

An aerial architectural rendering of a city development project. The scene shows a dense urban core with numerous skyscrapers, some highlighted in yellow and orange. A large, modern stadium with a curved roof is visible in the lower center. To the left, a waterfront area features a Ferris wheel and a large wooden pier. A multi-lane highway with several overpasses runs along the right side of the city. The background is dominated by a vast green forest, a large body of water, and a snow-capped mountain under a blue sky with scattered clouds.

LIVABLE SOUTH DOWNTOWN

URBAN
VISIONS

A 21st CENTURY CITY

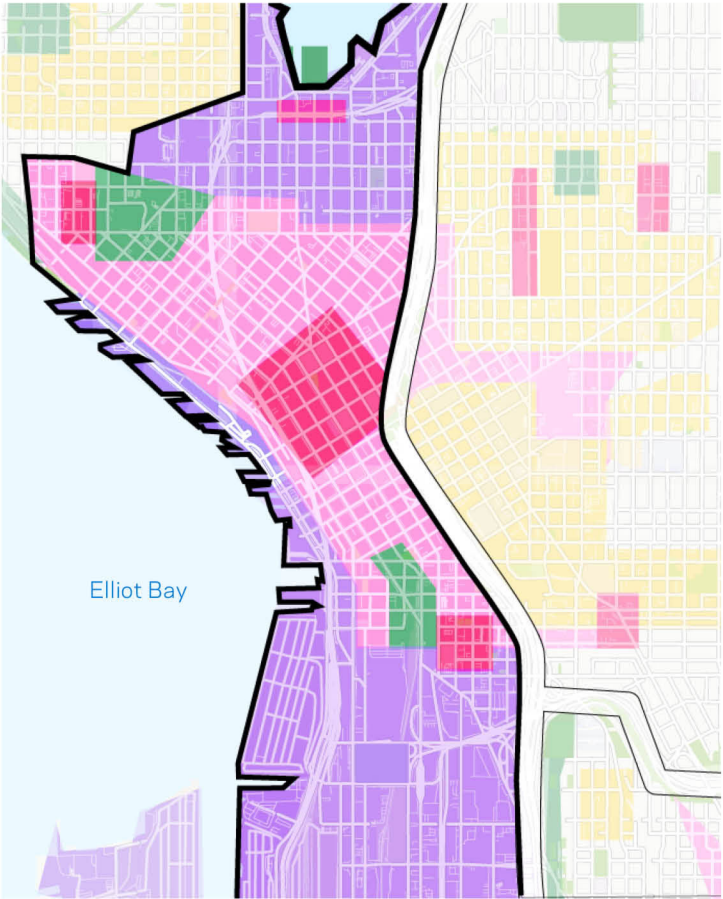
Seattle’s unique ecosystem has set our region apart for decades. From aeronautics and technology to music and coffee, the drive to offer new ideas fuels our community of ingenuity. From placid waters to rugged topographies, the drive to explore – and protect – our relationship with nature is an everyday conversation. Our creative and environmental resiliency is an asset coveted by the world.

However, as our beloved city reaches 750,000 inhabitants, the resulting influence of mid-20th century urban planning has threatened these core foundations. Like many American cities in the west, Seattle’s last 60 years introduced comprehensive plans and major roadways intended to shape and streamline urban function. However, the specificity of where to work, live, create, or rest turned our city from a healthy network to an engineered machine. The present-day results are mixed: some neighborhoods thrive while others struggle.

As expected, Seattle has not been idle. The redevelopment of the waterfront, the introduction of light rail, the rethinking of the Pike-Pine corridor, the rezoning of South Lake Union, and the potential lidding of I-5 have been put forward for action. These enhancements and provocations aspire to reinvigorate both our innovative pride and our innate connection to nature. Yet, just as with other urban centers in the United States, this attention has been focused on the periphery of our downtown, where impact may occur quickly not necessarily uniformly.

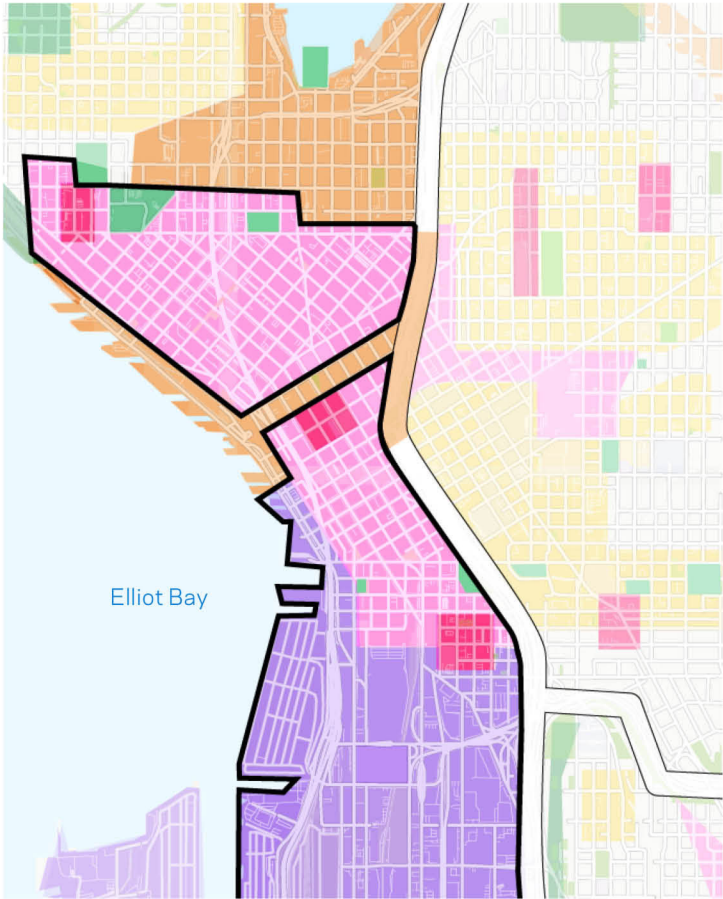
The perimeter of Seattle will flourish. So too must its core.

- Industrial Areas
- Major Public Recreation Areas
- Commercial Areas
- High Density Residence Areas
- Major Business Centers
- Zoning Changes + Enhancements



Historical Comprehensive Plan of Seattle — 1956

The center of Seattle started with much promise. From Pioneer Square to the International District, Seattle was a “walking city” that resembled pre-Civil War towns like Baltimore and Boston. A century later, downtown emerged as a 9-5 destination for office workers and vehicles, a homogenous system relying heavily on the success of what its zoning dictated.



Evolution of Comprehensive Plan — 2023

The “office-first” condition took multiple decades to take root but only two years of a pandemic to reveal its deep flaw. Fortunately, an outside-in approach is dissolving the stark edge between downtown and our perimeter neighborhoods. For ultimate success, we must also prompt change from the inside-out.

LIVABLE, CREATIVE, REGENERATIVE

Many West Coast cities did not have the benefit of formal master planning. The timing of their booms paralleled the invention of the automobile; as a result, emerging municipalities were designed around the car. A desire for easy-to-navigate streets fed by major thoroughfares converted areas of organic urban life into rigid centers of production. Compartmentalized “use” zones reinforced an assembly-line attitude, defining what part of life happens where. This “optimized” scenario worked when life and industry needed to be separated for health reasons, but it became extremely detrimental to what is needed for long-term urban success: a social infrastructure that supports all hours, aspects, and stages of life. Unfortunately, this programmed city typology has become a threatening anachronism. Its machine-like function separates the critical interactions that not only make a city synergistic, but, as life and work become intertwined, more enjoyably human.

Livable / Creative / Regenerative

An urban environment that thrives in perpetuity is not simply a destination where one works. Instead, it is a community where a full day starts and ends. It provides residents with amenities that support everyday life. It offers the most convenient and affordable mode of transportation — walking — in a way that is comfortable, delightful, and safe. A successful city prompts us to think differently, keeping us curious as life-long learners. It connects us to context and nature in ways that are meaningful and responsible. Through these attributes, a city maintains the crucial characteristic that civilization has provided for millennia — a human-first platform that is diverse, supportive, and interconnected.

A 10-MINUTE¹⁸ DOWNTOWN:

Can I afford to stay?

Do I feel safe? Am I a part of a neighborhood?

Can I walk to work or to the grocery store?

Can my family live here?

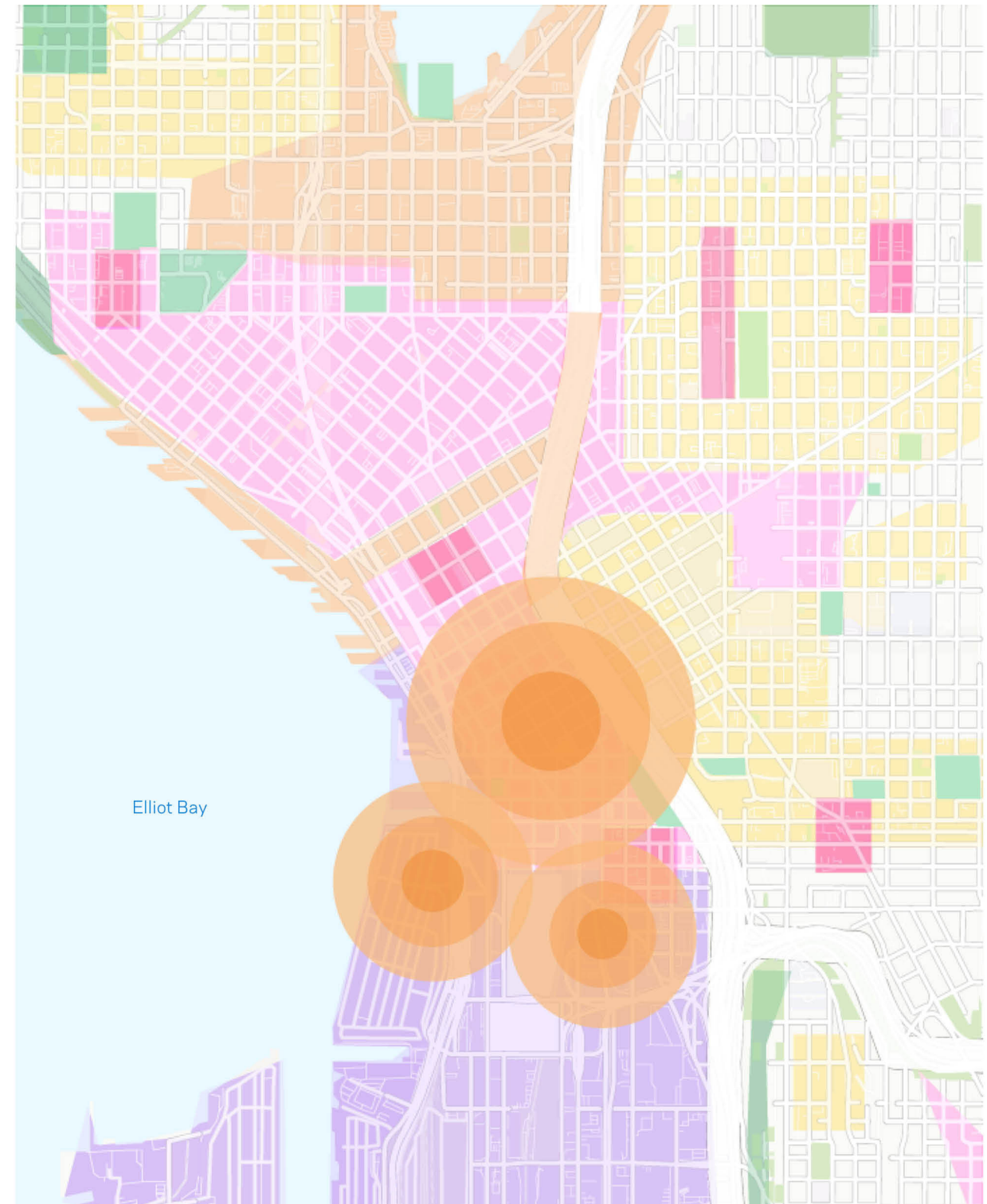
Can I learn and stay curious?

Can I grow my interests here? Can I grow old here?

Where do I rejuvenate?

Does my environment make me healthier?

Can my neighborhood give back?



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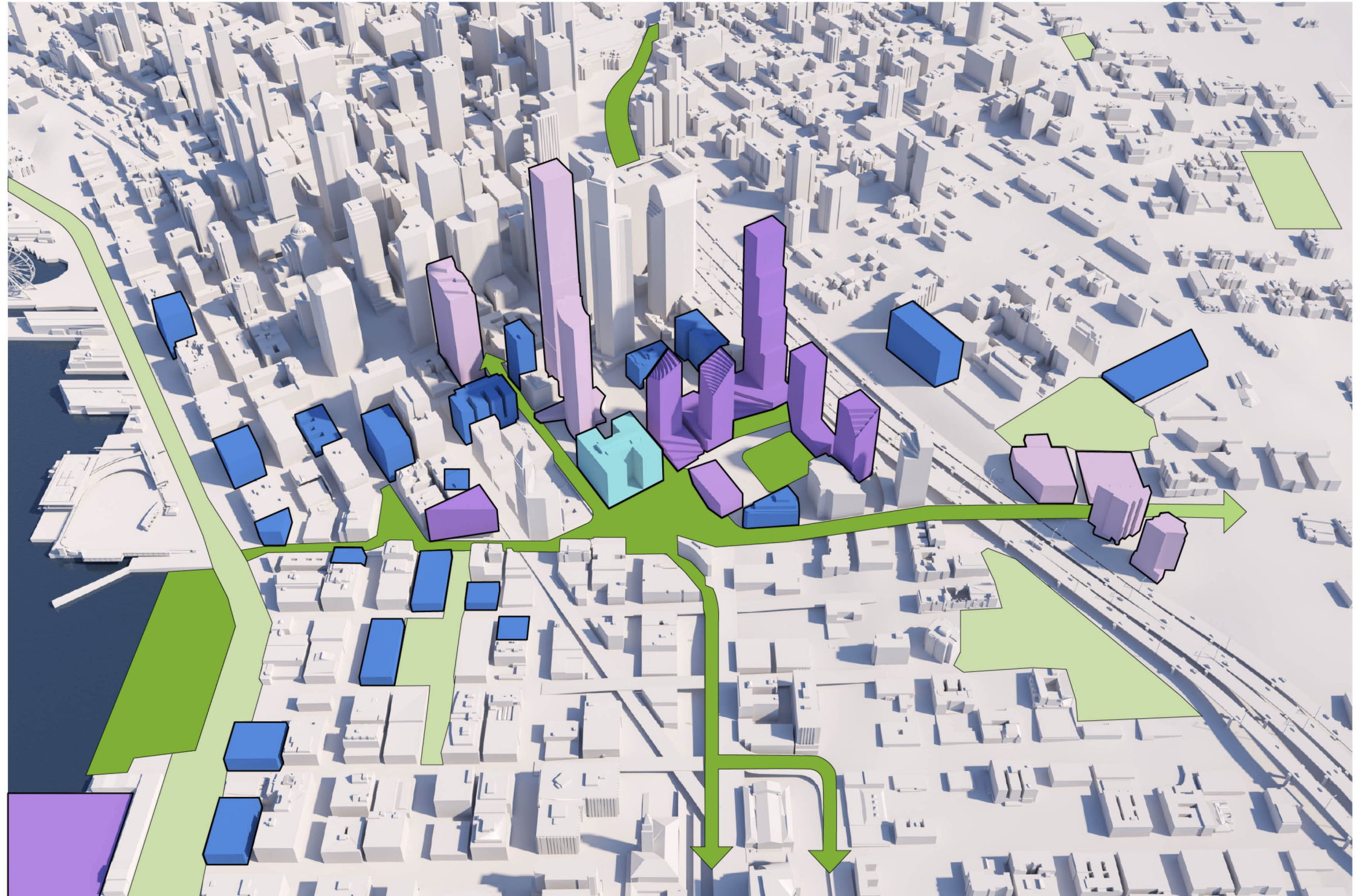
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A SHARED VISION

Successful cities around the world rely on the complementary relationship between a sentimental history and an inspiring future. Cities — and communities — are not instantly created. Foundational moments provide important anchors that encourage progress without dismissing character.

This master plan leverages the buildings that have amplified decades of Downtown experiences. It also encourages next steps that express Seattle's unique intersection between an innovation ecosystem and a natural environment unlike any other. The resulting outcome is a multi-sensory, multi-generational urban center that maintains its foundational soul.

- Proposed — New
- Proposed — Previous
- Proposed — New Landscape
- Existing — Landscape
- Existing — Converted Residential
- Existing — Converted Hotel





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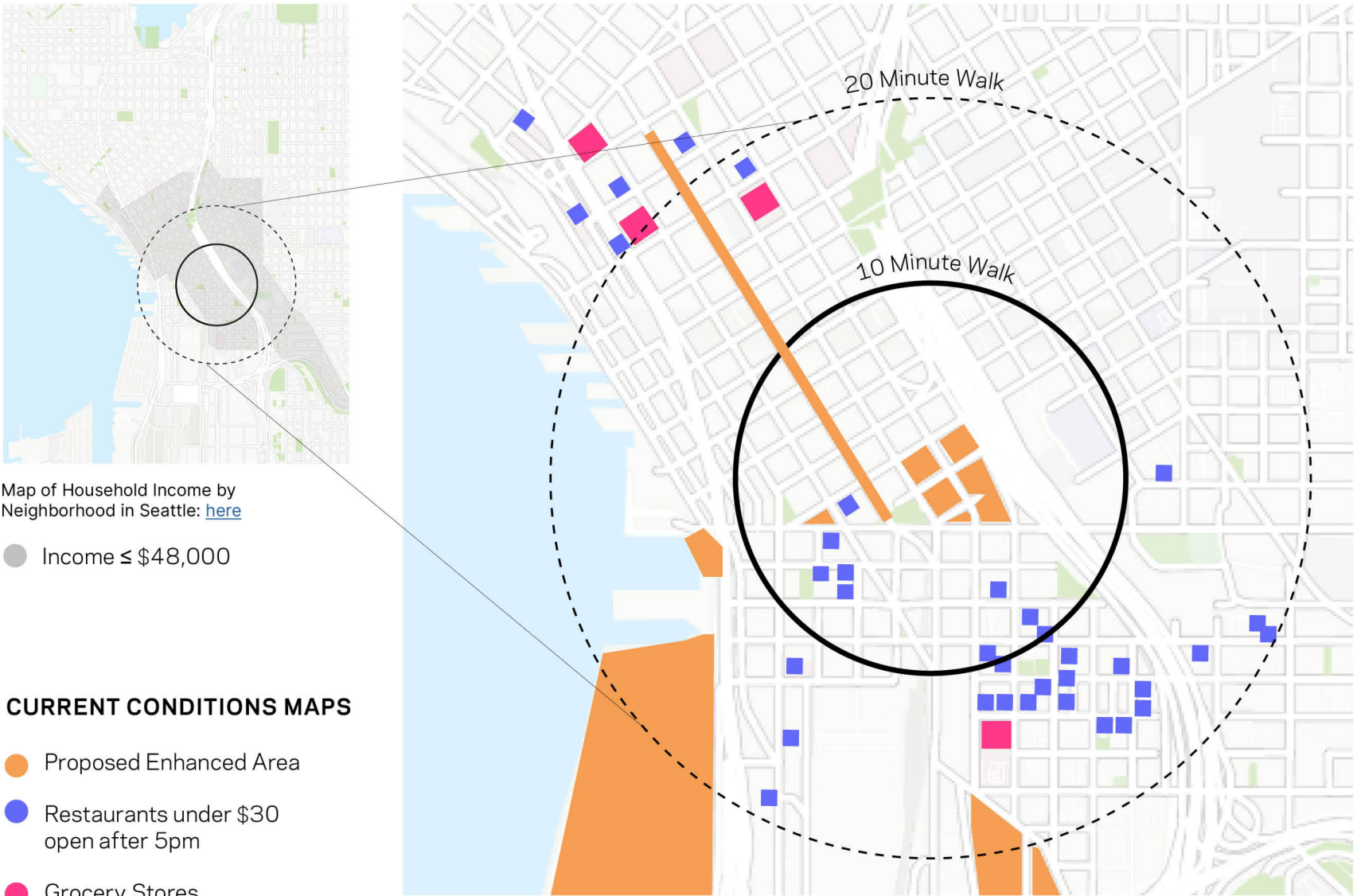
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A LIVABLE CITY

Cities naturally begin as centers of cultural, learning, and economic opportunities. As these assets grow though, the range of affordable options around them often shrinks. This barrier to equitable access often stymies an urban center’s lasting success.

A recognized issue, the number and types of residences do not reflect our demographic make-up. Per the city’s 2021 analysis¹, there is an effective shortage of nearly 21,000 rental units that are both affordable and available to households at 80% of the area’s median income or below (less than \$85,000 per the US census bureau). In downtown, residents on average earn 35% less than Seattleites; these households tend to require rents less than \$1500 a month (the market currently offers 14% of its units at that rate)². That’s an important reference point, but it’s also crucial to acknowledge that “livability” extends beyond just a place to sleep. It includes proximity to groceries and the ability for multiple generations to be supported. Livability also goes beyond basic needs; it includes the small but delightful moments that make life enjoyable such as casual meals and entertainment. Our next Downtown can offer this experience for all residents.



DID YOU KNOW?

According to Economist Intelligence Unit, livability is influenced by factors including stability, healthcare, culture & environment, education, and infrastructure. Per EIU’s livability criteria, our neighbor to the north — Vancouver — ranks 5th globally. No US cities are within the top 10 of EIU’s latest evaluation.

THIS DESIGN WILL:

Provide 4,000 units averaging 700sf in size, a breakdown that offers a range of apartment sizes for individuals, young families, and retirees

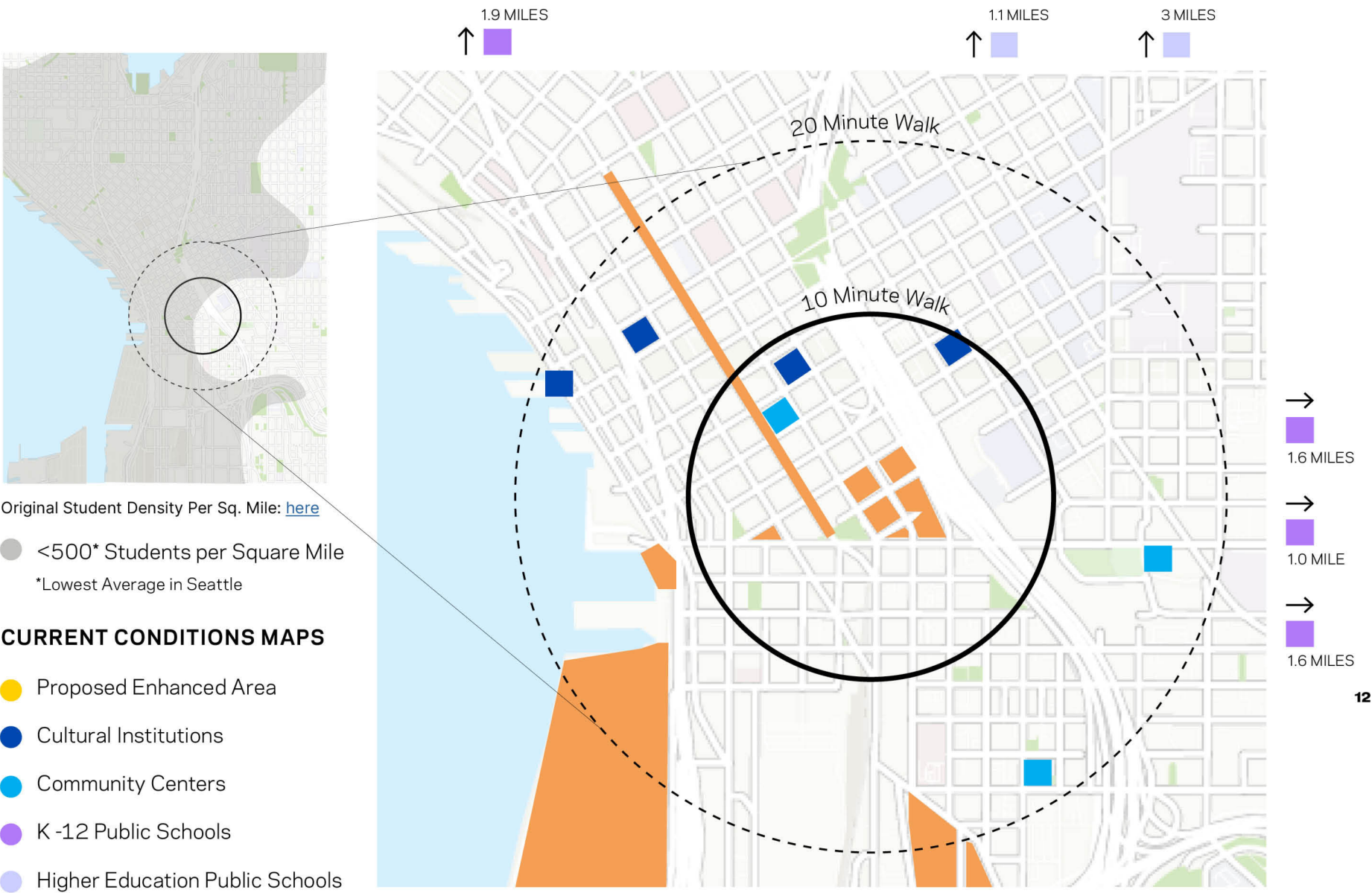
Reduce the average walk to a grocery store by 50%

Offer multiple mid-expense dining experiences within a 1 mile walk

A CREATIVE CITY

Seattle has long been a leader in ideas. In 2022, the World Economic Forum ranked our city in the Top 10 for both innovation and talent concentration⁵. The perspectives and backgrounds offered in the Northwest are fundamental to both idea generation and problem solving⁶. Diversity⁷ in background and exposure plays a major role in shaping a business’s competitive edge, a condition an engaged urban environment can enhance.

Per the Brookings Institute⁸, big cities across the US (including Seattle) not only grew faster over the last decade, but they also became more diverse, especially in youth populations. According to latest US Census, Downtown is ethnically more diverse than Seattle as a whole. Age-wise however, less than 4% of Downtown’s population is under 18⁹, well below city-wide statistic of 15%. Conversely, almost 5% more of Downtown’s population is over the age of 60. In terms of education, 10% fewer Downtown occupants have earned a bachelor’s degree or higher¹⁰ than those in Seattle. Through strategic programming, our Downtown can create an atmosphere that continues to inspire new perspectives.



DID YOU KNOW?

When a population doubles¹¹, there is a 15% increase in productivity, patents, research, and wages as well as a 15% savings on infrastructure.

THIS DESIGN WILL:

Include units that enable seniors to remain downtown, a cohort that is 22.9% of our core’s population (5% higher than Seattle overall)

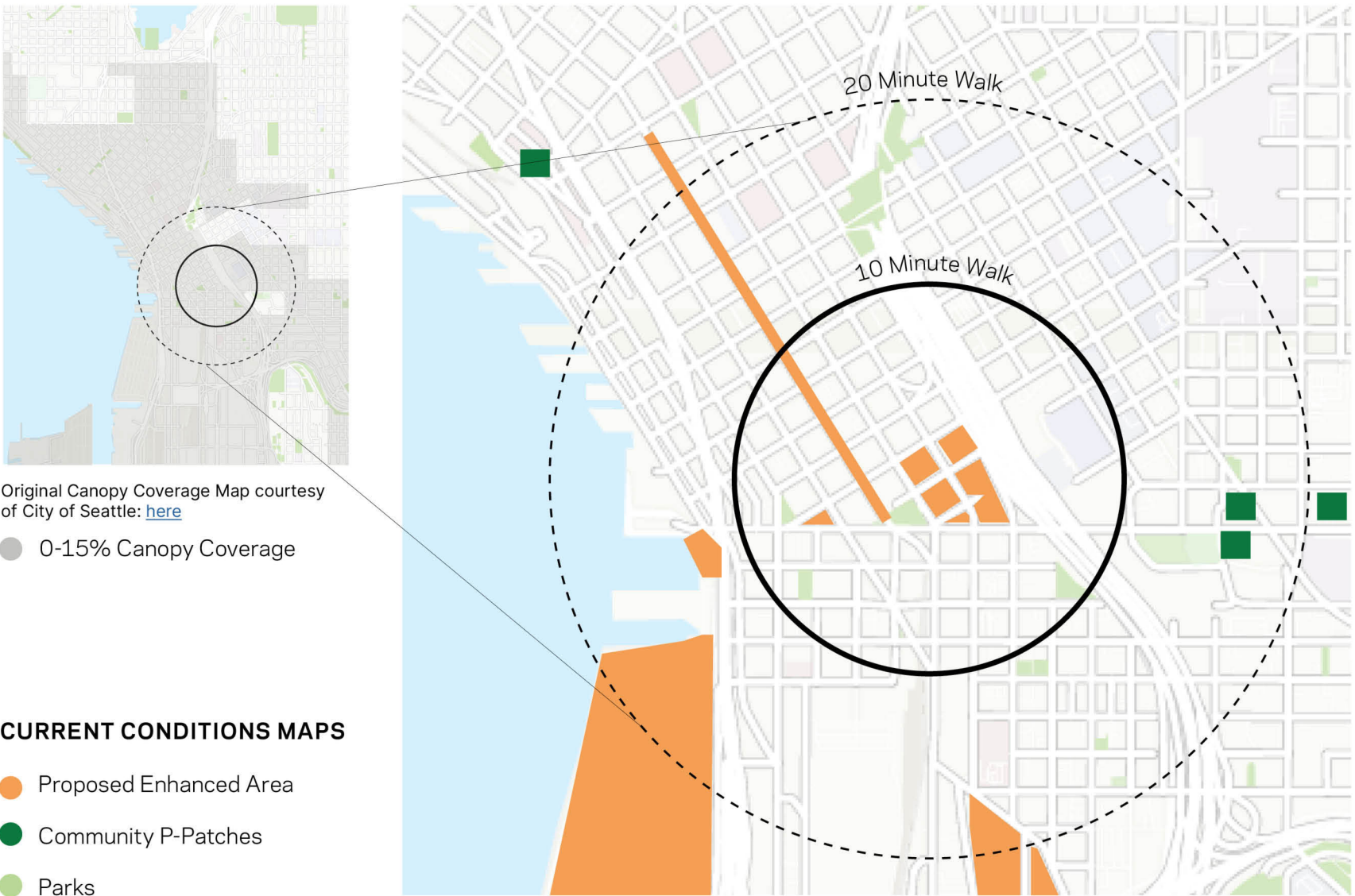
Introduce childcare facilities to encourage young families to stay downtown (there currently are fewer than 200 families west of I-5 and south of Pike)

Create locations for public schools within a 1-mile walk

A REGENERATIVE CITY

Urban landscapes play a pivotal role in elevating both human and environmental health. Vegetated conditions not only improve air quality, dampen noise, and boost immune systems, but as research determined in the 1980’s, they also reduce stress. As our planet warms, these soft spaces are becoming instrumental in reducing heat island effect, and as an outcome, mood disorders, anxiety, and aggressive behavior.

When it comes to resource consumption, Seattle is consistently labeled as one of the greenest cities in the nation. However, in terms of literal “green,” Seattle offers 360 sf of planting per resident, less than half what is provided in Portland, Dallas, and Atlanta. Seattle has lost 255 acres of green space in the last two years, and our average tree canopy coverage is 28.1% (with a goal to return to 30% by 2037). In Downtown, that coverage ranges from 0% to 13%, a paucity that not only influences the health of occupants, but also their comfort — a 5% increase in tree canopy results in 2 degrees of cooler temperature. Using regenerative systems thinking, Seattle can decrease resource use while having a net-positive impact on its citizens.



DID YOU KNOW?

In addition to improving the health of a city and its inhabitants, extensive research has shown that properly designed and maintained outdoor green space has the potential to reduce crime and make communities safer (Manhattan’s Bryant Park has been an intriguing precedent for revamping public landscapes for urban prosperity).

THIS DESIGN WILL:

Improve tree canopy coverage by 2x and reduce downtown’s temperature by almost 4 degrees

Sequester 20 tons of CO2 per year while potentially producing 35,000* pounds of food

*an amount providing 3 meals a day for 500 people

Reduce the flow of stormwater by up to 65% and increase rainwater infiltration by almost 750,000 gallons, keeping pollutants from sweeping into Elliot Bay

APPENDIX

1 — <https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/OPCD/OngoingInitiatives/HousingChoices/SeattleMarketRateHousingNeedsAndSupplyAnalysis2021.pdf>

2 — <https://www.rentcafe.com/average-rent-market-trends/us/wa/seattle/>

3 — <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/seattlecitywashington/EDU685221>

4 — did you know broken fact

5 — <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/02/innovative-global-cities-talent-property/>

6 — <https://adamfayed.com/what-are-the-most-competitive-global-cities-as-of-march-2023/#:~:text=The%20list%20is%20as%20follows%3A%201%20Business%20activity%3A,London%2C%20Hong%20Kong%208%20Capital%20markets%3A%20New%20York>

7 — <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesinsights/2020/01/15/diversity-confirmed-to-boost-innovation-and-financial-results/?sh=68f3a8eec4a6>

8 — <https://www.brookings.edu/research/2020-census-big-cities-grew-and-became-more-diverse-especially-among-their-youth/>

9 — <https://statisticalatlas.com/neighborhood/Washington/Seattle/Downtown/Age-and-Sex>

10 — <https://statisticalatlas.com/neighborhood/Washington/Seattle/Downtown/Educational-Attainment>

11 — <https://www.nature.com/articles/467912a>

12 — <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2022/09/03/1120756615/stressed-out-about-climate-change-4-ways-to-tackle-both-the-feelings-and-the-iss#:~:text=Climate%20change%20has%20direct%20effects,been%20linked%20to%20higher%20temperatures.>

13 — <https://www.seattle.gov/trees/management/canopy-cover>

14 — <https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/16/24/5119>

15 — <https://umusama2015.wordpress.com/2015/04/11/case-study-bryant-park-new-york-city/>

16 — <https://ensia.com/features/urban-agriculture-is-booming-but-what-does-it-really-yield/>

17 — <https://www.gsa.gov/governmentwide-initiatives/federal-highperformance-green-buildings/resource-library/integrative-strategies/green-roofs#:~:text=Green%20Roof%20Facts&text=Reduce%20the%20stormwater%20runoff%20rate,Last%2040%20years%20or%20more>

18 — <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/03/15-minute-city-stickiness/>