



ULI TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL REPORT

MT. BAKER STATION AREA TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

Published September 2019



**Urban Land
Institute**
Northwest

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- Encourage collaboration among all domains—public and private—of the real estate industry.
- Build consensus among industry and public leaders who influence land use, transportation, environmental, and economic development policies.

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ABOUT THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL (TAP) PROGRAM

The ULI Northwest Technical Assistance Panel program brings together a select, independent panel of experts to provide a fresh perspective on complex, local public and private development problems. Panelists represent a variety of professional and academic fields relevant to the issues at hand, including real estate development, planning and design. Panel members donate their time over two days to study the local context, focus on the issues presented to them by the hosting organization, perform limited research, deliberate, and agree upon a specific but limited set of recommendations addressing the problems and opportunities found by the panel. The subsequent report is a presentation of those recommendations and the priorities for action the panel finds appropriate.

ABOUT THE TAP REPORT

The TAP report is a summary of findings of one ULI Northwest Technical Assistance Panel, covering a particular study area. As such, it is not a plan or a feasibility analysis. Responsibility for further analysis and implementation of any panel recommendation lies with the hosting organization and/or its partners.

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Mt. Baker Station with adjacent Artspace Mt. Baker Lofts development.

Executive Summary

Mt. Baker Station is located near the intersection of South McClellan Street and Rainier Avenue South (Rainier), three miles south of downtown Seattle. It is situated at the north end of Rainier Valley, between the Beacon Hill and Mt. Baker neighborhoods.

Almost as soon as Sound Transit settled on the Mt. Baker station site, it was clear there was support for dense, transit-oriented development in the station area, the neighborhood, the larger community and with the City of Seattle (City) and community. Height limits in the station area had been substantially raised in anticipation of redevelopment and a desire for eventual transformation into a vibrant, walkable town center with street frontage and multistory, mixed-use buildings. Since the station opened in 2009, downtown Seattle and other Seattle neighborhoods have experienced rapid growth, and affordable housing is needed more than ever. Yet private investment and redevelopment around Mt. Baker Station has been notably absent.

“ I don’t think it’s too late to get equitable, fair development. ”

The University of Washington Consolidated Laundry site (UW Laundry), which is in a key location near the station, will now be available for redevelopment through legislative action by the State of Washington legislature (Compromise Capital Budget Sec 7038). This property is situated in a prime location for a dense, master planned development that helps fulfill agendas of the City and the University of Washington.

There are some measures the City can take to leverage public assets along with previous investments in mass transit. This would make private investment in the station area more likely. Safer and more intuitive connections across Rainier to Mt. Baker Station will enhance the pedestrian experience. Realizing potential for a town center near transit at Mt. Baker Station may hinge on the following recommendations:

- **Move the King County Metro bus transit center to the west of the light rail station.** Moving the Metro transit center from its current location on the east side of Rainier to 27th Avenue South on the west side of the light rail station will make multimodal connections between rail and bus transit much safer and more convenient. A linear transit center and bus layover along an extension of 27th Avenue South, connecting to South Winthrop Street, will minimize the footprint of the transit center and make

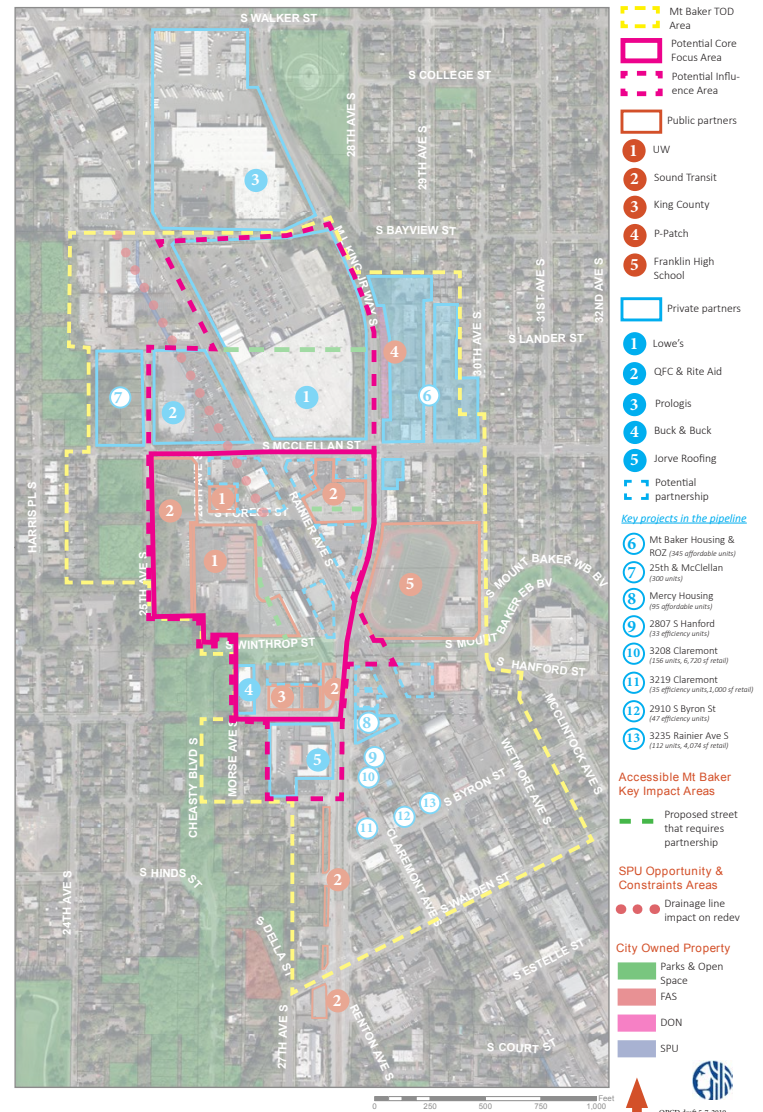
it more compatible with new development west of the station. The transition should take place in two phases, with electrified buses staying in the existing location while the lanes currently used for the diesel bus layover and stops are transformed into a pedestrian plaza and open space.

- **Design and redevelop the existing Metro bus transit center as a combination of open space and pedestrian plaza.** The redesign should feature a meandering pathway spine that leads to a prominent crossing of Rainier at South Forest Street. The pedestrian plaza will become a key element in a new system of high-comfort pedestrian corridors linking the Mt. Baker neighborhood to the north and south ends of the Mt. Baker light rail station. A widened, high visibility signalized crosswalk across Rainier will connect the new pedestrian plaza to the station, at South Forest Street.
- **Create a pedestrian refuge between Rainier and MLK.** This is a three-part design element consisting of a small plaza just south of the intersection of Martin Luther King Jr. Way (MLK) with Rainier, coupled with a two-stage crosswalk. The position of the resulting crosswalks are consistent with desire lines of pedestrian movement toward the light rail station as it appears from the east side of the intersection, and also positioned to reconnect the Olmsted legacy boulevards in Mt. Baker, running east-west in the Franklin High School area and just to the south of the station at South Winthrop Street. This crossing will leverage a historic Olmsted legacy for the future of the planned town center and increase comfort and safety for pedestrians approaching the light rail station and its plaza, especially from neighborhoods to the east.
- **Seek optimum development of the UW Laundry site.** This site is well-positioned to be a significant development stimulus, and the core of a vibrant town center.
- **Revisit zoning in the larger station area.** Revisions of the zoning map to align height limits with realistic, feasible mixed-use development will make desired private investment more likely.

MT BAKER BACKGROUND

The Mt Baker ULI TAP work will focus on areas immediately around the Mt Baker Light Rail Station area. These areas were identified as key catalysts and top priorities to stimulate redevelopment and economic development. Each site in this focus area has individual objective that supports the overall vision/goal for the Mt Baker TOD.

Mount Baker Station Area Opportunity Sites



Background

Sound Transit's Mt. Baker Station is located along an aerial light rail guideway next to the crossing of two historic north-south auto and transit thoroughfares, Rainier and MLK, both of which are high-volume arterials. The station is named after the affluent Mt. Baker neighborhood, located to the east of the study area. The station area itself is a gateway to the Rainier Valley, an economically, racially and culturally diverse area that has historically been home to many immigrant groups. The Mt. Baker community would like to see new development that reflects local diversity, creates economic opportunity, and minimizes displacement.

For two decades, local governments, transit agencies, City officials and neighborhood groups have had high expectations for the Mt. Baker Station area evolving into a vibrant town center. Planning and public outreach at every level, from regional to local and neighborhood have informed these expectations for accommodating growth. The hoped-for change amounts to dramatic transition from an auto-oriented node to a mixed-use TOD community. It is based on the presence of the station itself and connections to every other station in the growing regional transit system.

“ Accessibility to regional destinations should not be underplayed. ”

There have been numerous planning efforts and milestone changes to zoning in the past 20 years. They began with the North Rainier Neighborhood Plan, completed in 1999, which anticipated the arrival of light rail in the Rainier Valley and set up the Rainier Valley Community Development Fund. The McClellan Town Center Plan was developed between the years of 2001 and 2008, and the City of Seattle rezoned the area around the station, increasing building heights and density allowances. In the same period, a Southeast Action Agenda was accompanied by a Community Renewal proposal. In 2011, two years after Mt. Baker Station opened, the Mt. Baker Neighborhood Plan was updated to include an urban design framework action plan and this precipitated another upzone around the station. Then the City

of Seattle Department of Planning and Development hired a Transit-Oriented Development manager in 2014, and the Seattle Department of Transportation kicked off a planning effort called Accessible Mt. Baker. The Mt. Baker Town Center Neighborhood Design Guidelines were adopted in 2017, and a City of Seattle interdepartmental team was established to focus on implementation strategies.

The opening of the Mt. Baker Station in 2009 was followed by a decade of rapid development in downtown Seattle and other Seattle neighborhoods, accompanied by rapidly increasing ridership of light rail and transit in general. In the meantime, the need for affordable housing in the City of Seattle has become ever more urgent. Mt. Baker Station remains underused as a transit hub and as a center for multifamily development.

As of 2019, the area near the intersection of Rainier and South McClellan Street is seemingly stuck in a time capsule, with acres of parking and one-story buildings. Much of the station area remains underdeveloped and lacking in private investment. Streets and walkways around the station remain unwelcoming to, and underused by, pedestrians. It is an uncomfortable, if not hostile, environment for all active modes of transportation.

“ There’s nothing there. How do we prevent dead space? ”



Mobility constraints for active transportation.
Photo by Rachel Berney.

Hopes for the future of the station area center around multifamily and mixed-use development, with a mix of market-rate apartments, affordable and workforce housing. These investments would bring new riders to transit, which provides regional connections to jobs, entertainment and shopping without the need for a car. At the same time, investment would increase pedestrian activity in the streets and intersections nearby, spurring demand for neighborhood retail and encouraging even more investment. Desirable investment would

A challenging pedestrian environment.



transform a major intersection with very few pedestrians and no street frontage into a crossing with a more inviting, urban feel.

“ Access and attractions are under the rail station, but people can barely see it. ”

Significant public realm assets near the station are ready to become part of a vibrant town center but are largely invisible due to the overwhelming auto-oriented development. Presently, assets include Mt. Baker Station itself, with a sheltered town plaza beneath the rail platform. In combination with the adjacent ArtSpace apartment building, it could become an attractive space for gathering and community events. Also, the station area adjoins a historic Olmsted boulevard system, aligned to connect Beacon Hill to the west with the Franklin High School campus and the Mt. Baker neighborhood to the east. With safer and more comfortable pedestrian connections across Rainier and MLK, these east-west corridors could become part of a generous greenway that stretches from Mount Baker Boulevard to Cheasty Boulevard South, via an attractive hillclimb.

Recommendations



The pedestrian plaza
beneath Mt. Baker
Station.

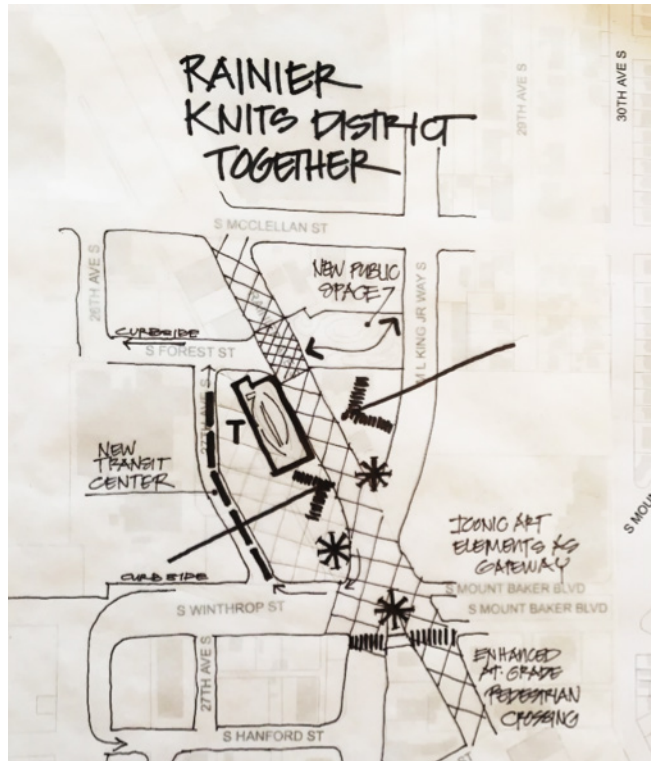
The City and community are in agreement on a desire for more urban development near Mt. Baker Station, with the overarching goal of a vibrant and diverse town center built around transit.

While neighboring private parcels are slow to transform from strip commercial (QFC/Rite Aid) and big box retail (Lowe's) to more urban patterns of development for complex reasons, there are important opportunities for the public realm to support transit and encourage greater density in the area around the station in the near term. Acting on these will increase the comfort and security of pedestrians and assure potential developers that the city is committed to supporting the neighborhood's transit-oriented growth. Strategic changes can make walking or riding to and from the station more intuitive, safe, and welcoming.

The following recommended changes are within the power of the City because they involve publicly owned land and City rights-of-way. They can calm heavy traffic (44,500 vehicles per day) on Rainier by increasing the pedestrian use of adjacent sidewalks and creating an environment that feels more multi-modal

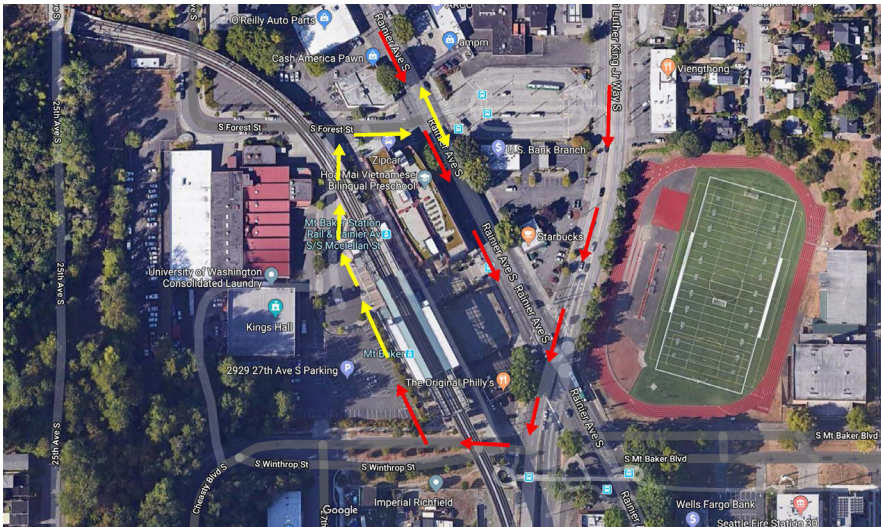
and less like a highway. At the same time, these changes will enhance connections to the larger Mt. Baker community, which is now lacking secure, comfortable ways to approach the station on foot. Adding public open space at strategic points will link the east and west sides of Rainier, and serve to make existing greenways more visible, more accessible, and more usable.

Proposed relocation of Metro transit center shown to the west of the light rail with enhanced pedestrian crossing at Rainier and MLK.

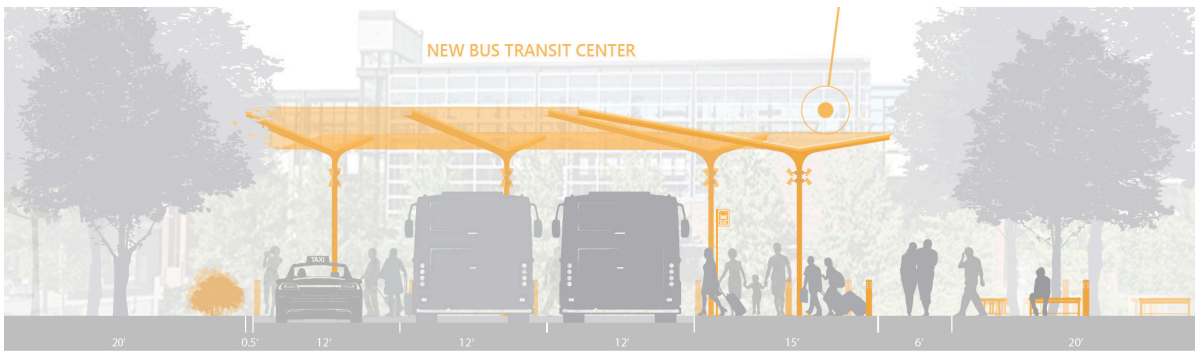


Move the existing Metro bus transit center.

The existing Metro transit center should be relocated in a two-stage process to a new linear transit center along the west side of the Mt. Baker light rail station, along 27th Avenue South, with a new southern access point at South Winthrop Street. The first phase would involve the new South Winthrop Street connection and relocation of existing diesel bus layover and stops. During this first phase, the electric trolley bus (Route #14) would remain at the existing transit center. Electric trolley buses would be relocated in a later phase, either through movement of the catenary lines or conversion of these routes to other fuel sources more compatible with a move. The new Metro station design would achieve the overarching goal of enhancing the experience of all transit users by providing a direct connection for transferring passengers between buses and the light rail station. The southern access to the light rail station from South Winthrop Street will make it possible to have right-hand drop off for passengers boarding or leaving a bus. The bus transfer and layover area should be kept to the minimum required to meet operational needs and at the same time increase urban design opportunities between the bus transit center, the light rail station and the UW Laundry site.



Proposed bus travel through the new Metro transit center west of the light rail station.

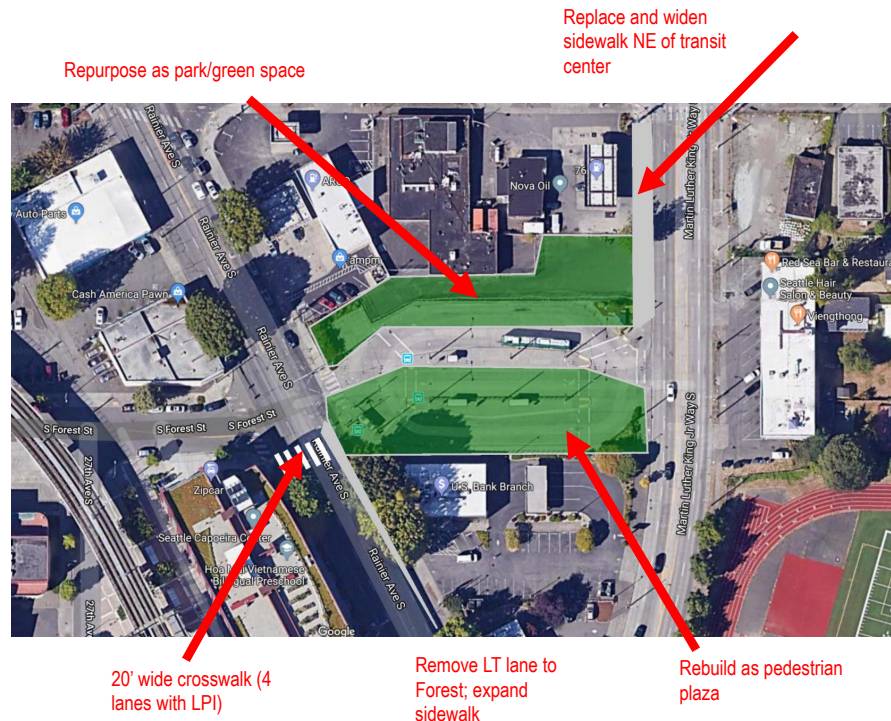


Convert the existing bus transit center to a pedestrian plaza and open space.

The existing Metro transit center, between MLK and Rainier, is owned by Sound Transit with a partial federal interest in the land ownership. The first phase of relocation would see the existing lane for Metro Route #14, which runs as an electric trolley, retained in its existing location. Lanes north and south of this route, which currently accommodate transit stops and layover for diesel buses, would be converted to an at-grade pedestrian plaza. The plaza would be created by removing the existing curbed transit lanes. More than just a "wide sidewalk," the plaza would be inspired by Seattle areas like Bell Street, 12th Ave and James Court, but without vehicular traffic mixing, and include a meandering or undefined path between MLK South and Rainier. The open space itself, which could be developed following the relocation and extension of the electric trolley to the west of Rainier, is an opportunity for landscaping. Planted areas can be created by removing concrete or in raised planters. Seating can be placed along the pathway, and there might be potential for street markets, food trucks, etc. Low Impact Design should be a guiding principal. The plaza could include physical and visual separation, using walls and or vegetation (planted or in raised planters), between the plaza and the bank and Starbucks south of the transit center.

Potential street-level design for Metro transit center. Design by Irving Chu, Berney 508 University of Washington UDP Studio, Fall 2018.

Conversion of the existing Metro bus transit center to a pedestrian plaza and open space.



8th Avenue North in South Lake Union is another great example of a green, pedestrian-friendly corridor.



Enhance pedestrian connections.

The following steps would improve the pedestrian environment near Mt. Baker Station by relocating and enhancing crossings that coincide with east-west desire lines to the north and south ends of the light rail station.

Improve the signalized crosswalk at Rainier and South Forest Street. Improving this crossing is critical for enhancing the value and visibility of the

completed pedestrian plaza and open space at the present Metro transit center. The existing crosswalk at South Forest Street would be widened to 20 feet, and markings replaced with high visibility markings. As 27th Avenue South is extended to accommodate a linear bus transit center, northbound left turns will be restricted at South Forest Street. This creates an opportunity to remove the existing left turn pocket and unused center median space on Rainier and use this space to widen and replace the existing sidewalk on the east side of Rainier, which needs repair. The wider sidewalk will accommodate additional transit stop space for northbound Rainier (Routes 7, 9 and 106) and shorten the distance across Rainier for those walking to and from the light rail station. The following elements will also support the widened crosswalk at South Forest Street:

- Implementation of Lead Pedestrian Interval (LPI) at South Forest Street-Rainier signal.
- Replace curb ramps where necessary to align with widened crosswalk.

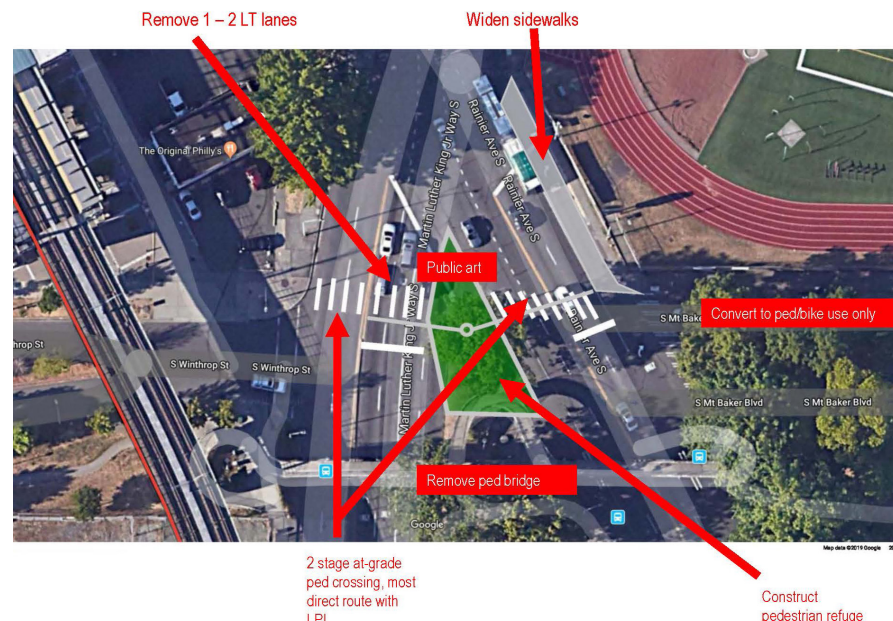
“ Pedestrian safety would be my number one aim. ”

Create a two-stage crossing and pedestrian refuge at MLK and Rainier at Mount Baker Boulevard. Providing a new refuge area will improve the pedestrian connection to the south end of the station area for Franklin High School and points east, align crossings with pedestrian desire lines to the station, and allow for the removal of the existing pedestrian bridge in favor of an at-grade crossing. This involves relocating existing signals and stop bars for northbound MLK and creating a two-stage pedestrian crossing aligned with the westbound lanes of South Winthrop Street and Mount Baker Boulevard. The current westbound lanes of Mt. Baker Boulevard would need to be converted to bicycle and pedestrian use only, as suggested in the Accessible Mt. Baker plan. Two-way vehicle traffic, including fire station access, would need to be relocated to the current eastbound lanes of Mt. Baker Boulevard. Conversion of existing roadway pavement to a small, triangular pedestrian plaza at the south side of the current MLK-Rainier intersection creates space for a pedestrian refuge between signal phases, space for the relocated signal pole and cabinet, and potential for public art. This curbed pedestrian plaza, including seating and landscape elements, would serve as a comfortable pause in a new two-stage crossing for east-west bound pedestrians. This crossing should be designed to augment and celebrate the heritage corridor of the Olmsted Greenway. Public art at the north end of the plaza will serve as a traffic calming pedestrian buffer and as a focal point for the neighborhood. Depending on further traffic operations analysis, project elements could include:

- Conversion of north lanes (current westbound) of Mt. Baker Boulevard to active pedestrian/bicycle use only between 30th Avenue and Rainier.
- Removal of at least one left turn lane on MLK at Rainier.
- Relocation of existing signals and stop bars for northbound MLK and Rainier to a location south of the existing north lanes (current westbound) of Mt. Baker Boulevard and South Winthrop Street. (Note: New dual-mast arm pole location can be within the new pedestrian plaza refuge.)

The Mt. Baker Station area has suffered from an incomplete system of at-grade crosswalks, and the old highway-era pedestrian bridge is still in place. This bridge does not meet ADA standards and maintenance is an obvious issue. It was reported to be slippery in wet weather due to leaves and rain. While used by some, it is often bypassed by pedestrians seeking a more direct east-west crossing through the intersection. Following completion of the new crosswalk, sidewalk, and pedestrian island improvements, removal of the pedestrian bridge is recommended to maximize pedestrian traffic into the new crosswalk system, and to enhance pedestrian visibility as well as safety.

Pedestrian bridge to be removed and replaced with two-stage, at-grade crossing.



“ The (arterial) overpass is so steep that people just don’t even try it. It would be covered with leaves in the wintertime, and people would fall. ”

Seek optimum development of the UW Laundry site.

This site carries an expectation to generate housing as well as to enhance the livability of the light rail station area. It represents an opportunity for a model

community, with housing and convenient transportation to every point along the growing light rail system, including the University of Washington itself. The first step is to identify feasible development alternatives, including an analysis of existing soil conditions and determine opportunities for accommodating appropriate density. Equitable housing opportunities can then be planned with confidence as well as other cost-effective development scenarios. The analysis would identify access and infrastructure improvements, as well as potential zoning modifications.

Revisit zoning in the larger station area.

To encourage new investment and redevelopment in the Mt Baker Station area, it will be necessary to revisit zoning decisions made in recent decades. High rise buildings are probably not feasible in the station area, with the possible exception of some areas north of South McClellan Street. The current height limits are an obstacle to development for the following reasons. Existing 145-foot limits are not high enough to amortize the cost of concrete construction. At the same time, wood-frame buildings taller than 85 feet are not consistent with the building code and are not economically feasible in much of the area, especially south of South McClellan Street, because of code constraints and foundation design complications in loose soils. Zoning for impractically tall buildings may actually discourage redevelopment because it artificially inflates the cost of land, encouraging owners to hold out for a market that will not materialize. Combined with long-term tenancies, which pose an obstacle to redevelopment of any kind, actual short-to-mid-term development capacity in the Mt. Baker Station area may be lower than expected. For all these reasons, the City should review and revise the zoning envelope for the station area. The goals of this zoning process include:

- Encourage development by minimizing unnecessary obstacles.
- Align boundaries with natural station area watershed and consider reasonable expansion of the multifamily-zoned areas to achieve desired population densities.
- Make zoning consistent with building code heights and with structural and fire safety systems (current and expected).
- Reduce patchwork pattern of current zoning and adjust the boundaries of zones to align with efficient development opportunities.
- Minimize required retail in marginal demand areas and focus retail zoning to key thoroughfares that reaffirm a Town Center and concentrate retail experiences.
- Consider allowing ground floor multifamily uses such as townhomes and walk-up apartments.

For Future Study

A number of other proposals, noted below, were discussed by panelists but not explored sufficiently within available time to become part of the core recommendations:

Develop a larger park in the station area, one that provides space for active play and also completes a system of open spaces, some existing and some newly identified in this report. If well situated and designed, such a park would be responsive to community desires, add value to the neighborhood and attract interest from private developers.

One possible location for a larger park is the 11,000-square-foot fenced property just south of the station, owned by C&H Family Partnership. A possible disadvantage of this site is that it would be removed from the pool of land available for multifamily housing. However, this site is likely to be problematic for multistory buildings if soil conditions are similar to the adjacent ArtSpace site. Yet it may be an ideal site for a park, because it:

- could possibly be combined with the adjacent “Philly’s” site for a more generous-sized park.
- is visible along Rainier, an important condition for a park as cited by panelists.
- is in a good position to provide active play space and serve a growing community in the station area.
- adjoins the Olmsted Greenway corridor, which is also of interest to panelists; it ties in with other existing open spaces and also existing and future pedestrian and multi-modal infrastructure.

Another possible location for park space is adjacent to and south of the current Metro transit center, on the east side of Rainier. It could become an extension of the landscaped open space mentioned in Recommendations, above, in the section about the future of the transit center site. Study of the comparative feasibility, advantages and disadvantages of these two possibilities for development of a larger park would be appropriate.

Construct a mid-block crosswalk on MLK between South McClellan Street and South Bayview Street, at the east end of the new pedestrian plaza, to provide access to Franklin High School and break up a superblock with new development. Implementation of this crosswalk would be predicated on SDOT's rechannelization (road diet) on MLK, north to South McClellan Street. Compatible with existing SDOT projects and practices on MLK, the goal would be to reduce crossing distance for pedestrians, provide opportunity for center pedestrian refuge and increase crossing comfort. This could potentially reestablish Lander as a cross street from 30th Avenue South to 25th Avenue South.

Widen the South McClellan Street sidewalk. The City might evaluate feasibility of widening the south sidewalk between MLK and Rainier by eliminating one eastbound traffic lane on South McClellan Street. This could lead to widening the crosswalks at South McClellan Street and MLK and Rainier, and refresh them with high visibility markings, and adding curb extensions if MLK is rechannelized (road diet). The goal would be to improve the walkability to the station from the Mt. Baker neighborhood.

Activate the Light Rail Station ground level. The area below the light rail station is an underused asset to the community. Relocation of the buses to 27th Avenue South nearer to the station will help to activate this. However, Sound Transit might consider seeking partners such as Seattle Office of Arts & Culture to activate the area with a slate of events and installations, such as food carts, community events, art installations, and markets.

The area below the light rail station provides a unique space for cultural and community events, art displays, and markets.



Next Steps

Based on the recommendations in this report, the following is a step-by-step description of actions meant to lift major barriers and disincentives to the development of the Mt. Baker station area and allow it to resemble the vibrant town center envisioned by the City and the Mt. Baker neighborhood. They are presented in chronological order:

Step One: Framework agreements

Negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between all parties, acknowledging and accepting the basic framework of TAP Panel recommendations.

Develop a plan to determine feasible development alternatives for the UW Laundry Site. The plan should outline a process that will:

- Analyze geotechnical conditions and conduct preliminary environmental investigations.
- Develop design alternatives for maximizing density by exploring other cost-effective development scenarios.
- Develop conceptual access and infrastructure improvements, determine if land use or zoning modifications are needed.
- Design for the relocation of the existing Metro transit center to a site west of the existing Mount Baker light rail station using southern access through South Winthrop Street. The relocation plan should include near-term relocation of diesel buses and relocation of the electric trolley bus line in a later phase. The transit center design would accommodate bus layover as well as pedestrian and bicycle comfort and safety. The partners should prioritize the experience of transit users by connecting bus transit with the light rail station. Other goals include minimizing loss of development capacity on the UW Laundry site and using 27th Avenue South as a strategic urban design element between the UW Laundry site and transit facilities.

University of Washington: Review and fund Development Conceptual Plan for Laundry site and review the eventual RFP offering the site for development of affordable housing.

City of Seattle: Through the following departments, implement a conceptual Plan for development:

- **Office of Housing:** (Draft RFP for housing at UW Laundry Site.)
- **Budget Office**
- **Office of Planning and Community Development** (OPCD)
- **Department of Transportation** (SDOT)

As lead agency for public right of way, SDOT will:

- Lead design and implementation of South Winthrop Street modifications within ROW.
- Convert 27th Avenue South for relocation of the transit center.
- Coordinate early and proactive public communication regarding South Winthrop Street modifications (especially with Friends of Olmsted). See step 5 for more information.
- Review and approve Metro Transit Center relocation design (on SDOT ROW).

Sound Transit: Review and approve plans and designs, including:

- Re-use of existing bus transit center site.
- Transit Center relocation design (on Sound Transit ROW).

King County Metro: As lead agency for bus transit, King County Metro will:

- Lead design and implementation of transit center relocation north of South Winthrop Street.
- Manage public communication regarding transit stop relocations (Routes 8, 48, Trailhead Direct).

Step Two: Pedestrian Plaza

Design a Pedestrian Plaza at current King County Metro Transit Center, south of existing lanes for Metro Route #14 (electric trolley) layover. Existing facility (owned by Sound Transit) would be converted to a single-grade pedestrian plaza between MLK and Rainier. Features of the plaza would include:

- Consistent elevation between the MLK and Rainier intersections, removing the existing curbed transit lanes. This will provide additional space for the transit station/stop at Rainier (Routes 106, 7, and 9).

- Physical and visual separation, using walls and/or vegetation (planted or in raised planters) between the plaza and the bank and Starbucks south of the transit center.
- A meandering or undefined path between MLK South and Rainier, with potential for street markets, food trucks, etc.
- Opportunity for landscaping and plantings, either planted in areas created by removing concrete or in raised planters.
- Seating along pathway.
- Low Impact Design as a guiding principal.

Seattle Parks and Recreation: Provide design assistance and review on pedestrian plaza

Seattle DOT: Provide design assistance and review on pedestrian plaza

King County Metro: Relocate transit center itself (see #1), including:

- Vacation of leasing interest at transit center.
- Public communication about relocated transit routes.

Sound Transit (Lead Agency): Design and implement conversion of existing transit center to pedestrian plaza.

Step three: Green space

Design Phase I and Phase II green space at current King County Metro Transit Center, north of existing lanes for Metro Route #14 (electric trolley) layover. Existing facility (owned by Sound Transit) will be converted to green (planted) space for recreation, and concrete removed. The design process might include installation of a family-friendly play space, depending on available buffers to other properties, including Route #14 layover, MLK Way and Rainier. If play space is included, curbed separation from Route #14 layover area must be provided.

The green space design shall be expandable (Phase II) when electric trolley (Route #14) moves to new transit center, west of light rail station.

Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) (Lead Agency): Acquire ownership interest (sale or lease) in existing Sound Transit-owned land at transit center north of existing Route #14 layover lane. Design and implement conversion of existing transit center area to park space.

KC Metro: Relocate transit center (see step one above).

Sound Transit: Approve conversion of existing transit center, plus sale or lease of ownership interest to Seattle Parks. Manage Federal interest in transit center property upon transfer to Seattle Parks.

Step four: Crossing at South Forest Street

Improved crosswalk at Rainier and South Forest Street (at east side of pedestrian plaza, when completed). This would include the following elements:

- Widened sidewalks between MLK and Forest on the east side of Rainier.
- Widened crosswalks near additional transit stop space for northbound Rainier. This also shortens crossing distance for pedestrians.
- A widened existing crosswalk at South Forest Street to 20 feet, plus markings replaced with high-visibility markings.
- Implement Lead Pedestrian Interval (LPI) at South Forest Street-Rainier signal.
- Replace curb ramps where necessary to align with widened crosswalk.

Seattle DOT (Lead Agency): replace and widen sidewalk, restripe wide crosswalk at South Forest Street and Rainier, and implement LPI.

Step Five: Crossing at Mount Baker Boulevard

Improve pedestrian access and crossing at MLK and Rainier at Mount Baker Boulevard (south of light rail station). Improve pedestrian connection to the south end of the station area for Franklin High School and points east in the following ways:

- Relocate existing traffic lanes and signals to create two-stage pedestrian crossing aligned with South Winthrop Street and Mount Baker Boulevard, with high comfort pedestrian plaza at the south side of the current MLK-Rainier intersection. Recommended project elements include;
- Convert north lanes (current westbound) of Mt. Baker Blvd. to pedestrian/bicycle only between 30th Avenue South and Rainier.
- Construct curbed pedestrian plaza, including seating, landscaping, etc. at the south side of the intersection of MLK and Rainier. Plaza will serve as a high-comfort area to wait for new two-stage crossing for east-west bound pedestrians along the current westbound and eastbound lanes of South Winthrop Street and westbound lanes of Mount Baker Boulevard. This pedestrian route should be designed

and implemented in such a way that it adds to and celebrates the heritage corridor of the Olmsted Greenway.

- Consider removal of at least one turn lane on MLK at Rainier.
- Relocate existing signals and stop bars for northbound MLK and Rainier to a location south of the existing north lanes (current westbound) of Mount Baker Boulevard and South Winthrop Street. (Note: New dual-mast arm pole location can be within new pedestrian plaza/refuge.)
- Remove existing east-west crosswalks and northbound stop bars. Replace stop bars at new signal location. Place 20-foot-wide, high visibility crosswalk markings at new two-stage crossing across MLK and Rainier.
- Provide public art at the north end of the plaza as a traffic-calming pedestrian buffer and as a focal point for the neighborhood.

SDOT (Lead Agency): Convert Mount Baker Boulevard north (current westbound) lanes to pedestrian and bicycle only (restripe and signing). Design pedestrian plaza-refuge at south corner of MLK-Rainier intersection. Restripe wide crosswalk from Mount Baker Boulevard across MLK and Rainier to south end of light rail station. Relocate signal for northbound MLK and Rainier to location south of Mount Baker Boulevard westbound lanes.

Seattle Fire Department: Coordinate with Seattle Fire Station 30 personnel and get approval for conversion of north (current westbound) lanes of Mount Baker Boulevard to active mode only.

Seattle Office of Arts and Culture: Provide review and comment on pedestrian plaza design and consider procuring public art to mark place and heighten awareness.

Step six: Review zoning

Review Mt. Baker Station Area boundaries and zoning. The goals are to:

- Encourage development by minimizing unnecessary obstacles.
- Align boundaries with natural station area walkshed.
- Make zoning consistent with building code heights and with structural and fire safety systems (current and expected).
- Reduce patchwork pattern of current zoning and ensure size of zones aligns with efficient development considerations.
- Minimize required retail in marginal demand areas.

Seattle Office of Planning and Community Development (Possible lead)

Seattle Department of Neighborhoods: (Possible lead)

Panelists are aware of special funding sources connected with Seattle Parks, SDOT (Seattle Moves) and Sound Transit's System Access Fund. Each of these are potentially available some improvements described above. Other sources that could be leveraged to implement these changes are locally funded transportation programs such as the Transportation Improvement Board's Urban Sidewalk and Complete Streets programs and Washington State Department of Transportation's Safe Routes to School program. There are federal funding opportunities through the Puget Sound Regional Council. The use of public-private partnerships (3P) is encouraged in order to accelerate timelines and implement projects in the short term. The panel does not make specific recommendations for funding sources for each project. Rather, the panel has identified a recommended lead agency for each improvement and would leave it to that agency and the partner agencies identified, to develop a funding strategy, potentially including sources listed above, in addition to grant funding and PPPs.

Conclusion

Hopes and plans for a vibrant town center in the area around Sound Transit's Mt. Baker Station have been frustrated for over a decade, even in a time of rapid growth in Seattle. A combination of factors has inhibited strategic public investment and private developer response. However, should public agencies receive prescribed funding and can work together in a decisive and sustained way, it's likely that these barriers can be addressed, and that development potential will be unlocked. Based on proven measures for pedestrian comfort and safety, a hostile walking environment can be transformed, and a unique public realm realized. Affordable housing can be built into master planned developments.

When the City and its partners have decided on some courses of action based on the recommendations above, it may be necessary to seek consultants to provide services in feasibility analysis, investigation, master planning and/or design. Where appropriate under a master plan, development partners may be sought.

With renewed dedication to creating a multimodal transit hub and walkable, transit-oriented neighborhood, long anticipated development can occur, and a new generation of residents will discover the hidden assets of the Mt. Baker Station area and help to build a market for more housing and community businesses.

Addendum

Statement by Mt. Baker TAP Partners

The ULI Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) brought in multi-discipline expertise to make neutral and independent recommendations on implementing the Mt. Baker Town Center vision. TAP Partners thoroughly reviewed the ULI TAP recommendations and provided comments and suggestions in this addendum. Further feasibility and financial analysis will be needed to evaluate the ability to implement recommendations. TAP Partners will be working collaboratively to evaluate the feasibility of these recommendations and make collective implementation decisions. A full list of TAP Partners appears on page 2 of this report.

Key Challenges and Considerations

- **Move the King County Metro bus transit center to the west of the light rail station:**
 - While this is a possible arrangement, Metro would likely assess the cost-benefit of moving trolley routes at the same time as the extension of 27th Ave S. Additionally, Metro would assess the impact of splitting the transit center routes on wayfinding for customers. Also, Route 48 will likely be electrified before any roadway extension could take place, leaving only Route 8 using the 27th Ave S option.
- **Convert the existing bus transit center to a pedestrian plaza and open space:**
 - The existing Metro transit center is owned by Sound Transit and operated and maintained by King County Metro. It is an active bus transit facility serving multiple routes and a large amount of transit boardings. Any relocation of the existing transit center will require extensive planning and a funding strategy, as neither Metro nor Sound Transit have identified capital funds to relocate the facility. The existing importance of the transit facility warrants

its replacement prior to surplus of the existing transit center property. Should the transit center relocate and the property be surplus, Sound Transit is committed to equitable engagement of the community, as well as engagement of local jurisdictions and stakeholders to guide the priorities of the reuse of the property. The TAP recommendations would be considered as a part of that process. It should be noted that Sound Transit owns existing surplus property adjacent to the existing transit center that the agency would likely consider in tandem with the redevelopment of the transit center, should the timelines of those properties align.

- o Developing this as a stand-alone open space would likely not be successful. There is limited utility and no means of activation. However, if it was developed as open space as part of a larger redevelopment of the surrounding parcels, then it could be successful as it would serve a purpose and be surrounded by buildings/residents with an interest in the space.
- o Needs to be timed carefully with extension of trolley operations if a two-step transition to using new transit center is taken.

- **Create a pedestrian refuge between Rainier and MLK:**

- o Require further traffic operations analysis.
- o Need further analysis on removing one or two left turn lanes on MLK.
- o Need to assess impacts of potential intersection delays to transit operations.
- o Must require Metro to evaluate the placement of three bus stops south of Rainier and MLK intersection.

- **Seek optimum development of the UW Laundry site:**

- o The transfer of the UW Laundry Site to the City of Seattle to develop for affordable housing is a tremendous development opportunity. The terms of the transfer still need to be determined, and so releasing an RFP may be premature as a first step.
- o Sound Transit supports the recommendation of optimizing the development of the UW Laundry site and would like this recommendation expanded to include adjacent properties also owned by governmental entities. Sound Transit owns approximately 2 acres directly west of the UW Laundry site and views this an opportunity to coordinate the development of the Sound Transit and UW properties including site infrastructure, concept site plan, and Request for Proposals for development. Sound Transit believes that determining what happens to the

entire property west of Mount Baker Station is required before considering options to relocating the existing Metro transit center. A potential approach is a master plan of the area adjacent to the Mount Baker Station. This would support improved development and community outcomes for the Mt. Baker neighborhood.

- **Green Space:**

- Open space should be created and integrated with the corresponding redevelopment and density around it. The existing Metro bus transit center may not be the best location for SPR to acquire property to develop a park.
- Incorporating open space into the redevelopment of the UW Laundry site or the C & H Family Partnership site is likely a better option.
- The City is interested in co-locating a park and affordable housing on the C & H Family site and would like to continue those conversations.
- The King County Wastewater surplus site should be evaluated for co-development opportunities for open space, affordable housing and possible market-rate development with abutting private property owners.

- **Revisit zoning in the larger station area:**

- The need for zoning revisions will be determined after a potential master planning process.

Next Steps

- **Framework agreements:**

- TAP Partners are in the process of developing a feasible framework/agreement to continue collaborative effort on implementing the Mt Baker vision. It will require strong political support from each agency.
- The framework/agreement will include a work plan that lays out priorities and associated potential tasks, timeline, sequencing and dependency of each task, roles and responsibility for each agency, and potential funding resources.



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