost assumptions include site acquisition, soft and hard construction costs, fees and permits, and financing costs. This 'baseline feasibility' is then adjusted to account for potential market shifts (i.e., increases in rents), and developer adjustments (i.e., accepting lower profit margins, constructing more economically than assumed).

Development Prototypes

As mentioned previously, the four development prototypes studied in this memo include: (1) high-rise rental apartments with a ground-floor commercial component; (2) high-rise mixed-use development with residential, office, and hotel components; (3) mass timber rental apartment with ground floor retail; and (4) commercial-to-residential conversion project. A summary of the prototypes is provided in Exhibit 1 on the following page, followed by descriptions of each prototype.

Exhibit 1: Downtown Development Prototype Summaries

	Prototype 1: High-Rise Residential		Prototype 2: High-Rise Mixed-Use		Prototype 3: Mass Timber Residential		Prototype 4: Commercial to Residential	
Project Characteristics								
Site Size (SF - Acres)	25,000	0.57	25,000	0.57	13,750	0.32	25,000	0.57
Number of Units		550		1,000		150		96
Building Height (feet)		300		990		108		54
Number of Stories		30		90		12		6
Residential Units								
	Count	SF	Count	SF	Count	SF	Count	SF
Studio	55	500	100	500	15	500	10	500
1-BR	275	700	500	700	75	700	48	700
2-BR	220	900	400	900	60	900	38	950
3-BR	0	1,200	0	1,200	0	1,200	0	1,200
All Units (Total SF - Units)	550	418,000	1,000	760,000	150	114,000	96	74,700
<i>Density (du/acre)</i>	958		1,742		475		167	
<i>Circulation %</i>		20%		20%		20%		30%
Total Residential Square Feet		522,500		950,000		142,500		106,714
Total Market Rate Units		522		950		142		96
Total Affordable Units		28		50		8		0
Total Affordability (% of units)		5.0%		5.0%		5.0%		0.0%
Avg Affordability (% of AMI)		60.0%		60.0%		60.0%		n.a.
Ground Floor Retail Space		11,000		0		5,000		7,500
Total Office Square Feet		n.a.		450,000		n.a.		n.a.
Net Rentable Office SF		n.a.		382,500		n.a.		n.a.
Total Hotel Square Feet		n.a.		75,000		n.a.		n.a.
Hotel Rooms		n.a.		150		n.a.		n.a.
Total Building Square Feet		533,500		1,475,000		147,500		114,214
<i>Density (FAR)</i>		21.3		59.0		10.7		4.6
Parking								
Residential Parking Spaces		413		750		113		32
Retail Parking		n.a.		0		n.a.		n.a.
Office Parking		n.a.		300		n.a.		n.a.
Hotel Parking		n.a.		50		n.a.		n.a.
Total Parking Spaces		413		1,100		113		32

Sources: City of Seattle; BAE, 2024.

Prototype #1: High-Rise Rental Residential

The high-rise rental residential prototype is based on a typical 30-story residential development project in downtown Seattle, with a density of nearly 960 DU per acre. Due to the building height, this prototype assumes type-I construction of either concrete or steel, leading to higher construction costs relative to traditional wood-framed construction. This prototype assumes a 25,000 square foot site, equal to roughly half of a traditional downtown block. In total, this 30-story residential building includes 550 housing units (55 studios, 275 one-bedroom units, and 220 two-bedroom units). In terms of unit size, these units range from 500 to 900 square feet. Given the elevators and fire exits required for a building of this size, the prototype assumes 20 percent circulation for a total of 522,500 square feet of gross

residential development. Within the ground floor, this prototype includes 11,000 square feet of retail space for local-serving retail, food service or community service uses. Based on comparable projects and discussions with developers, BAE assumes that traditional market-rate developments in downtown Seattle will include 0.75 parking space per unit. As such, this prototype assumes the inclusion of 413 parking spaces in a subterranean parking garage.

This prototype is required to abide by the City's Multifamily Housing Affordability (MHA) ordinance. Given this prototype is intended to represent the typical feasibility of development in all of downtown Seattle, which includes a variety of zoning and MHA requirements, the prototype assumes five percent the units must be affordable to households making 60 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI), or 28 units within the project.

Prototype #2: High-Rise Mixed-Use

Representing a skyline-defining tower in downtown Seattle, the high-rise mixed-use prototype is based on a 90-story development. To maximize the economic feasibility of this prototype, this model assumes the lower floors are reserved for a hotel component, including 150 hotel rooms in 75,000 square feet of building area. The middle floors of the mixed-use tower include 450,000 square feet of office space intended to capture "Class A" tenants with view premiums and highly-amenitized space. The remaining upper floors are reserved for residential units, which includes a total of 1,000 residential units. To provide adequate parking for these various uses, this model assumes a total of 1,100 parking spaces, the majority of which are reserved for residential tenants.

Similar to Prototype 1 above, this prototype is similarly required to abide by the City's MHA ordinance. While the MHA requirement ranges throughout downtown, the majority of downtown zones require between three and seven percent of the units to be affordable to households at 60 percent of AMI. To represent a prototypical project within downtown, BAE assumes five percent of the units must be affordable to households at 60 percent of AMI, or 50 total housing units within the 1,000-unit project.

Prototype #3: Mass Timber Residential

Intended to capture innovative construction technologies and innovations that may spur future housing development, the third prototype models a mass timber building reaching above 100 feet in height. This innovative technology represents an opportunity to achieve taller buildings than is possible under typical type-5 wood-frame construction, which typically reaches a maximum of 80 to 85 feet. This technology therefore allows greater densities and a better utilization of urban land without requiring the use of full type-I construction like steel or concrete. To date, a limited number of mass timber residential buildings have completed in Seattle, although local mass timber manufacturing plants are increasing their presence throughout the Pacific Northwest, which will continue to improve the cost efficiencies of the technology.

One additional benefit of mass timber construction is the ability to deliver high-density projects on relatively small sites. As such, this prototype assumes a 13,750 square foot site, roughly equal to a quarter-block within downtown Seattle. In total, this prototype includes 150 residential units, for a density of nearly 500 dwelling units per acre. Due to the unique characteristics of mass timber, primarily the light-weight materials, this prototype assumes subterranean parking to reduce the weight of the above-ground structure. Similar to the prior prototypes, this project includes 0.75 parking spaces per unit, for a total of 113 spaces in the subterranean garage. Lastly, to abide by the City's MHA ordinance, this project includes 8 units affordable to households at 60 percent of AMI.

Prototype #4: Commercial-to-Residential Conversion

The final prototype captures an emerging opportunity to repurpose underutilized commercial spaces into residential space within downtown Seattle. Given this prototype relies on the characteristics and quality of existing buildings, this prototype aims to model the economics of a fairly average, underutilized office building that requires substantial investment to convert to residential uses. However, based on developer input, one of the critical factors driving the feasibility of this development prototype is the required seismic upgrading to meet current building code. This prototype assumes the building meets existing seismic requirements and that the bulk of new development costs are associated with gutting the office space, extending utility lines to align with the location of residential units, and the internal walls and corridors necessary to convert the space for residential uses. The feasibility of this prototype is sensitive to a range factors, most of which relate to the existing quality of the building.

This prototype assumes the acquisition and conversion of a 115,000 square foot six-story office building within downtown Seattle. This prototype assumes the ground floor will be used for residential lobby space and a small amount of ground floor retail space. Within the five additional floors, the prototype includes nearly 100 housing units. Due to the likely inefficiency of converting the space to residential uses, this model assumes a greater portion of each floor is non-leasable relative to a typical new building. As such, the total number of units and associated density is modestly lower than a new building. In order to attract residential tenants, this prototype includes 32 parking spaces in an at-grade or subterranean garage. This is a much lower ratio of parking spaces per unit, but will depend on the number of spaces within the existing building.

To support the feasibility of this development typology, Seattle recently exempted office to residential conversion projects from the MHA requirement. As a result, this prototype does not include any deed-restricted affordable housing units, however, as will be discussed below, the rental rates expected in this prototype are somewhat lower than traditional new development due to unique characteristics of the conversion process, which results in more affordable units than new buildings.

Baseline Cost and Revenue Assumptions

The following section outlines the development cost and revenue assumptions that inform the baseline feasibility analysis. These cost and revenue assumptions are based on interviews with local developers with recent experience in Seattle and the broader King County area; an analysis of recent land sales, development costs, and rental rates that BAE conducted as part of this study; and a review of development applications for recently completed projects. These assumptions are reflected in the pro forma financial feasibility models that are included in Appendix A to this memo.

Development Cost Assumptions

Site Acquisition Cost – Given the Downtown area covers a broad geography and range of neighborhoods, this analysis assumes a different site acquisition cost for each prototype that best reflects the likely location of each specific building typology. Based on recent land transactions and appraisals in the area, BAE assumes the site acquisition cost for the new building prototype (Prototypes 1 through 3) range from \$6.0 to \$12.0 million, with the higher price associated with the high-rise mixed-use development which is only likely to occur on a limited number of sites. For Prototype 4, the office-to-residential conversion, BAE assumes a full building acquisition cost of approximately \$150 per existing building square footage, or roughly \$17 million. This acquisition cost will depend on the quality of the existing building; however BAE used this price to reflect an average acquisition opportunity.

Hard Costs – Because the prototypes range in building heights and building materials, the hard costs differ between each prototype. For example, the hard costs for the 30-story high-rise residential project are assumed at \$450 per square foot, while the taller mixed-use building includes a hard cost of \$500 per square foot of office and residential, and \$650 per square foot of hotel space. Lastly, the mass timber hard costs are estimated at \$420 per square foot. For the office-to-residential conversion prototype, BAE assumes a cheaper hard cost per square foot, at \$275 per gross building square foot, to successfully convert the office space to residential units.

Parking Costs – Due to the urban nature of these prototypes, all assume parking is provided in a subterranean parking garage. The cost to deliver subterranean parking is estimated at \$65,000 per space, which includes the additional costs associated with excavation and other aspects of building underground parking.

City Impact and Permitting Fees – Currently, the City of Seattle has limited City impact and permitting fees. Based on a review of comparable projects, it is evident that projects are required to pay utility connection fees that equate to roughly \$6,500 per unit.

Soft Costs – Softs costs, which are typically estimated as a percentage of hard construction costs, include the costs associated with architecture, engineering, legal, and accounting services. Given all of these prototypes represent somewhat complex or innovative development types, the soft cost assumptions are slightly above traditional soft cost expectations. For Prototypes 1 and 3, which represent new residential developments, soft costs are estimated at 18 percent of hard costs. For the more complex mixed-use high-rise prototype, soft costs are estimated at 20 percent of hard costs. Finally, due to the unique challenges of office-to-residential conversion projects, BAE assumes soft costs are 22 percent of site acquisition and hard costs.

Developer Fee – In order to attract developers and investors, real estate projects must support a one-time developer fee, while also generating sufficient levels of profit to investors. For rental prototypes, the developer profit is measured based on the value of the property, but the developer will still include a one-time developer fee to cover staffing overhead. BAE estimates this developer fee is equal to 4 percent of hard and soft construction costs.

Financing Costs – Assumptions regarding the financing of construction loans are comparable for all prototypes. Developers are assumed to take out a loan valued at 65 percent of construction costs and be charged a loan fee of 1.5 percent of the loan amount. The construction period interest is estimated based on an annual interest rate of 6.5 percent and a drawdown factor of 60 percent. The length of the loan is assumed at 24 months to cover the construction period.

Operating Cost and Revenue Assumptions

Residential Rental Rates – Given rental rates per square foot by bedroom size vary throughout Downtown and by development type and quality, the following rents are assumed in the prototypes. These reflect the higher expected rents for prototypes with view premiums and expected on-site amenities:

<u>Unit Type</u>	<u>Prototype 1: High-Rise Residential</u>	<u>Prototype 2: High-Rise Mixed-Use</u>	<u>Prototype 3: Mass Timber Residential</u>	<u>Prototype 4: Commercial to Residential</u>
Studio	\$2,325	\$2,500	\$2,325	\$2,200
1-BR	\$3,115	\$3,395	\$3,115	\$2,940
2-BR	\$3,870	\$4,230	\$3,870	\$3,848

Non-Residential Rental Rates – While the primary use of each prototype is residential, the following rental rates were estimated for the non-residential uses, most importantly within the high-rise mixed-use building:

- Office Rent/SF: \$5.50/SF Full Service Gross*
- Hotel Average Daily Rate: \$375 per night (at 70% occupancy)*
- Retail Rent/SF: \$2.50/SF NNN*

Residential Rental Operating Expenses – In order to calculate the Net Operating Income (NOI) of the prototypes, this analysis assumes operating costs for the residential component of each prototype are equal to 28 percent of the prototype’s rental income. This includes property taxes, on-site property management, and on-site amenities. The feasibility analysis also assumes a five percent vacancy rate to account for standard apartment turnover and resultant loss of rental income.

Non-Residential Operating Costs – Both office and hotel uses assume significant ongoing operating costs to serve office tenants and hotel guests. These are estimated at 32 percent of office gross revenue and 45 percent of gross hotel revenue. For retail spaces within the prototypes, these rents are conducted on a Triple-Net basis (NNN) which passes off the majority of ongoing operating costs to the tenant. As such, the feasibility analysis assumes a limited commercial operating cost of five percent of gross revenue. The analysis also assumes a vacancy rate of between 5 and 7 percent for each use.

Capitalization Rate and Required Yield– The capitalization rate (cap rate) represents the rate of return on a real estate investment property with a net operating income, like a multifamily rental project, and is used to estimate project value. Real estate developers and investors use this cap rate to determine the required project return for new construction projects. More specifically, investors will only invest in new construction projects that have a higher yield than the current cap rate. This “developer spread” is what determines the project feasibility. Under current market conditions, BAE estimates a cap rate of 5.0 percent for residential projects, and a required project yield of 6.0 percent in order to attract investors to a new construction project in downtown. For the high-rise mixed-use prototype, each use is a significant portion of the project and contains a different cap rate. BAE assumes a hotel cap rate of 7.0 percent, which translates to a required project yield of 8.5 percent, while the office cap rate is estimated at 5.75 percent with a required project yield of 6.75 percent.

Baseline Financial Feasibility

The following summarizes the financial feasibility of the baseline prototypes. Exhibit 2 below summarizes the critical cost and feasibility findings, while Appendix A includes the full pro forma feasibility models. Appendix A-1 is the pro forma financial feasibility model for the high-rise residential prototype, Appendix A-2 is the pro forma financial feasibility model for the mixed-use development prototype, Appendix A-3 is the mass timber prototype, and Appendix A-4 is the office to residential conversion prototype.

Prototype #1: High-Rise Rental Residential

The high-rise rental prototype has a total development cost of roughly \$625,000 per unit, or nearly \$350 million in total cost. This includes a site acquisition cost of roughly \$4.8 million for the 25,000-square foot site in downtown Seattle. The majority of the cost, however, is associated with hard construction costs, amounting to approximately \$230 million, or two-

thirds of the total overall development cost. The other major cost factors include soft costs (\$45.6 million), subterranean parking costs (\$26.8 million) and financing costs (\$18.6 million).

Assuming the rental rates reported above, this prototype is estimated to generate roughly \$23.3 million in total gross annual revenue. After an assumed vacancy rate and typical operating costs, the building results in an annual Net Operating Income (NOI) of \$15.6 million. While this annual revenue is significant, by dividing the NOI by the total development cost, this project results in a 4.54 percent yield on cost. In the current real estate investment market, developers and investors are seeking a minimum of 6.0 percent yield on cost for stabilized developments. Given this project generates a lower yield than the required yield on cost, this rental prototype is currently **infeasible**, largely driven by the high development cost, high developer return requirements, and rental rates in downtown that have not kept pace with the cost of construction.

Prototype #2: High-Rise Mixed-Use

The high-rise mixed-use prototype has the highest total and per square foot development cost, driven by the required materials and complexity of a 90-story tower project. As seen in Exhibit 2 below, this prototype is expected to cost \$1.2 billion, or \$788 per gross square foot. Based on the additional detail shown in Appendix A-2, the residential component accounts for roughly 61 percent of the total development cost, given it is the largest component of the project. In terms of the total overall project, hard construction costs account for the most significant portion of the project costs, estimated at nearly \$750 million. Other critical costs include soft costs (\$174 million), parking costs (\$82.5 million), and financing costs (\$66 million).

From an ongoing revenue perspective, this project is estimated to generate nearly \$90 million in annual revenue. After accounting for vacancy and operating expenses, the project results in approximately \$49 million in annual net operating income. However, due to the high construction cost of nearly \$1.2 billion, the project has a projected yield on cost of 4.22 percent. This is well below the minimum blended required yield on cost of 6.4 percent, indicating this prototype is currently **infeasible** in the current market. Appendix A-2 below summarizes the feasibility of each component of the project, which indicates that the hotel component is actually closest to feasibility, driven by the high average daily rates. The office and residential components have similar yield on costs, but due to the perceived challenges and risks associated with future office demand, the office component is further away from feasibility.

Prototype #3: Mass Timber Residential

With a slightly lower cost per square foot relative to the prior prototypes, the 150-unit mass timber prototype has a total development cost of roughly \$90 million, or \$605,000 per residential unit. Similar to the prior prototypes, hard cost still account for the largest share of development costs, at nearly \$60 million. Due to the more limited site size, of just 13,750

square feet, the site acquisition cost is much lower than the prior prototypes, at \$2.1 million. The other primary costs include soft costs, parking costs, construction financing costs, and developer fees.

From a revenue perspective, this 150-unit prototype is expected to yield \$6.4 million in gross rents. After accounting for operating costs and a standard vacancy rate, the prototype yields \$4.3 million in net operating income. Based on the total cost of \$90 million, the prototype has a projected yield on cost of 4.74 percent. This is below the minimum required return of 6.0 percent, indicating this prototype is **infeasible** without subsidies. This aligns with recent mass timber developments in the city and region, which accessed a range of local and state funding to support the delivery of a mass timber residential building. However, the aim is that this technology will continue to improve and the costs will decrease over time. The impact of these potential cost decreases is discussed below.

Prototype #4: Office-to-Residential Conversion

Assuming a fairly significant existing building acquisition cost of \$17 million, converting an aging office building to residential units is expected to cost a total of \$61 million, or \$639,259 per unit. On a per unit basis, this is more expensive than the mass timber prototype, though that prototype relies on finding a vacant site which is likely to be more challenging than finding existing underutilized buildings. Hard costs still account for the largest cost associated with this prototype, however the building acquisition cost is the second largest cost. The other primary costs to deliver this prototype include soft costs, financing costs, and developer fees.

With an expected net annual operating income of \$2.7 million, this prototype has a projected yield on cost of 4.40 percent. This is well below the minimum required return of 6.5 percent, indicating this baseline prototype is **infeasible**. As discussed in more detail below, the cost to acquire the existing structure is a critical factor in the feasibility of development. If an existing development can be purchased at a price well below market price, that decreases the cost basis for the project and can improve the project economics. Until office buildings begin trading hands for less than the assumed \$150 per existing square foot, the feasibility of these developments is challenging.

Exhibit 2: Downtown Development Prototype Feasibility Summary

	Prototype 1: High-Rise Residential	Prototype 2: High-Rise Mixed- Use	Prototype 3: Mixed-Use Mass Timber	Prototype 4: Office-to- Residential
Development Program				
Residential Component				
Number of Units	550	1,000	150	96
Market-Rate	522	950	142	96
Affordable	28	50	8	0
Avg Unit Size (SF)	760	760	760	758
Retail Component				
Total Retail Square Footage	11,000	0	5,000	7,500
Office Component				
Total Office Square Footage	n.a.	450,000	n.a.	n.a.
Hotel Component				
Total Hotel Square Footage	n.a.	75,000	n.a.	n.a.
Total Hotel Rooms	n.a.	150	n.a.	n.a.
Total Parking Spaces	413	1,100	113	0
Parking Type	Subterranean	Subterranean	Subterranean	n.a.
Feasibility Analysis				
Total Development Cost	\$344,518,602	\$1,162,853,136	\$90,665,954	\$61,368,883
Cost per gross SF	\$687	\$788	\$663	\$590
Cost per Residential Unit	\$626,397	\$710,247	\$604,440	\$639,259
Rental Feasibility				
Net Operating Income	\$15,625,724	\$49,033,942	\$4,297,975	\$2,699,470
Project Yield on Cost	4.54%	4.22%	4.74%	4.40%
Required Yield on Cost (a)	6.00%	6.40%	6.00%	6.50%
Project Feasibility	Infeasible	Infeasible	Infeasible	Infeasible

Note:

(a) Assumes a blended Yield on Cost based on the mix of uses and associated required returns.

Sources: City of Seattle; BAE, 2024.

Financial Feasibility Sensitivity Adjustments

In addition to the baseline pro forma analyses reflected in the model printouts in Appendix A, BAE conducted sensitivity testing that assesses the impact on feasibility from potential changes in three key categories: development costs, market shifts, and city policies. For example, some developers may be able to construct the prototypes for lower costs than our research has suggested, such as through reductions in building or material costs. Developers may also choose to accept lower profit margins for less risky projects. In addition, demand for housing in Downtown may change as conditions improve and additional amenities are delivered in the subarea, potentially raising the rental rates. Lastly, although the baseline

prototype feasibility analyses assume existing City policies regarding entitlement timeline, density, and fees, the City may be able to influence the feasibility of prototypes by adjusting these policies to support development.

The results of each sensitivity tested below assume all other costs and revenues are equal to those in the baseline prototypes and are therefore not representative of cumulative feasibility impacts from multiple sensitivity adjustments.

Development Cost Adjustments

Following is a range of key development cost components that BAE tested for sensitivity.

Reduced Hard Costs

Given that hard construction costs are the most significant component of development costs, any reduction in hard costs will improve development feasibility significantly. While hard costs have increased significantly in the last five years, interviews with local developers indicate that hard costs increases have slowed and even reached stagnation in the past year. Hard cost decreases are uncommon, but are typically a result of innovation in construction process and materials.

Reduced Developer Profit

For both of the market-rate developments, the developer profit requirement is a major determinant of project feasibility. For example, if a developer or investor does not require any project profit, the high-density rental prototype would be feasible assuming market-rate rents. However, any investor in residential development requires a profit and therefore is not going to invest in this type of development. However, a small reduction in the required profit margin does improve the feasibility of the project, but still results in a feasibility gap. A reduction in project profit for rental apartments can occur in a number of ways, including market fluctuations that attract more capital to the region, as well as reduced risk associated with a project through streamlined permitting and more certainty around the entitlement process.

Market Shifts

In addition to a reduction in development costs and required profit margin, shifts in market conditions will dramatically influence the feasibility of residential development. Due to recent increases in construction costs and interest rates, combined with stagnant rents and sale prices, development feasibility is challenging. However, should costs stagnate and rents or sale prices increase, the feasibility of development will improve.

City Fees and Policies

Following are cost components relating to City fees and policies that BAE tested for sensitivity.

Entitlement Timeline and Risk

While only a limited component of the project costs, a longer project approval process does lead to increased holding costs and increased project risk, which results in higher profit requirements to attract investment in residential projects. By reducing the entitlement timeline and risk, all of the prototypes become more feasible, though still require rent or sale prices increases or other cost decreases to reach feasibility.

Height and Density

Throughout Downtown, the City has already unlocked fairly high densities and height limits, indicating that more height or density will not dramatically improve feasibility until market conditions improve. However, there may be certain zones where these prototypes are not currently allowed, especially areas where the 100+ foot mass timber prototype may be an ideal development typology.

Impact Fees

Relative to comparable jurisdictions in King County, Seattle has limited City fees. Developments in Seattle are required to pay utility connection and use fees, though these fees only amount to roughly \$6,500 per unit. If the City were to explore reducing or deferring fees to support residential development, any reduction will only reduce the development cost by between one and two percent, having a limited impact on project feasibility.

Prototype Feasibility Sensitivity Tables

The following section summarizes the sensitivity of the prototypes to adjustments in two critical categories: hard costs and market-rate rents. These are the two largest factors that lead to development feasibility. Given the recent increases in development costs, over a period when market rate rents did not keep pace, the feasibility of the prototypical developments discussed above is challenging. However, the following outlines the potential sensitivities to cost and rent changes to help understand the amount of change needed to support a feasibility project. It should be noted that these assume developers and investors continue to require high yield-on-costs relative to prior market cycles. Should those requirements fall, these developments will be considered feasible with less cost and rent adjustments.

Prototype #1: High-Rise Rental Residential Sensitivity

As seen below, the high-rise rental residential prototype requires a combination of hard cost decreases and rental rate increases to yield a feasible project, under current market return requirements. More specifically, the table below indicates that a project with a small decrease in total hard costs will be feasible if market-rate rents increase 20 percent. Similarly, if hard costs fall by 20 percent, the prototype would be considered feasible with a ten percent increase in market rate rents.

Impact of Hard Cost and Rent Adjustments on Project Yield on Cost:

		Hard Cost Adjustment						
		-20%	-10%	-5%	0%	5%	10%	20%
Rent Adjustment	-20%	3.9%	3.5%	3.3%	3.2%	3.0%	2.9%	2.7%
	-10%	4.7%	4.2%	4.0%	3.9%	3.7%	3.5%	3.3%
	-5%	5.1%	4.6%	4.4%	4.2%	4.0%	3.9%	3.6%
	0%	5.5%	5.0%	4.7%	4.5%	4.3%	4.2%	3.9%
	5%	5.9%	5.3%	5.1%	4.9%	4.7%	4.5%	4.2%
	10%	6.3%	5.7%	5.4%	5.2%	5.0%	4.8%	4.4%
	20%	7.1%	6.5%	6.2%	5.9%	5.6%	5.4%	5.0%

Prototype #2: High-Rise Mixed-Use Sensitivity

Similar to Prototype #1, this mixed-use high-rise prototype requires substantial changes to market conditions to meet current investor return requirements. As shown below, the project yield on cost reaches the minimum required (shown in green) with significant hard cost decreases and increases to office and residential rents.

Impact of Hard Cost and Rent Adjustments on Project Yield on Cost:

		Hard Cost Adjustment						
		-30%	-15%	-5%	0%	5%	15%	30%
Office and Residential Rent Adjustment	-30%	3.3%	2.8%	2.6%	2.5%	2.4%	2.2%	2.0%
	-15%	4.5%	3.8%	3.5%	3.3%	3.2%	3.0%	2.7%
	-5%	5.3%	4.5%	4.1%	3.9%	3.8%	3.5%	3.1%
	0%	5.7%	4.8%	4.4%	4.2%	4.0%	3.7%	3.4%
	5%	6.1%	5.2%	4.7%	4.5%	4.3%	4.0%	3.6%
	15%	6.8%	5.8%	5.3%	5.1%	4.9%	4.5%	4.1%
	30%	8.0%	6.8%	6.2%	6.0%	5.7%	5.3%	4.8%

Prototype #3: Mass Timber Residential Sensitivity

The mass timber prototype requires less adjustments to reach feasibility. As shown below, the project is feasible with a 20 percent increase in market rate rents and a limited decrease in hard costs. Similarly, if the mass timber technology is able to achieve greater cost efficiencies, market rate rents only need to increase by between five and ten percent to reach project feasibility under current investor return requirements.

Impact of Hard Cost and Rent Adjustments on Project Yield on Cost:

		Hard Cost Adjustment						
		-20%	-10%	-5%	0%	5%	10%	20%
Rent Adjustment	-20%	4.0%	3.6%	3.5%	3.3%	3.2%	3.1%	2.8%
	-10%	4.9%	4.4%	4.2%	4.0%	3.9%	3.7%	3.4%
	-5%	5.3%	4.8%	4.6%	4.4%	4.2%	4.0%	3.7%
	0%	5.7%	5.2%	5.0%	4.7%	4.5%	4.4%	4.0%
	5%	6.1%	5.6%	5.3%	5.1%	4.9%	4.7%	4.4%
	10%	6.6%	6.0%	5.7%	5.4%	5.2%	5.0%	4.7%
	20%	7.4%	6.7%	6.4%	6.2%	5.9%	5.7%	5.3%

Prototype #4: Office-to-Residential Conversion Sensitivity

Unlike the prior sensitivity models, the table below outlines the sensitivity of this prototype to changes in site or building acquisition costs. As noted above, this model is particularly sensitive to the cost of acquiring the building that will be converted to residential units. While the baseline model assumes a fairly modest sale price of \$150 per gross building square foot, a significant decrease in the site purchase price can yield a feasible project with modest increases in rental rates.

Impact of Site Acquisition Costs and Rent Adjustments on Project Yield on Cost:

		Site Acquisition Cost						
		-50%	-25%	-10%	0%	10%	25%	50%
Rent Adjustment	-20%	3.8%	3.4%	3.2%	3.1%	3.0%	2.8%	2.6%
	-10%	4.6%	4.1%	3.9%	3.7%	3.6%	3.4%	3.2%
	-5%	5.0%	4.5%	4.2%	4.1%	3.9%	3.7%	3.5%
	0%	5.4%	4.8%	4.6%	4.4%	4.2%	4.0%	3.7%
	5%	5.8%	5.2%	4.9%	4.7%	4.6%	4.3%	4.0%
	10%	6.2%	5.6%	5.2%	5.1%	4.9%	4.6%	4.3%
	20%	7.0%	6.3%	5.9%	5.7%	5.5%	5.2%	4.8%

FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY CONCLUSION

As summarized above, the financial feasibility of high-density residential and mixed-use development in Downtown Seattle is challenging under current market conditions due to recent cost increases and interest rates, in tandem with stagnant rent increases. The challenges in development feasibility in Downtown are not unique to this neighborhood, but are indicative of broader economic conditions effecting real estate development of all types with cost increase and revenue stagnation as the market recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent interviews with stakeholders indicate that development costs are stabilizing, if not decreasing, which will result in improved project economics. Similarly, expected interest rate decreases related to the Federal Reserve's decision to lower the overnight lending rate will likely lead to reduced costs and more reasonable investor return requirements in the near- to medium-term. While the above analysis indicates that development feasibility in Downtown would require improvements to the current market conditions, this is not atypical of a real estate market cycle. The City should interpret these results as an indication of why development interest in certain neighborhoods of Downtown is fairly limited at present, but also recognize that the City can improve project feasibility by leveraging publicly-owned land, investing in infrastructure, and updating land use, zoning, development standards and other policies and requirements to prepare the Downtown Regional Center for development when these conditions improve. While it is speculative to estimate when market conditions will improve to yield more favorable economic conditions in new development projects, real estate market cycles typically last between seven and ten years. Assuming the current conditions represent a beginning of a new market cycle, it is reasonable to assume the feasibility of new development will improve over the next five to seven years through a combination of improved market conditions in Seattle, decreased interest rates, innovation in construction typologies and materials, and renewed interest in urban real estate investing. In addition, Downtown Seattle is uniquely positioned to capture in these improved economic conditions given the projected job growth and future planned investment in downtown, including the Ballard Link Extension of Sound Transit which will create new transit stations throughout downtown and opportunities for transit-oriented development.

Appendix A-2: High-Rise Mixed-Use Financial Feasibility Analysis

Project Characteristics		Cost & Income Assumptions		Development Cost Analysis		Feasibility Analysis					
Site Area (acres - sf)	0.57	Site Acquisition Cost, per Acre	\$12,000,000	Hotel	\$350,189	Office	\$2,101,135	Residential	\$4,435,729	TOTAL	\$6,887,052
Building height (stories & feet)	90	Development Costs:		Construction Cost	\$46,750,000	Hard costs	\$225,000,000	Hard costs	\$475,000,000	Gross scheduled rents	\$20,531,250
Total building area exc. parking (sf)	1,475,000	Hard Cost per Office/Residential	\$650	Soft costs (% of hard costs)	n.a.	Tenant improvement costs	\$38,250,000	Soft costs	\$56,250,000	Less operating expenses	(\$9,239,063)
Parking (sf)	385,000	TI allowance per leasable Office sf	\$100	Impact Fees (per sf)	\$9	Parking Costs	\$22,500,000	Financing costs	\$4,001,011	Leas vacancy	(\$6,159,375)
Building floor-area ratio	59.0	Soft costs (% of hard costs)	20.0%	Inclusionary Fee, per BMR residential sf	\$21.50	Soft Costs	\$57,150,000	Total Development Cost	\$70,188,116	Net Operating Income	\$5,132,813
Hotel Component		Developer fee (% of hard and soft costs)	4%	Developer Fee	\$641,447	MHA Fee Payment	n.a.	Development Feasibility	\$382,418,028	Net Operating Income	\$28,501,679
Hotel Space (sf)	75,000	Hotel	\$375	Average Daily Rate	\$125	Developer Fees	\$2,545,658	Construction costs	\$669,760,000	Development Feasibility	\$669,760,000
Hotel Rooms	150	Occupancy Rate	70%	Operating expenses (% of Gross Rev)	45%	Total Construction Costs	\$68,187,105	Financing costs	\$40,486,992	Construction costs	\$669,760,000
Avg Size (sf)	500	Cap Rate	7.00%	Operating expenses (% of Gross Rev)	7.00%	Financing Costs	\$3,355,686	Interest on construction loan	\$18,283,365	Financing costs	\$4,001,011
Office Component		Office	\$5.50	Rent (FS, per month, per gsf)	7%	Points on construction loan	\$945,324	Total Financing Costs	\$40,486,992	Financing costs	\$4,001,011
Gross office area (sf)	460,000	1 br (# & avg. sf)	100	Vacancy rate	32%	Total Financing Costs	\$4,001,011	Total Development Cost	\$70,188,116	Required Yield-on-Cost	7.31%
Circulation (% & sf)	67,500	2 br (# & avg. sf)	400	Cap Rate	5.75%	Total Financing Costs	\$4,001,011	Cost per sf	\$850	Project Feasibility	Infeasible
Leasable office area (sf)	382,500	3 br (# & avg. sf)	0	Gross residential area (sf)	950,000	Total Financing Costs	\$4,001,011	Cost per du	\$710,247	Project Feasibility	Infeasible
Residential Component		Gross residential area (sf)	950,000	Leasable residential area (sf)	760,000	Total Financing Costs	\$4,001,011	Cost per du	\$710,247	Project Feasibility	Infeasible
Total dwelling units (# & avg. sf)	1,000	Dwelling units per acre	n.a.	MHA Requirement	50	Total Financing Costs	\$4,001,011	Cost per du	\$710,247	Project Feasibility	Infeasible
Studios (# & avg. sf)	100	Market Rate		Below-Market Rate (% units)	5%	Total Financing Costs	\$4,001,011	Cost per du	\$710,247	Project Feasibility	Infeasible
1 br (# & avg. sf)	500	Studio	\$2,500	Low-Income (60% AMI)	5%	Total Financing Costs	\$4,001,011	Cost per du	\$710,247	Project Feasibility	Infeasible
2 br (# & avg. sf)	400	1 br	\$3,395	Moderate-Income (60% AMI)	0%	Total Financing Costs	\$4,001,011	Cost per du	\$710,247	Project Feasibility	Infeasible
3 br (# & avg. sf)	0	2 br	\$4,230	Middle-Income (110% AMI)	0%	Total Financing Costs	\$4,001,011	Cost per du	\$710,247	Project Feasibility	Infeasible
Gross residential area (sf)	950,000	3 br	\$5,460	Income Level		Total Financing Costs	\$4,001,011	Cost per du	\$710,247	Project Feasibility	Infeasible
Leasable residential area (sf)	760,000	Low-Income	\$1,531	Moderate-Income	0	Total Financing Costs	\$4,001,011	Cost per du	\$710,247	Project Feasibility	Infeasible
Dwelling units per acre	n.a.	Moderate-Income	\$1,629	Middle-Income	0	Total Financing Costs	\$4,001,011	Cost per du	\$710,247	Project Feasibility	Infeasible
MHA Requirement	50	Middle-Income	\$2,236	Income Level		Total Financing Costs	\$4,001,011	Cost per du	\$710,247	Project Feasibility	Infeasible
Below-Market Rate (% units)	5%	Low-Income	\$2,500	Low-Income	5	Total Financing Costs	\$4,001,011	Cost per du	\$710,247	Project Feasibility	Infeasible
Low-Income (60% AMI)	5%	Moderate-Income	\$3,395	Moderate-Income	0	Total Financing Costs	\$4,001,011	Cost per du	\$710,247	Project Feasibility	Infeasible
Moderate-Income (60% AMI)	0%	Middle-Income	\$4,230	Moderate-Income	0	Total Financing Costs	\$4,001,011	Cost per du	\$710,247	Project Feasibility	Infeasible
Middle-Income (110% AMI)	0%	Middle-Income	\$5,460	Middle-Income	0	Total Financing Costs	\$4,001,011	Cost per du	\$710,247	Project Feasibility	Infeasible
Income Level		Low-Income	\$1,531	Middle-Income	0	Total Financing Costs	\$4,001,011	Cost per du	\$710,247	Project Feasibility	Infeasible
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Income Level		Middle-Income	\$2,500	Middle-Income	0	Total Financing Costs	\$4,001,011	Cost per du	\$710,2		

Downtown Seattle Project List

Date: December 19, 2025

Prepared for: Seattle Downtown Regional
Center Plan

Prepared by: Seattle Department of
Transportation

PROJECT NUMBER	NEIGHBORHOOD	PROJECT TITLE	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	PROJECT TYPE	EXTENTS - MILAGE
1	CID, Pioneer Square	2nd Ave Ext / 4th / Jackson Improvements	<p>Street improvements to provide more comfort for people outside of personal vehicles at the complex intersection and transit hub at 2nd Ave Ext, 4th Ave, and Jackson St. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the number of general purpose travel lanes on 2nd Ave Extension north and south of Jackson Street in order to provide more space for people walking, rolling, biking, and gathering. Pursue investment to increase public space activation and greening. Revise intersection operations and reduce crossing distances at intersections along Jackson Street (at 2nd Ave Ext and 4th Ave) to respond to consistent community feedback on intersection safety and comfort, and to provide better conditions for 2026 FIFA World Cup attendees. Program and improve the pedestrian island south of Jackson, between 2nd Ave Ext and 4th Ave, as part of the street reconfiguration, as identified in the Jackson Hub Concept Plan (2019). Consider pedestrianizing the 3rd Ave slip lane that connects 2nd Ave Ext with Jackson or re-designing to add mobility hub elements. Pursue installation of upgraded bicycle infrastructure between Jackson and Yesler on 4th Ave, to connect with the existing protected bike lane north of Yesler. If such installation is not operationally feasible, extend existing 2-way PBL infrastructure on 2nd Ave Ext as far as Jackson St as a local connection to King Street Station." 	Bike, Pedestrian, Vehicle, Transit	~4 city blocks
2	CID	King Street Festival Street	Flexible street concept to allow for street activations and car-free periods in the heart of CID (from 5th Ave to Maynard Ave S).	Pedestrian, bike, PSPS	~2 city blocks
3	CID	5th Ave S: car-lite street	Restrict general purpose traffic as local only from 5th Ave between Jackson and Weller St and make roadway transit and bike only at some or all days and times of the year, to provide a more pleasant environment adjacent to CID Link station and to improve streetscape for gateway into CID at 5th and King.	Transit, bike, PSPS, pedestrian	~2 city blocks
4	CID	King St and Jackson St I-5 underpass improvements	Work with relevant partners to support the vision from Friends of I-5 CID, which includes street and public space investments on both Jackson and King, with programming potentially in the existing parking lot in between the two blocks that is underneath I-5. Concurrently, continue to improve the King St neighborhood greenway for safer bicycle and pedestrian mobility and additional urban design elements.	Bike, pedestrian, PSPS	~2 city blocks
5	CID	Lane St (and other non-commercial oriented CID streets) re-allocation of right-of-way	Reallocation of street right-of-way for activation and greening, in concert with potential development site(s). Expand reach of vibrant public spaces and commercial frontages with uses such as seating and vending beyond where it is already thriving, such as King Street.	PSPS, pedestrian	Neighborhood wide.
6	CID	Maynard St: support a vibrant retail street	Introduce pedestrian scale elements and green infrastructure like trees or planter boxes or less intense landscaping where areaways are present along this vibrant retail corridor from Jackson St to Dearborn St.	PSPS	~4 city blocks
7	CID	Improve alleys in the CID	Celebrate historic alleys through improving urban design elements. Support businesses and residents by improving alley conditions throughout the district through maintenance and modernization.	PSPS, pedestrian, vehicle	Neighborhood wide.
8	CID	Reimagine street grid in South CID at Dearborn / Charles St	In concert with future Link station site, development and changes in land use, re-imagine street grid to support movement through the area while creating a more comfortable pedestrian environment. Explore squaring the grid from Seattle Blvd to Charles St to connect with Airport Way. Improve Dearborn St bicycle facility condition and signalization around I-5 ramps, and improved sidewalk maintenance on Dearborn St, pedestrian lighting, and pedestrian infrastructure.	Pedestrian, vehicle, transit, freight, bike	~10 city blocks
9	CID, Pioneer Square	Jackson St corridor multimodal improvements	Pursue STP large capital project for multimodal improvements along Jackson St to prioritize transit operations and upgrade King Street neighborhood greenway infrastructure, along with wider sidewalks for better pedestrian comfort and green landscaping, throughout CID and Little Saigon. (1st Ave to Rainier)	Pedestrian, transit, bike	1st Ave S to Rainier Ave S
10	CID	Little Saigon intersection and corridor improvements	Pursue improvements to 12th and Jackson intersection to make crossings safer and prioritize people and transit movements, in concert with King County Metro. Expand "King Fixture" (red lantern light post treatments) into Little Saigon as noted in the The CID Lighting Study (p19).	Pedestrian, PPS, pedestrian	1 block, intersection area
11	CID	Rainier Ave S + Boren Ave corridor and intersection improvements	Re-allocate space on Rainier Ave S in Little Saigon as part of the larger Rainier Corridor project, including transit-only lanes, protected bike lanes, improved pedestrian crossings, removal of slip lanes (e.g. at Dearborn St), and a pedestrian-friendly redesign with signal timing adjustments of the complex intersection at Rainier/Jackson/Boren/14th .	Pedestrian, bike, transit	1 block, intersection area

PROJECT NUMBER	NEIGHBORHOOD	PROJECT TITLE	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	PROJECT TYPE	EXTENTS - MILAGE
12	Pioneer Square	1st Ave S corridor transformation: S Jackson to S Dearborn	Re-think right-of way from S King St to S Dearborn St including considering reducing travel lanes to one through lane in each direction. Support local businesses and visitors through a diversity of curbside uses, wider sidewalks, and activation.	Pedestrian, PSPS, Vehicle	~2 city blocks
13	Pioneer Square	Intersection Improvements	Pursue traffic calming, wayfinding and safety enhancements (e.g., stop signs, chicane, elevated crosswalk, painted intersection, wayfinding, or others), especially in advance of 2026 FIFA World Cup.	Pedestrian, PSPS, Vehicle	1 block, intersection area
14	Pioneer Square	Occidental Ave people street	With successful piloting during 2026 FIFA World Cup, transform Occidental Ave from Jackson St south to the stadiums to create a people-focused connection with Lumen Field and T-Mobile Park. Focus on which streets are prioritized for people walking vs. others that prioritize people rolling (e.g. bikes, scooters, etc).	PSPS, pedestrian	~0.5 miles
15	Pioneer Square	Virginia and Stewart Multimodal Improvements	Create an adaptable street that is people-first and limits through traffic on 2nd Ave between Washington and Lumen Field, in conjunction with a pilot during 2026 FIFA World Cup.	PSPS, pedestrian	~4 city blocks
16	Downtown Core	5th Ave, 2nd Ave, 4th Ave, and Olive Way transit lane re-allocation with bus restructures	With changes to the future transit network, reallocate BAT lanes to support businesses, improve safety, and create more space for pedestrians.	PSPS, pedestrian, transit	Multiple blocks and streets in downtown
17	Downtown Core	3rd Ave Transit Spine	With changes to the future transit network in concert with Sound Transit light rail expansion, consider changes in operations, design, and activation for transit riders along this critical transit spine. This could include improving transit reliability, and adding sidewalk space to allow more people to wait comfortably for transit, walk, roll, dine, and visit local businesses.	PSPS, pedestrian, transit	~20 city blocks in downtown
18	Downtown Core	1st Ave S corridor transformation: S Jackson to Stewart St	1st Ave segment with the future Center City Connector, includes dedicated lanes for streetcar to support and enhance this vibrant retail corridor. The Center City Connector will join the South Lake Union and First Hill Streetcar lines to create a seamless connection through these vibrant neighborhoods, including through the heart of Downtown Seattle's commercial core. When complete, 5 miles and 23 stations of streetcar service will be available to access hundreds of destinations, including Pike Place Market, Colman Dock, and First Hill, along with four direct connections to Link light rail, and connections to Sounder and Amtrak service at King Street Station.	PSPS, pedestrian, transit, vehicle	~13 city blocks in downtown
20	Downtown Core	North/South bicycle facilities downtown	Install and improve protected bike lanes to accommodate additional bicycle and e-mobility volumes and types of mobility (e.g., cargo bikes), and speeds through wider facilities and upgraded barriers. Make PBL 4th Ave one-way northbound and install a new PBL on 5th Ave southbound. (Pine St to S Main St)	Bike	4th and 5th Aves in downtown core
21	Belltown and Denny Triangle	Belltown 3rd Ave transformation	Reduce width for vehicle movements on northern portion of 3rd Ave to allow for more activation and people-focused public spaces. Do so in conjunction with more ground floor residential development, leveraging street improvements and sidewalk widening + greening opportunities afforded by private development. (Bell St to Denny Way)	Pedestrian, PSPS	~7 city blocks along 3rd Ave
22	Belltown and Denny Triangle	1st Ave S corridor transformation: north of Stewart St	On northernmost segment of 1st Ave pursue potential tree-lined median similar to southernmost segment, expanded street dining opportunities in Belltown to support local businesses and improvements to the pedestrian experience.	Pedestrian, PSPS	~12 city blocks
23	Belltown and Denny Triangle	Westlake Ave Transformation: Olive Way to Denny Way	Restrict vehicle access to transit, deliveries, and pickup/drop offs to transform this street, which disrupts the street grid and neighborhood traffic operations, into a truly people-focused and vibrant mixed use corridor. Consider design treatments that are context-sensitive: some blocks may have different needs than others.	Pedestrian, transit, vehicle	~5 city blocks
24	Belltown and Denny Triangle	5th Avenue green corridor	Pursue a green corridor design on 5th Avenue underneath Monorail tracks, between the columns and the western curb, to create an expanded landscaped pedestrian/bicycle space and relocate the curbside functions to between the Monorail columns.	Pedestrian, PSPS, Vehicle, Bike	~8 city blocks
25	Belltown and Denny Triangle	Virginia and Stewart Multimodal Improvements	Convert Virginia St into a two-way transit street with bus-only lanes, and add a protected bike lane on Stewart St. Opportunity to invest in fewer, better bus zone improvements and enhanced transit reliability measures.	Transit, bike, PSPS	~12 city blocks
26	Belltown and Denny Triangle	Denny Way multimodal improvements	Improve Denny Way for people walking, rolling, and taking transit. This could include repairing sidewalks, planting new trees, and improving intersections for safer travel by removing slip lanes and shortening crossing distances. Improve connections to nearby ad future Link stations and adjust signal timing and operations to better support transit and freight movement.	Transit, pedestrian, vehicle, PSPS, freight	~20 city blocks

PROJECT NUMBER	NEIGHBORHOOD	PROJECT TITLE	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	PROJECT TYPE	EXTENTS - MILEAGE
27	Belltown and Denny Triangle	Bell Street upgrades and expansion	Extend the Bell Street shared street treatment westward to the new waterfront, from 1st Ave to Elliott Ave, and north/eastward from 6th Ave as far as Denny Way. Evaluate function of existing shared street configuration to make it function better for pedestrians and bicyclists, including travel along the street, crossings of the north-south avenues, and turns to and from the street.	Pedestrian, bike, vehicle	~6 city blocks
28	Belltown and Denny Triangle	Enhance intersections on Vine St and Clay St	Install all-way stop control or traffic signals to facilitate safer pedestrian crossings and reduce speeds along the major north/south corridors.	Vehicle, pedestrian	Intersections
29	Belltown and Denny Triangle	Elliot Ave and Western Ave multimodal improvements	Update Western Ave and Elliot Ave to make the streets more welcoming to people walking and rolling, reduce speeding, and improve business access needs. (Bell St to Denny Way)	Vehicle, pedestrian	~9 city blocks
30	Waterfront	Waterfront Seawall and Promenade between the Aquarium and Broad St	Continue the waterfront pedestrian promenade between the Seattle Aquarium and Broad St to strengthen the pedestrian connection between the Aquarium, the cruise terminal, the Olympic Sculpture Park, and Elliott Bay Trail. Concurrently, modernize and re-build the seawall and make water-side improvements to maintain structural integrity.	Pedestrian	~9 city blocks
31	Downtown Core	Duplicate I-5 crossings project from First/Hill Capital Hill Plan (Denny Way to Yesler Way)			