

Graham Street Station Area Planning

Background Report

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Seattle
Office of Planning &
Community Development



Seattle
Department of
Transportation

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Study area at a glance

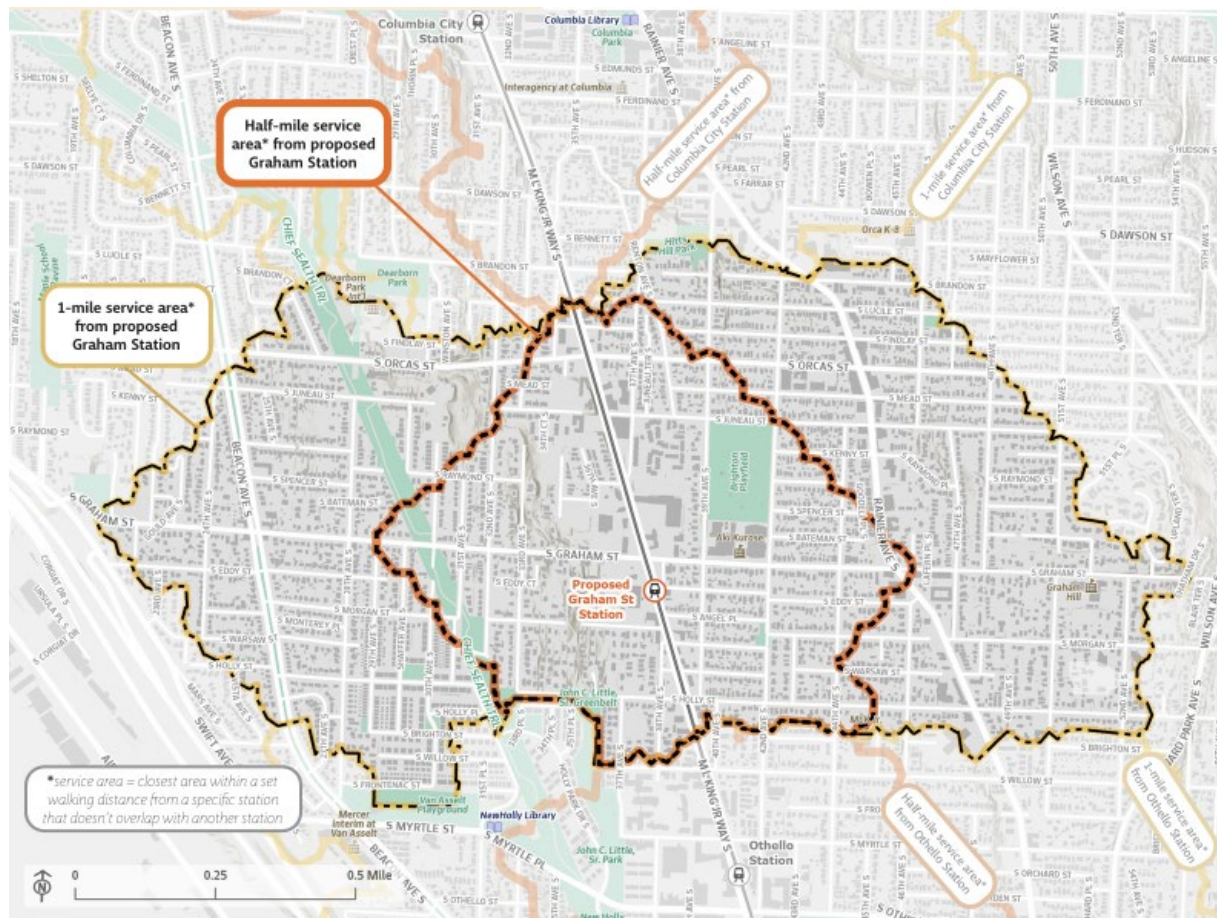
A new light rail station at S Graham St between the existing Columbia City and Othello stations will create new opportunities for the neighborhood. People will be able to choose different options for how they get around and where they live, work, find community and play. Graham Street Station Area Planning focuses on this area to anticipate and plan for potential changes to land use and transportation.

Throughout this document, we use two different boundaries to help us understand the area: the smaller “Station Area” within a short walking distance of the planned station, and the larger “Study Area” encompassing the broader neighborhood and majority of riders.

The smaller “Station Area” is within a half-mile (or roughly 10-minute) walk from the proposed Graham Street Station, excluding area that is closer to other stations. Through this planning process, we will focus on how land use and public amenities can support community-identified priorities. About 4,100 residents live in this area. The station area around Othello Station includes about 8,700 people, and similarly about 8,100 people in the area around Columbia City Station.

The larger “Study Area” is within a one-mile (or roughly 20-minute) walk to Graham Street Station, excluding area that is closer to other stations. This represents the area where we think a majority of future light rail riders could choose to use the proposed Graham Street Station. Through this planning process, we will identify and prioritize transportation projects to improve neighborhood access for people walking, rolling, biking, and taking transit. About 12,400 people live in the one-mile Study Area.

Please note that the project area boundary shows the general area we are planning for and may change as the project progresses.



Half-mile Station Area	Graham Street Station	Othello Station	Columbia City Station	City of Seattle
Population (2024 WA-OFM data)	4,118	8,673	8,084	797,700
% People of Color (2020 Census data)	82.8%	78.3%	65.0%	40.5%
Land Area in acres	309	299	304	53,754
Population Density per acre	13.3	29.0	26.6	14.8
Housing Units (2024 WA-OFM data)	1,492	3,785	3,834	413,723
Housing Density per acre	4.8	12.7	12.6	13.0

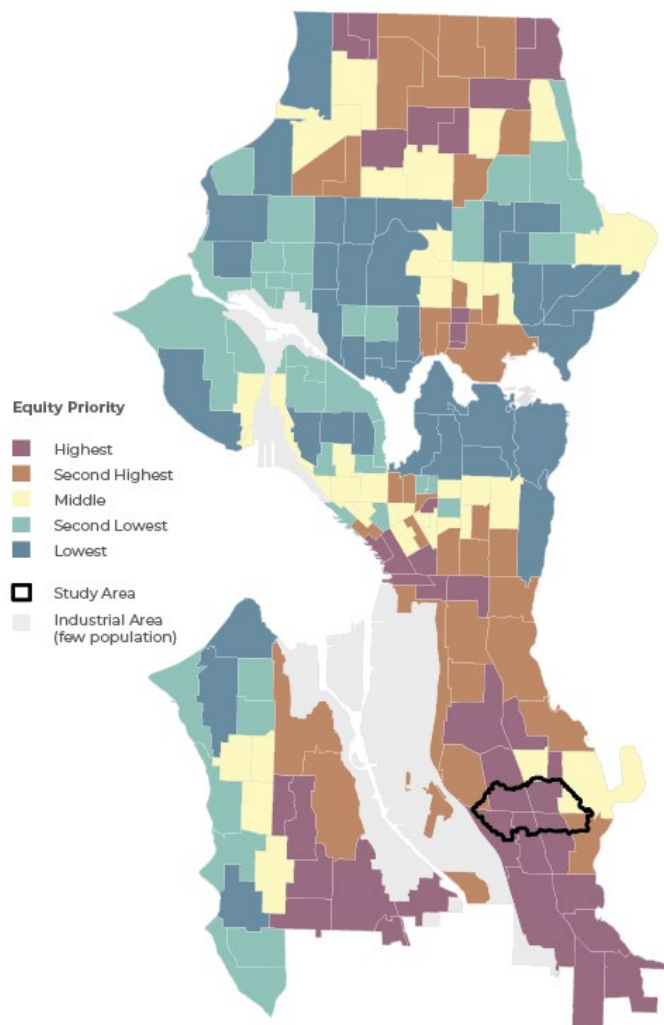
Demographics

Race and Social Justice Index map

The [Race and Social Justice Initiative](#) (RSJI) is the City's commitment to eliminate racial disparities and achieve racial equity in Seattle. One tool developed to support this goal is the [Race and Social Equity Index](#). The map, produced in 2023, is a composite of three indices to illustrate where RSJI-priority populations are concentrated:

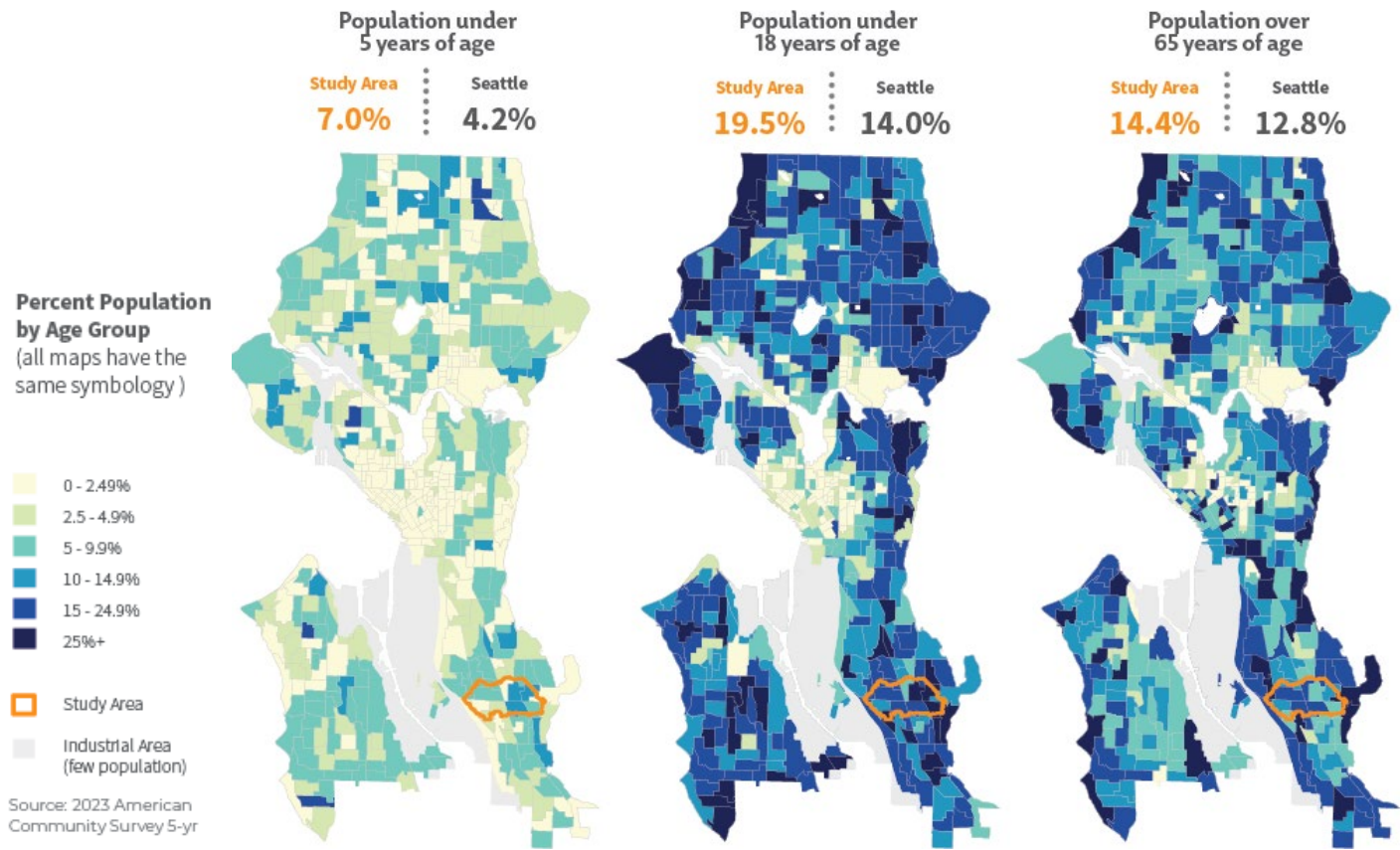
- Index of Race, Ethnicity and English Language Learning
- Socio-economic Disadvantage
- Health Disadvantage

The core part of the Graham Street Station Area Planning study area includes census tracts that have the highest equity priority, the area further away from the station (between half-mile and one-mile away) contains census tracts with middle, second highest, and highest equity priorities.



Age characteristics

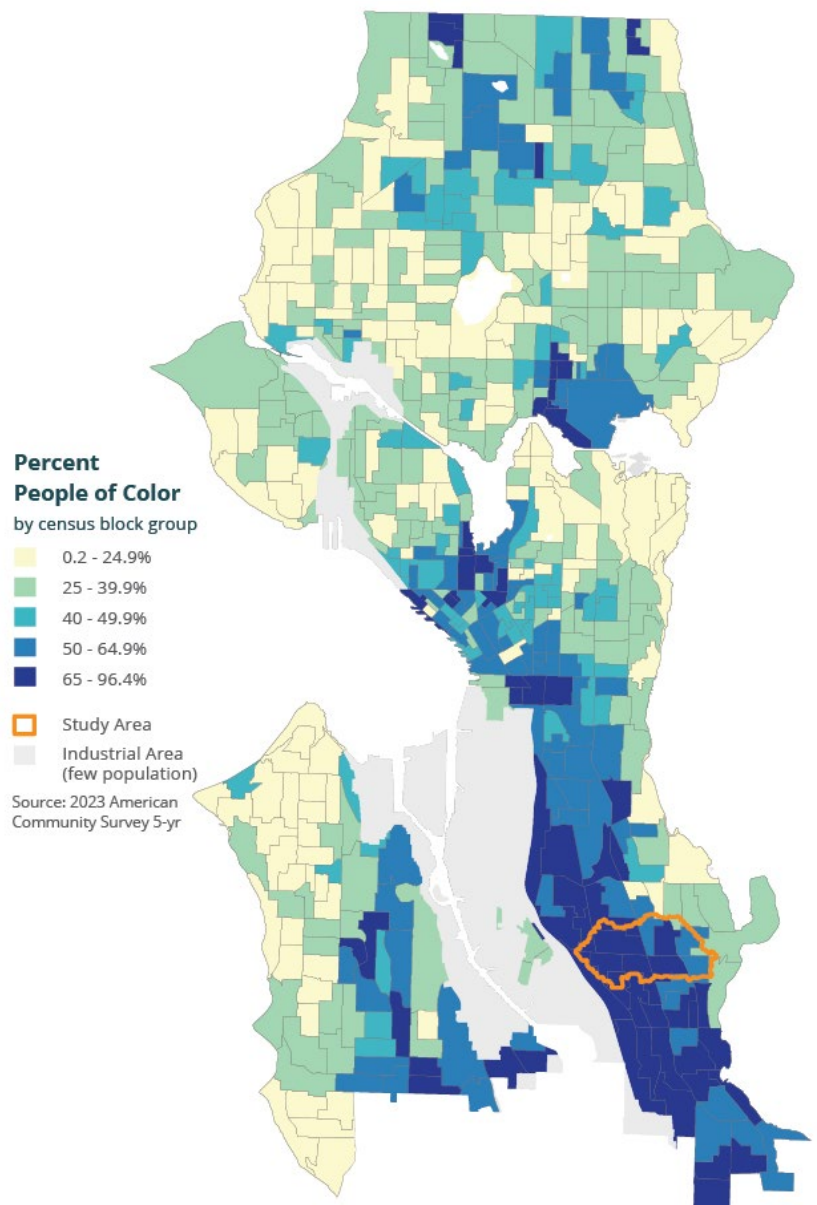
The Graham Street study area is slightly older with a median age of 37.9, when compared to 35.5 years for Seattle as a whole. However, the area also has a significantly higher number of people under 18 years of age, at 19.5% in comparison to 14.0% for Seattle. Those over the age of 65 comprise 14.4% of the area, slightly higher than 12.8% for the city. The presence of higher number of children is likely due to the proximities to several elementary and middle schools.



Race & ethnicities

The Graham Street study area has a very diverse population, where almost four-fifths (78.3%) of the population identify as people of color, almost double that of Seattle as a whole (40.5%). The four largest race and ethnicity groups are Asians 42.9%, White 21.7%, Black/ African American 20.5%, and Hispanics/Latinx 8.1%. Note that the way U.S. Census bureau categorizes racial identities do not necessarily align with how many people identify themselves, but it is still the best quantitative data source available to help us understand this topic.

Race & Ethnicities	Pop.	%
Total Population in Graham Street Study Area	12,610	100.0%
White (non-Hispanic)	2,734	21.7%
People of Color (not White non-Hispanic)	9,876	78.3%
Native Americans (non-Hispanic)	30	0.2%
Black/ African Americans (non-Hispanic)	2,590	20.5%
Asian (non-Hispanic)	5,405	42.9%
Pacific Islanders (non-Hispanic)	68	0.5%
Other (non-Hispanic)	90	0.7%
Multiracial (non-Hispanic)	672	5.3%
Hispanic & Latinx	1,021	8.1%

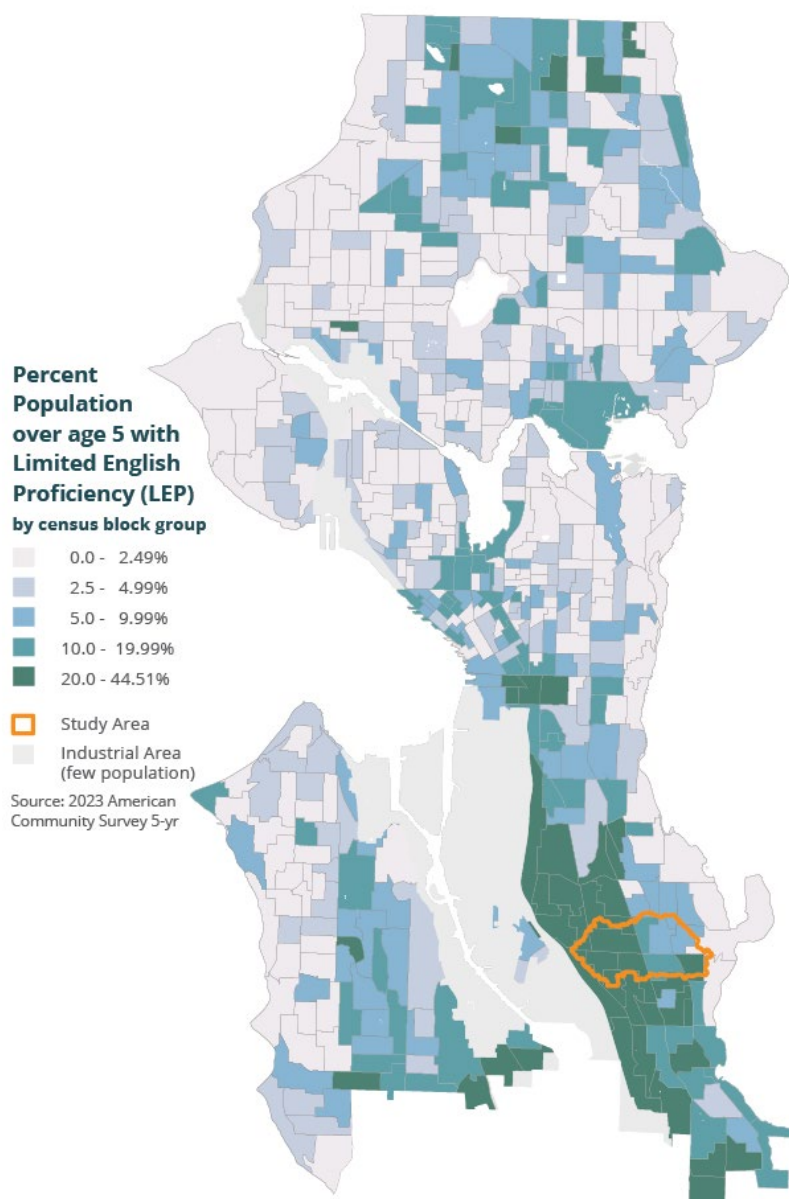


Languages spoken at home

About 41.3% of people in the Graham Street Station Area Planning Study Area speak a language other than English at home, which is significantly higher than 23.1% for the city. Half of this population in Graham Street Station area (22.9%) reported having limited English proficiency, which the Census Bureau identified as those who “Speak English less than very well”. Eight of Seattle’s top 15 languages have a significant presence in the Graham Street Station area. In order of the number of speakers, these languages are: Chinese, Vietnamese, Spanish, Tagalog, and the four East African languages for which the census bureau does not provide a breakdown (Somali, Amharic, Tigrinya, Oromo).

Note that while Chinese varieties are the most spoken at home language group other than English, the majority of the small businesses in the area are run by Vietnamese speakers. We have conducted small business engagement in English, Vietnamese, Somali, Amharic, and Tigrinya.

The map below shows how the Graham Street study area compares with the rest of Seattle in term of the percent of the population age 5 and over with limited English proficiency.



This table provides a detail breakdown of the type of languages spoken at home for Graham study area and in comparison with Seattle as a whole. At the local (census tract) level, the Census Bureau for 12 languages and language groupings. This table shows number of speakers as tabulated by the Census Bureau, as well as identifies the top 15 languages of Seattle in order of prevalence based on various sources in addition to Census Bureau that was [published by the Seattle Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs](#).

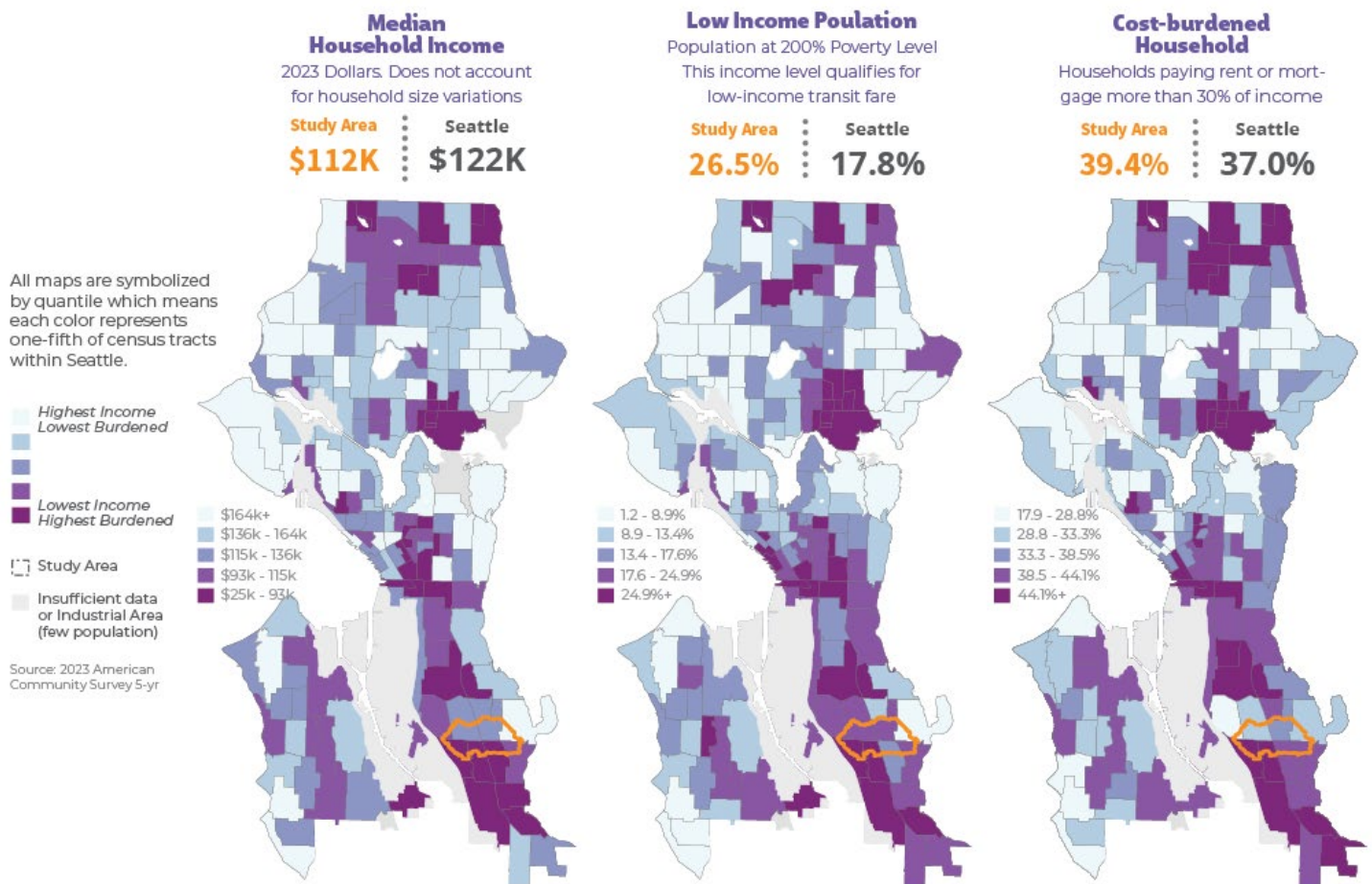
- Top 15 languages 2023 ranking # in red.
- Traditionally used Seattle Top 7 languages in underlined green font.
- Blue asterisk* denotes languages that are part of the top 15 in 2020 but not in 2023.

Language other than English spoken at home (2023 ACS 5YR), U.S. Census 12 Top Languages Groupings		Graham Study Area	% of Graham Study Area	Seattle
Prominent languages in each grouping				
Population 5 years and older		11,935	-	-
Speak only English at home		7,007	58.7%	76.9%
Speak a language other than English at Home		4,927	41.3%	23.1%
Limited English Proficiency (LEP)		2,734	22.9%	7.1%
Spanish #1		543	4.6%	4.6%
Spanish LEP		274	2.3%	1.3%
Chinese #2	incl. Mandarin,	1,507	12.6%	5.0%
Chinese LEP	Cantonese, etc.	1,005	8.4%	2.1%
Vietnamese #3		674	5.6%	1.5%
Vietnamese LEP		501	4.2%	0.8%
Other	Somali #4, Amharic #7,	1,206	10.1%	2.2%
Other LEP	Tigrinya #10, Oromo #12	562	4.7%	0.9%
Tagalog #5	aka Filipino, excl other	472	4.0%	1.1%
Tagalog LEP	langs. of the Philippines	211	1.8%	0.4%
Other Asia Pacific Island	Japanese #9, Telugu,	256	2.1%	2.2%
Other Asia Pacific Island LEP	Khmer*, Lao*, Thai*, Tamil, Ilocano	142	1.2%	0.6%
Korean #6		13	0.1%	0.8%
Korean LEP		0	0.0%	0.3%
Russian, Polish, or other Slavic	Russian #8,	12	0.1%	0.9%
Russian, Polish, or other Slavic	Ukrainian #15, Polish	2	0.0%	0.2%
Other Indo-European	Hindi #13, Persian,	106	0.9%	3.1%
Other Indo-European LEP	Portuguese, Italian, Punjabi, Gujarati	14	0.1%	0.4%
French, Haitian, or Cajun	French #14	21	0.2%	0.7%
French, Haitian, or Cajun LEP		6	0.1%	0.1%
German or other West Germanic	German, Yiddish	50	0.4%	0.7%
Other West Germanic LEP		0	0.0%	0.1%
Arabic*	incl. all varieties	69	0.6%	0.3%
Arabic LEP		17	0.1%	0.1%

Household characteristics

The Graham Street Station Area Planning Study Area has a slightly lower median household income of \$112,000 in comparison with \$122,000 for Seattle as a whole, however the low-income population at 26.5% is significantly higher than the 17.8% figure for the city. Low-income population is defined as people living in household making 200% (double) of the federal poverty level income, this is also the income level that qualifies for low-income transit fare in the region.

Overall, 39.4% of households in the area are cost-burdened—about the same as the citywide rate. A household is considered cost-burdened if it spends more than 30% of its income on rent or mortgage payments. Among renter households, however, the share is much higher: 53.1% are cost-burdened compared to 43.8% citywide.



Land use

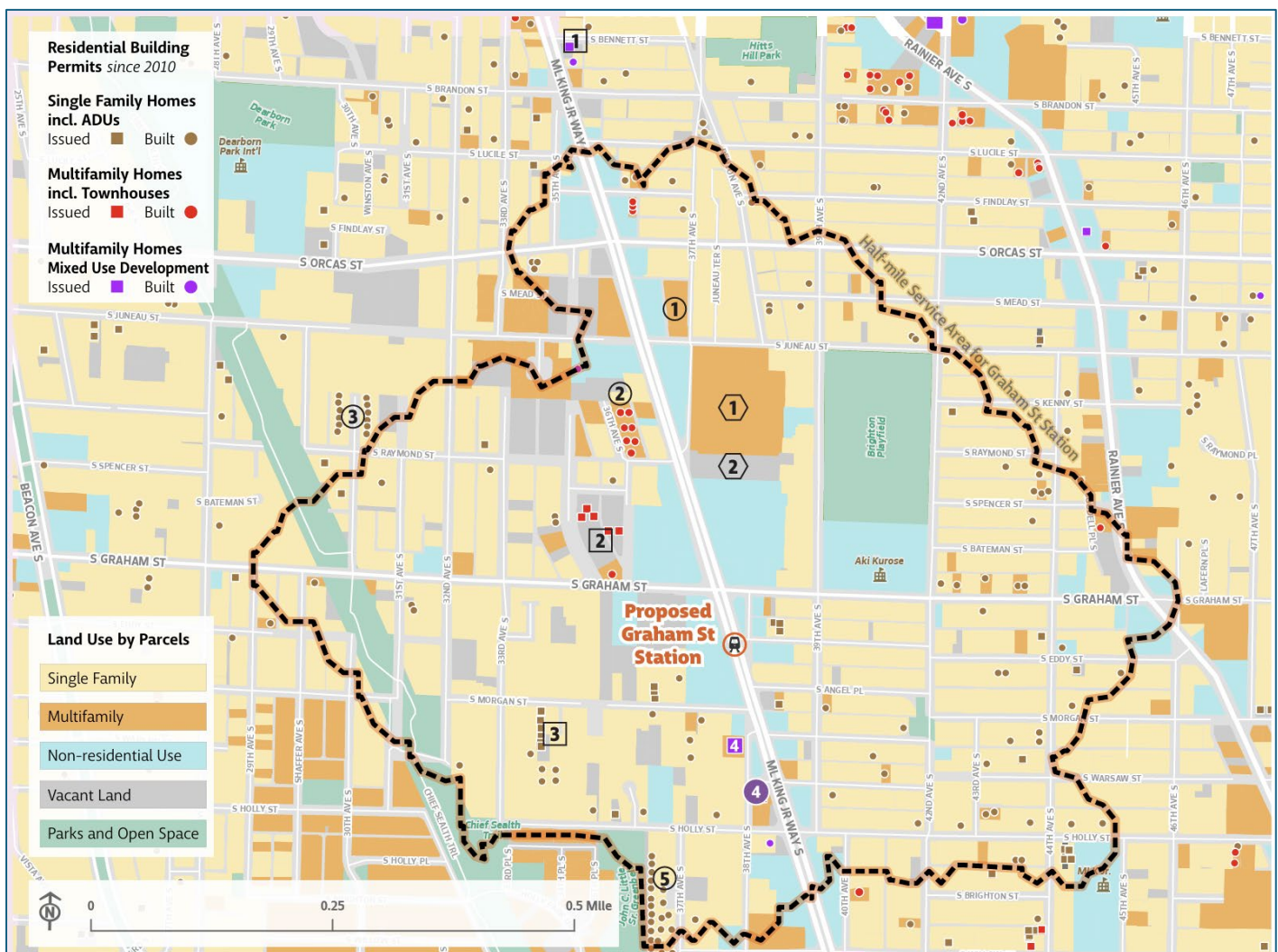
Residential land use and recent development

Within the proposed Graham Street Station's half-mile Station Area, single family residential is the primary land use, and only 454 housing units have been built between 2010 and 2024. The similarly sized areas around Othello Station and Columbia City Station saw a significantly higher number of new housing construction during the same time period with about 2,500 units in each station area.

This map below shows what type of residential buildings have been constructed in the area since 2010. Of the 456 housing units built, 246 units are apartment homes, 86 single family homes, 72 townhomes, and 50 accessory dwelling units.

As of December 2024, building permits have been issued for 359 housing units, though it appears some developments are stalled. Additionally, two large projects that do not yet have permits may potentially increase housing supply in the area by 949 units.

Legend and table associated with the map on the next page.



Housing Units Built 2010-2024

Half-mile service area	Graham Station	Othello Station	Columbia City Station
Single Family Houses	86	51	143
Accessory Dwelling Units	50	32	46
Townhouses, Rowhouses, Live/Work Units	72	180	282
Apartments (incl. ground floor units)	246	2,110	2,104
Other	0	2	2
Total	454	2,375	2,577

Housing Units include all permits issued. Source: SDCI 2024

Notable Housing Developments

Built since 2010

- ① Filipino Community Village senior apts, 95 units, 2018 (Not part of calculations above)
- ② Townhouse development, 37 units, 2019-2020
- ③ Single family development, 12 units, 2011-2017
- ④ Apartment development, 131 units, 2025 (projected)
- ⑤ Single family development, 30 units, 2010-2012
- ⑥ Apartment development, 211 units, 2022

Permit Issued

- ① Apartment development, 14 units, issued 2020
- ② Townhouse development, 20 units, issued 2020-2022 (stalled?)
- ③ Single family/ ADU/ Townhouse development, 16 units, issued 2024
- ④ Apartment development, 114 units, issued 2021
- ⑤ Apartment development, 195 units, issued 2024

Permit Not Yet Issued

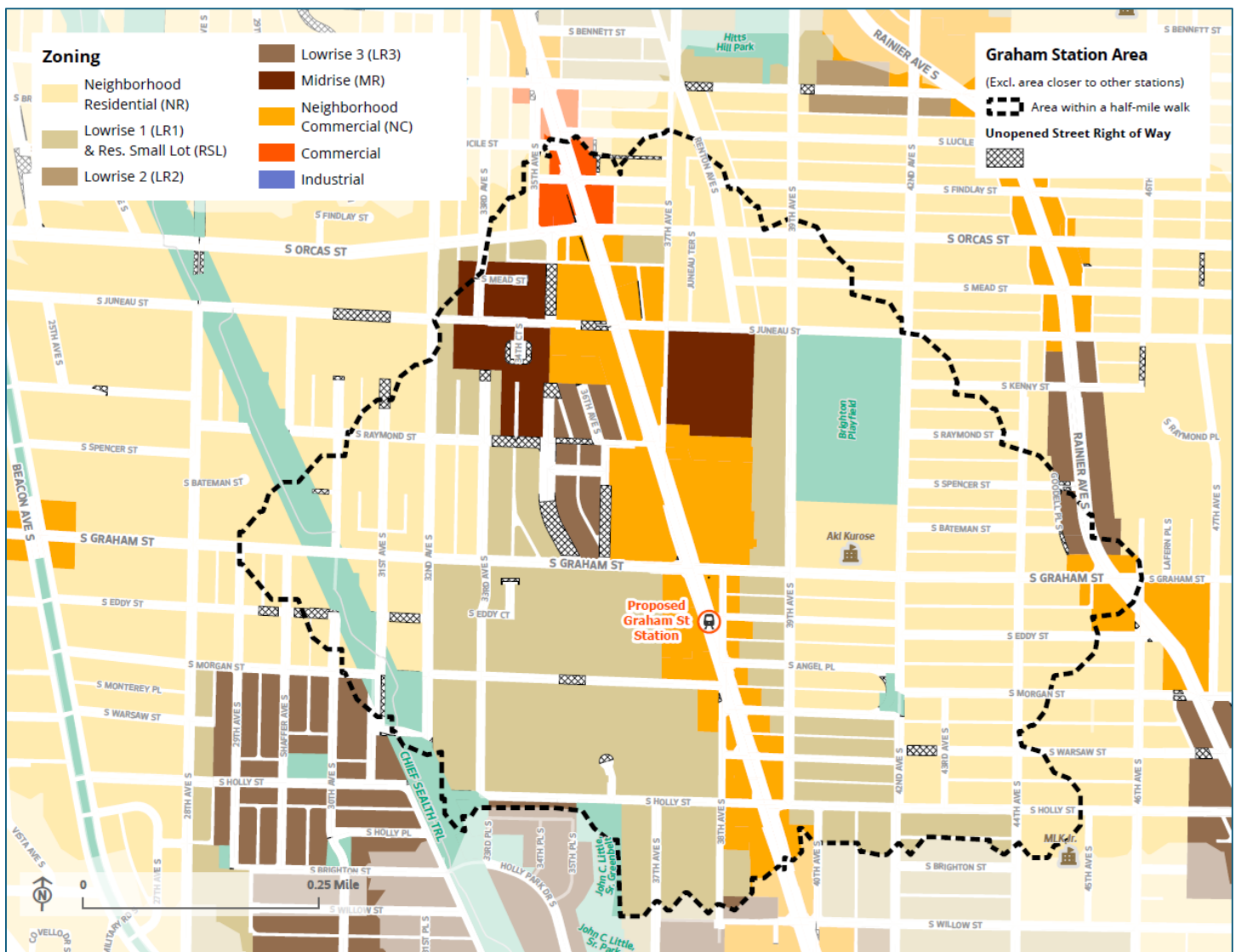
- ① Kingway Apartments Redevelopment -
Major phased development, 761 units and 561 parking spaces
Existing 164 units to be demolished
- ② Apartment development "Bode Othello" 352 units, no parking

Existing Zoning

This map shows the current zoning (as of 2023) for the Graham Street Station area. Lots along ML King Jr Way S are primarily zoned Neighborhood Commercial (NC), which is a mixed-use zone that encourages residential buildings with ground floor retail. The NC zone in this area has a height limit between 55 and 75 feet.

Just off the MLK corridor, many blocks are zoned Residential Small Lot (RSL), which is currently being rezoned to Lowrise 1 (LR1) as part of implementing the One Seattle Comprehensive Plan, hence the map shows the two zones with the same color. Few blocks in the area have high-density residential zoning Midrise (MR) and Lowrise 3 (LR3). MR zones allow residential buildings up to 8 stories, while LR3 allows residential buildings up to 5 stories.

The Neighborhood Residential (NR) is the least dense residential zone, previously allowing only one primary and one accessory unit, and now allowing four residential units per lot in compliance with Washington State House Bill 1110.



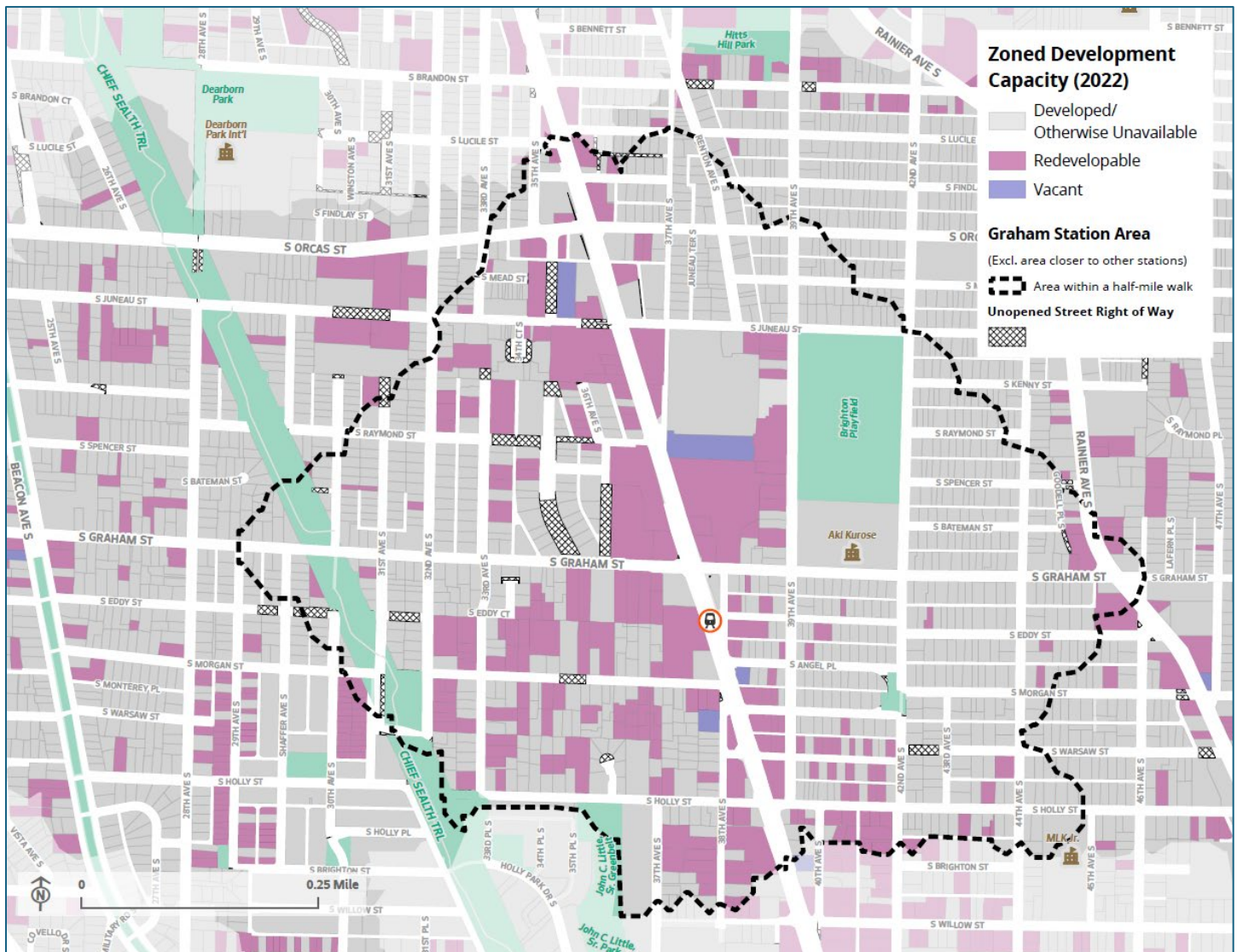
Existing Zoned Capacity

The [Zoned Development Capacity Model](#) estimates potential development by comparing existing development to an estimate of what could be built using current zoning as of 2022. The difference between potential and existing development yields the capacity for new development measured by the number of housing units and the number of potential jobs that could be added.

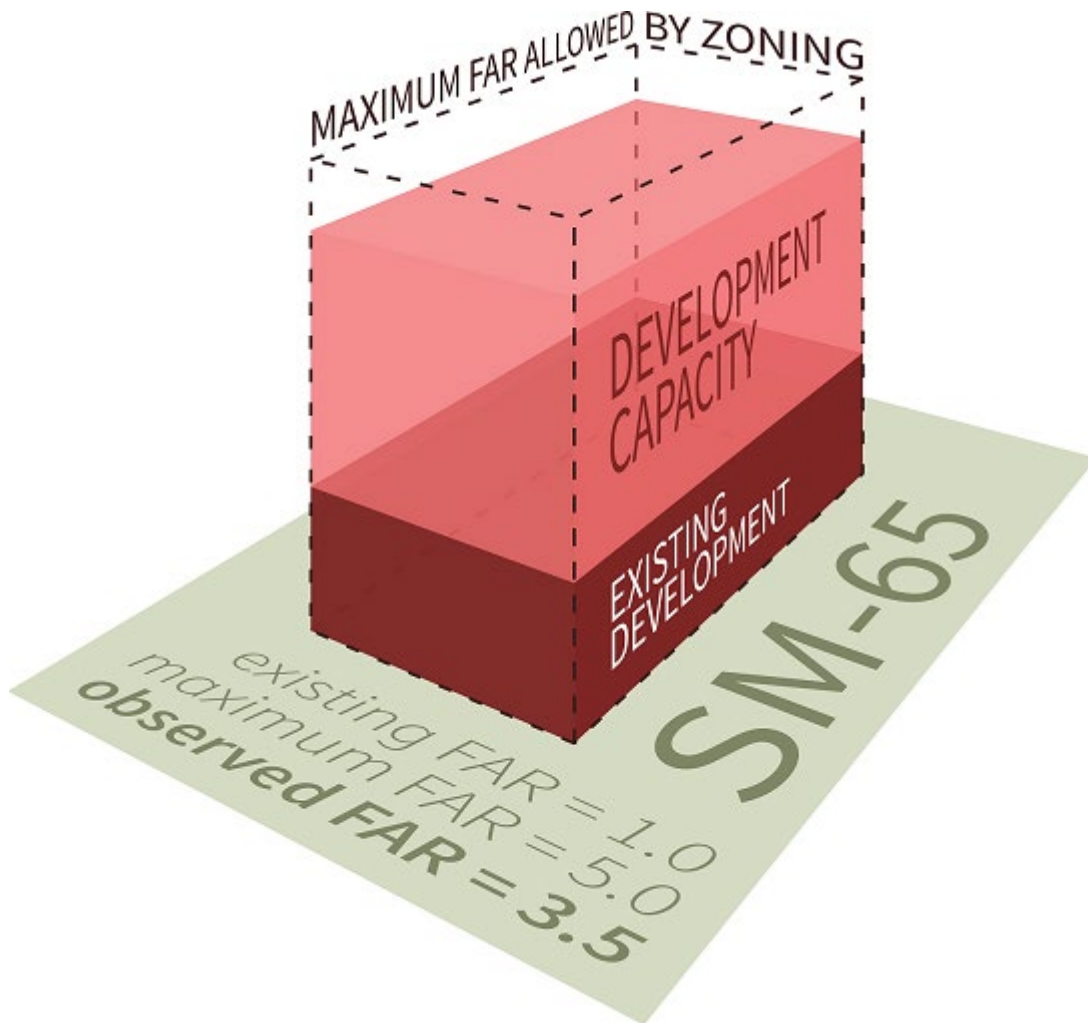
Within the Station Area (area within a half-mile walk to Graham Street Station), there are currently 1,436 housing units. Using current zoning, the Zoned Development Capacity Model estimates the area *could produce* an additional 3,708 units. The model also estimates job capacity based on imputed data. Currently there are 1,927 jobs in the area, if fully redeveloped, the area has a potential additional job capacity of 1,691 jobs.

Seattle's Development Capacity Model does not predict market demand, how much, or how quickly development will occur in the coming years. The analysis is for the purpose of understanding the supply that could eventually be produced.

See the



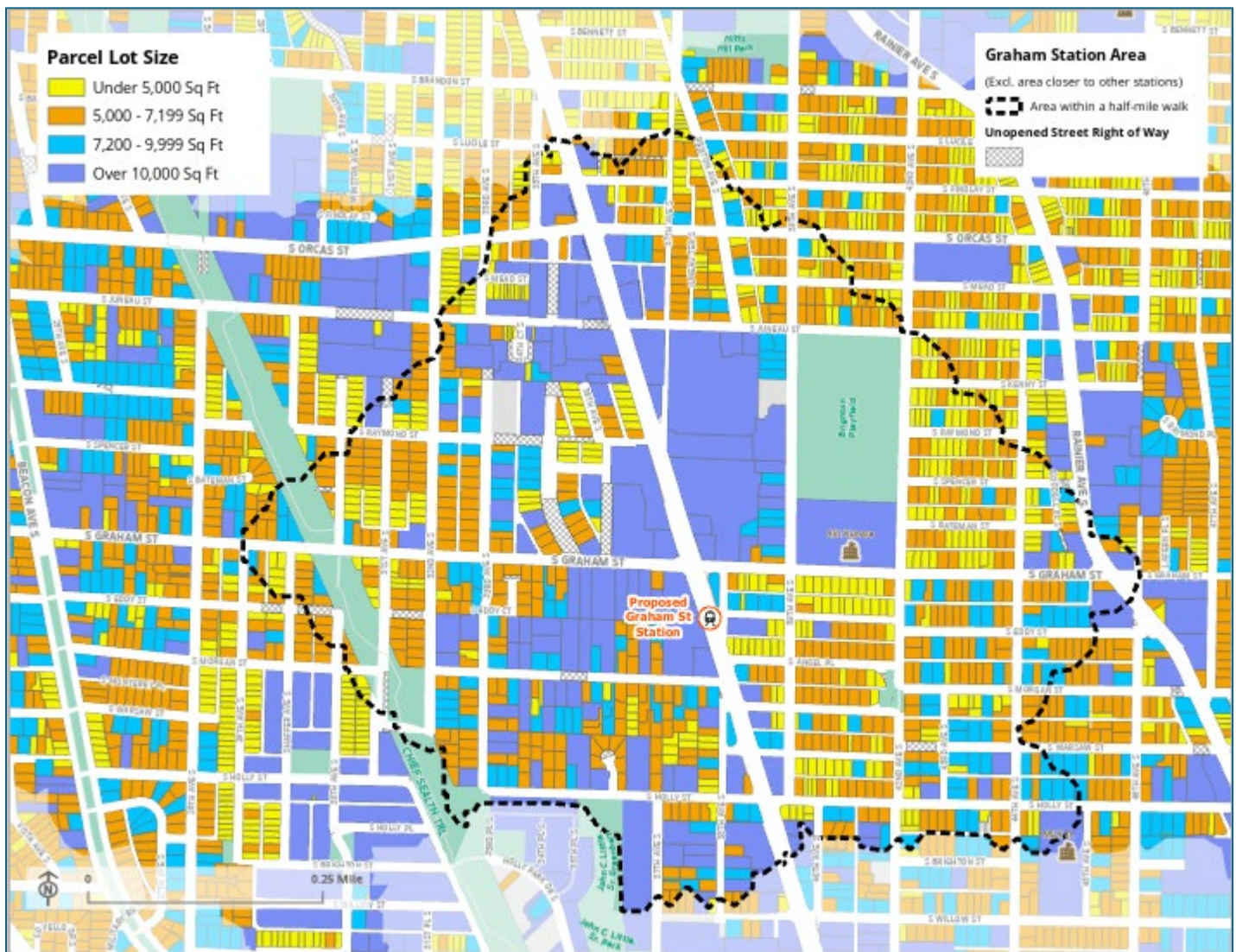
This figure shows the relationship of existing, observed, and maximum development. Development capacity is calculated using the developable land area times the future density assumption, minus the existing development. For more information please see the [Zoned Development Capacity](#) website.



Block and lot sizes

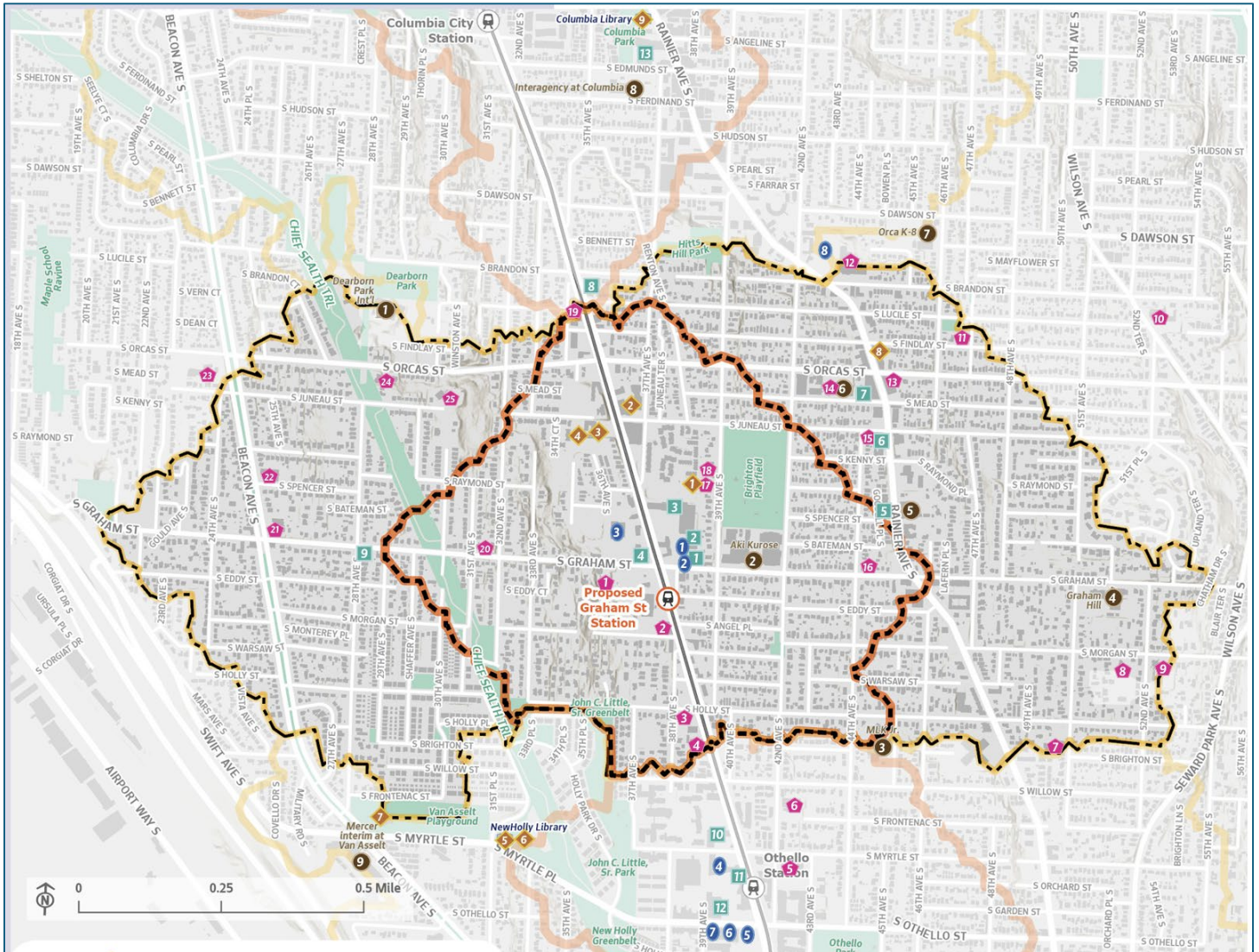
Lot sizes range widely in this area. Areas closest to the proposed Graham Street Station have many large lots (bigger than 10,000 sq ft), while many of those are commercial properties which tend to be bigger, there are also many residential lots in this category. Most residential lots are the typical single-family lots that are under 7,200 sq ft. Relatively few lots are in the median size range between 7,200 and 10,000 sq ft.

Long and large blocks can present challenges for walkability, as they can make pedestrians walk further, have a less enjoyable experience, and limit access to local destinations. Several large and long blocks with little pedestrian permeability are located directly adjacent to the station.



Community institutions and amenities

This map shows a distribution of community institutions and amenities in the Graham Street Station area, broken out into five categories: Schools, Spiritual Centers, Community Assets, Groceries & Bakeries, and Medical & Government. Some of these on the list are outside the Graham Street Station area but are likely frequented by people who live in the Graham Street Station area.



Business vitality

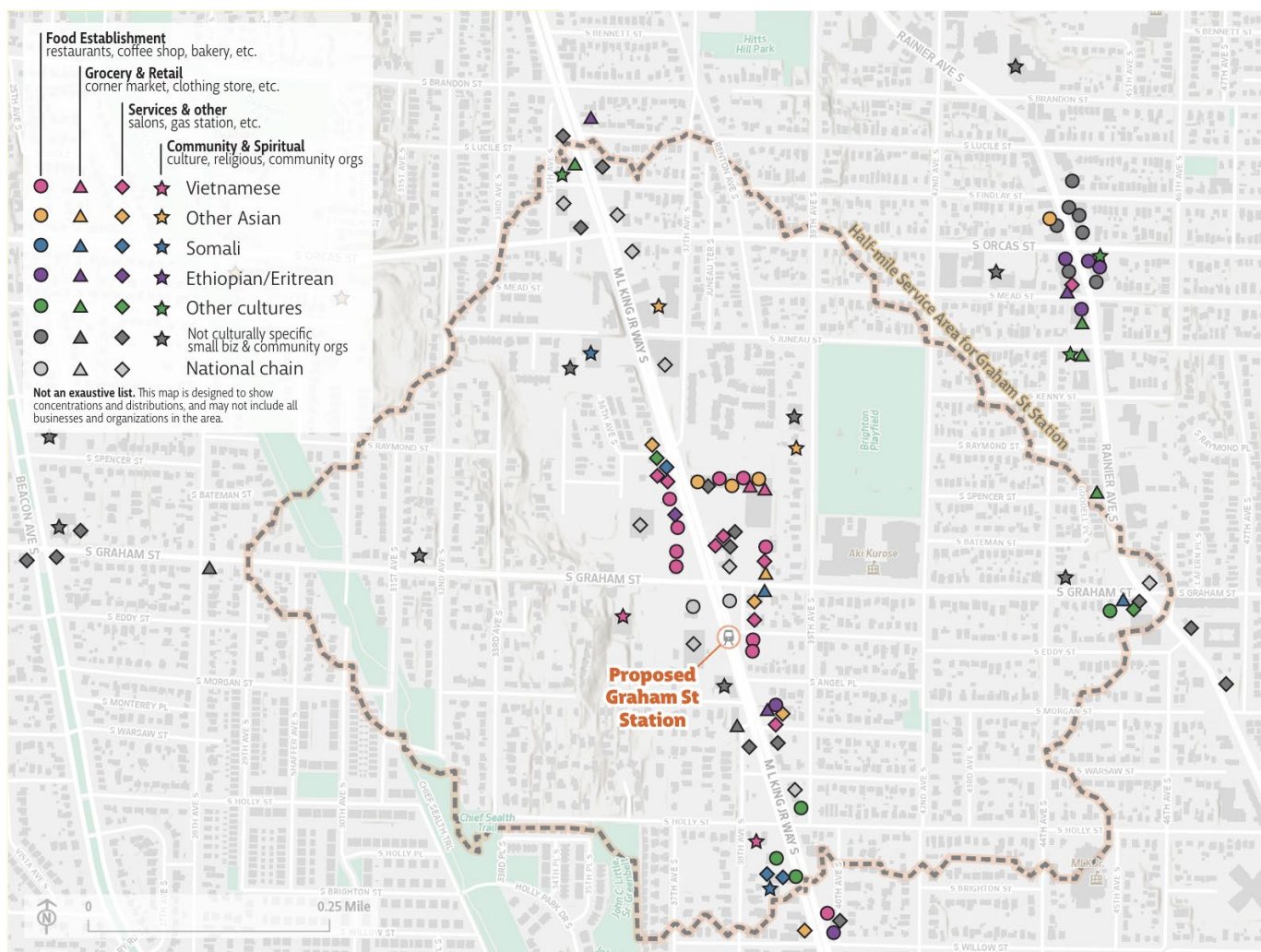
Graham Street Station area has two main commercial cores, one at the intersection of ML King Jr Way S and S Graham St, and another running along Rainier Ave S and crossing S Orcas St (Hillman City). The MLK/Graham St core is anchored by a large shopping plaza and parking lot (Empire Plaza) with many small BIPOC and immigrant owned restaurants and businesses, as well as a handful of larger corporate businesses. Further east, a diverse array of local businesses and organization cluster along Rainier and make up the heart of the Hillman City neighborhood.

The MLK/Graham St commercial core contains about 50 businesses. Based on store signage, about 40% are likely Vietnamese run, and about 15-20% are owned by or serving East African communities.

The Hillman City commercial core has around 20 businesses, with about 25% being owned by or serving East African communities.

Overall, in the whole Graham Street Station area, there are 254 businesses based on business license data (2024), 124 of those are part the services employment sector, which include restaurants and cafes in the area.

Note that the business districts are not officially designated, and the map is designed to show concentrations and distributions of the types of businesses in the area; it is not meant to be a comprehensive list of businesses and organizations in the area.



Access to Parks

This map illustrates the Half-Mile Service Area for the proposed Graham Station. The service area is outlined by a dashed orange line. Key streets shown include S. Bennett St, S. Brandon St, S. Lucile St, S. Findlay St, S. Orcas St, S. Mead St, S. Junco St, S. Kenny St, S. Raymond St, S. Spencer St, S. Bateman St, S. Graham St, S. Eddy St, S. Morgan St, S. Monterey Pl, S. Warsaw St, S. Holly St, S. Brighton St, S. 1st Ave, S. 2nd Ave, S. 3rd Ave, S. 4th Ave, S. 5th Ave, S. 6th Ave, S. 7th Ave, S. 8th Ave, S. 9th Ave, S. 10th Ave, S. 11th Ave, S. 12th Ave, S. 13th Ave, S. 14th Ave, S. 15th Ave, S. 16th Ave, S. 17th Ave, S. 18th Ave, S. 19th Ave, S. 20th Ave, S. 21st Ave, S. 22nd Ave, S. 23rd Ave, S. 24th Ave, S. 25th Ave, S. 26th Ave, S. 27th Ave, S. 28th Ave, S. 29th Ave, S. 30th Ave, S. 31st Ave, S. 32nd Ave, S. 33rd Ave, S. 34th Ave, S. 35th Ave, S. 36th Ave, S. 37th Ave, S. 38th Ave, S. 39th Ave, S. 40th Ave, S. 41st Ave, S. 42nd Ave, S. 43rd Ave, S. 44th Ave, S. 45th Ave, S. 46th Ave, S. 47th Ave, S. 48th Ave, S. 49th Ave, S. 50th Ave. Landmarks include the Dearborn Park and the Aki Kurose. The proposed Graham Station is marked with a red 'X' and labeled 'Proposed Graham St Station'. A scale bar indicates 0.25 Mile. A north arrow is located in the bottom left corner.

- 1 Angel-Morgan P-Patch
- 2 John C. Little P-Patch
- 3 New Holly Youth & Family P-Patch
- 4 Lucky Garden P-Patch
- 5 New Holly 29th Ave P-Patch
- 6 Hillman City P-Patch
- 7 Brandon Street Orchard P-Patch

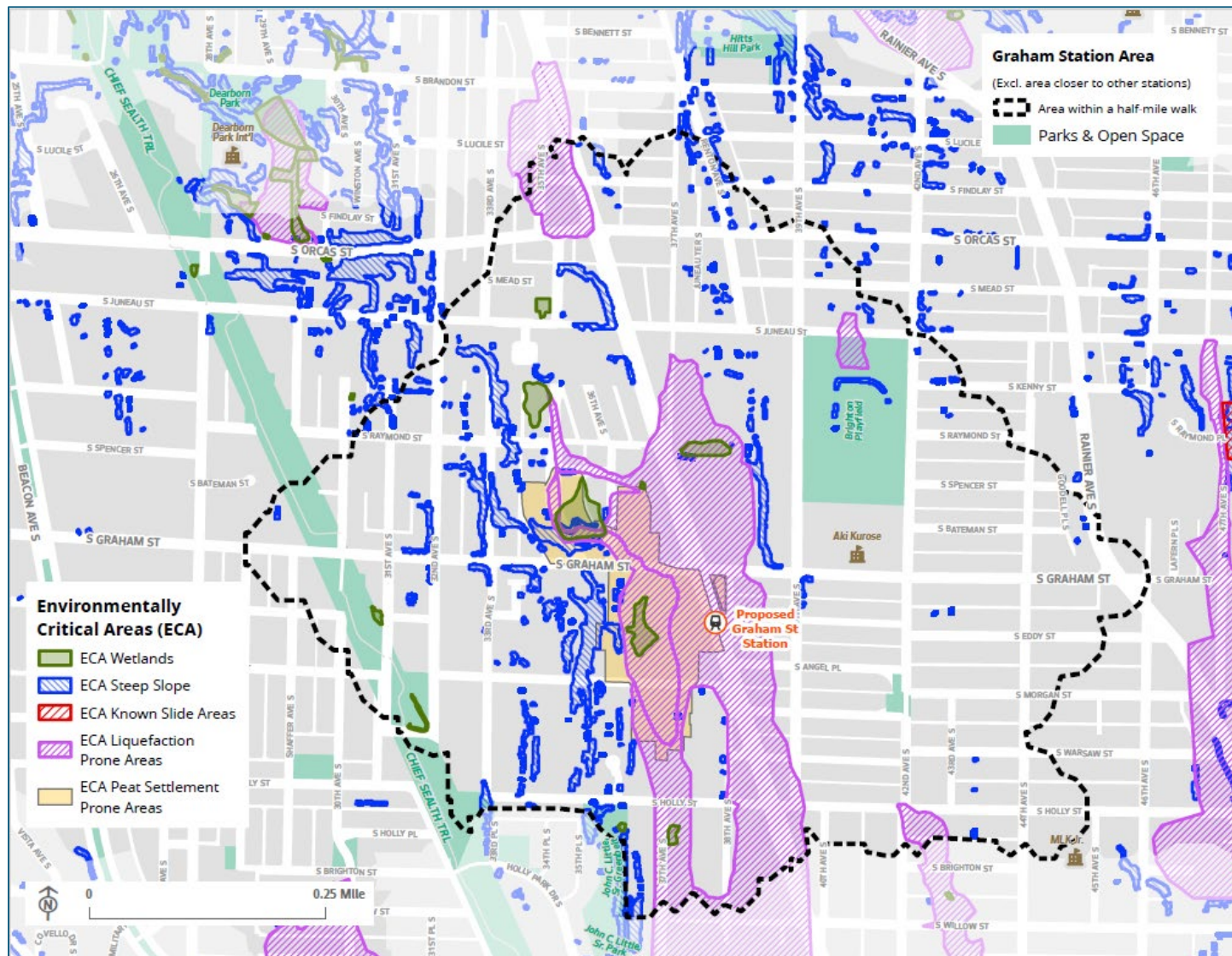


Less amenities

Environmentally Critical Areas

The City's Environmentally Critical Areas (ECA) [Code](#) governs areas of Seattle that provide critical environmental functions. For example, wetlands protect water quality and provide fish and wildlife habitat. Our ECA code also addresses areas that represent particular challenges for development due to geological or other natural conditions. The goal of our ECA regulations is to effectively protect these areas and to protect public safety, while allowing reasonable development in our growing city.

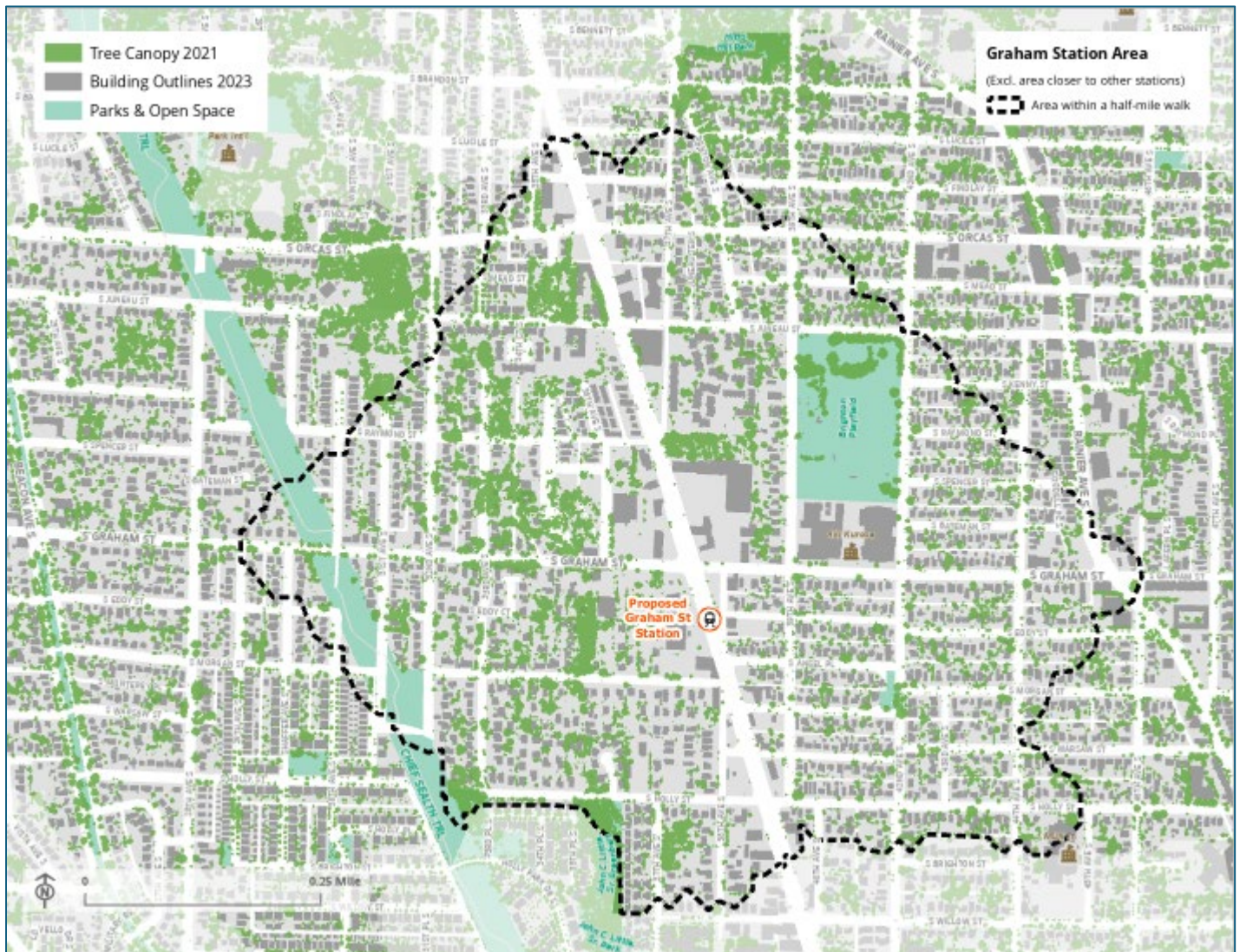
This map shows where ECA are in the Graham Street Station area. Most of the large lots surrounding the MLK Way/Graham St intersection are within a liquefaction-prone area with some wetland conditions. The hills west of the station have some steep slopes as well. Development of properties in ECA are subject to additional development standard in addition to zoning regulations.



Tree Canopy

Canopy coverage refers to the percentage of an area that is covered by tree canopies, as interpreted using aerial photographs. It is an important tool used by the City to understand the extent and distribution of trees in Seattle. The City's goal is to reach 30% canopy cover by 2037. The most recent assessment in 2021 found that 28.1% of Seattle is covered with trees. The area within half a mile of Graham Street Station has a tree canopy coverage of 21.8%.

Tree canopies mostly occur in residential areas, parks, natural areas, as well as city rights-of-way.



Transportation

Pedestrian Network

The study area corresponds to a 1-mile travel distance and encompasses a half-mile walkshed. Significant parts of the sidewalk network in the Graham Street Station area are missing, especially for streets between ML King Jr Way S and Chief Sealth Trail, the area northwest of Brighton Playfield, and Graham Hill east of Rainier Ave S. Many streets also have substandard sidewalks that are significantly narrower than the current standards, as identified in Seattle's *Streets Illustrated*.

Several locations in the study area have been identified as needing street crossing enhancements. Enhancements could include marked crosswalks, all-way stops, or a signal to help pedestrians cross the street. The Pedestrian element in the Seattle Transportation Plan identified initial intersections that could be improved by identifying if the intersection is not currently enhanced and it is 600 feet or more away from the closest enhanced crossing. . Additional crossing enhancements are being identified through the engagement process.

People Streets & Public Spaces

Streets play an important role in getting people to where they need to go and as public spaces. Many streets serve mobility needs and also support people who are strolling in their neighborhood, sitting and connecting with a friend, or waiting for a bus. **People Streets** in the Seattle Transportation Plan are streets that offer inviting spaces for people to linger, enjoy their surroundings, and connect with others. They support local business districts and business access. **Public Spaces** are spaces that invite people to gather, play, and connect. Public spaces may incorporate public art, seating, games, trees and green infrastructure, or spaces for vendors and gatherings. They are often stewarded by community members and supported by the city.

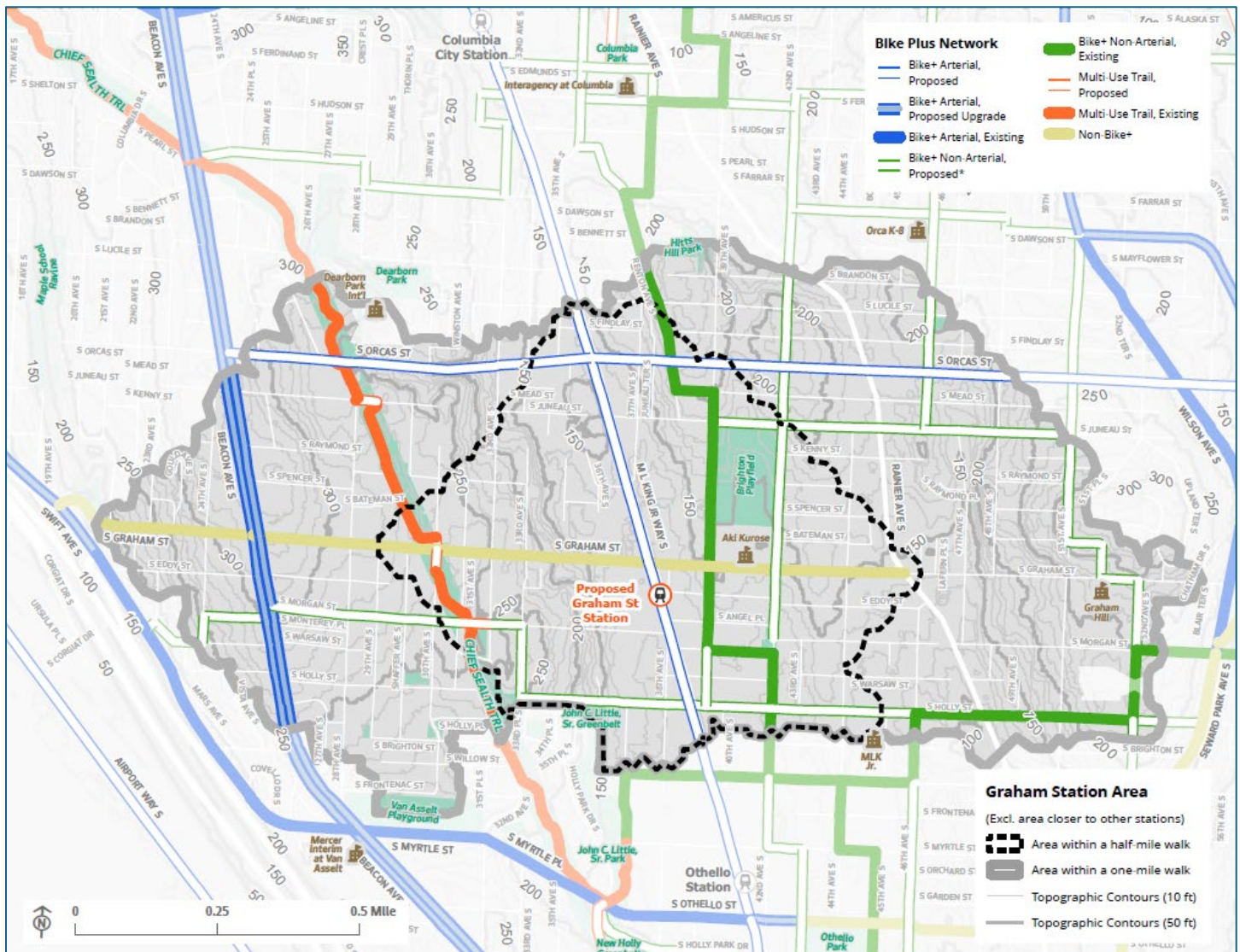
The STP identified some potential people streets. Destination streets are streets in the heart of a neighborhood with a high density of destinations. Event Streets are streets that are designed to host community events, like farmers markets. The STP has identified several destination streets in the Graham area, we will continue to refine, adjust, and add ideas for People Streets through the Graham Street Station Area Planning process.

See the following page for the map associated with Pedestrian Network and People Streets & Public Spaces.

Bicycle Network

The existing bicycle network is primarily made up of north-south streets. The all ages and abilities network is shown by the Bike+ facilities on the map including the Healthy Street on 39th Ave S, and the Chief Sealth Trail. There are limited existing facilities that connect to the future light rail station. There are no existing east-west Bike+ corridors for biking. Steep topography in this neighborhood makes biking challenging for many ages and abilities.

The Seattle Transportation Plan proposed an expanded bicycling network, which will be further fine-tuned in the Graham Station Area Planning process. “Bike+ Arterial” includes protected bike lanes on arterial streets, “Bike+ Non-Arterial” include neighborhood greenways and healthy streets on non-arterial streets. Additionally, S Graham St is identified as “Non-Bike+” due to the narrowness of the street’s right of way.

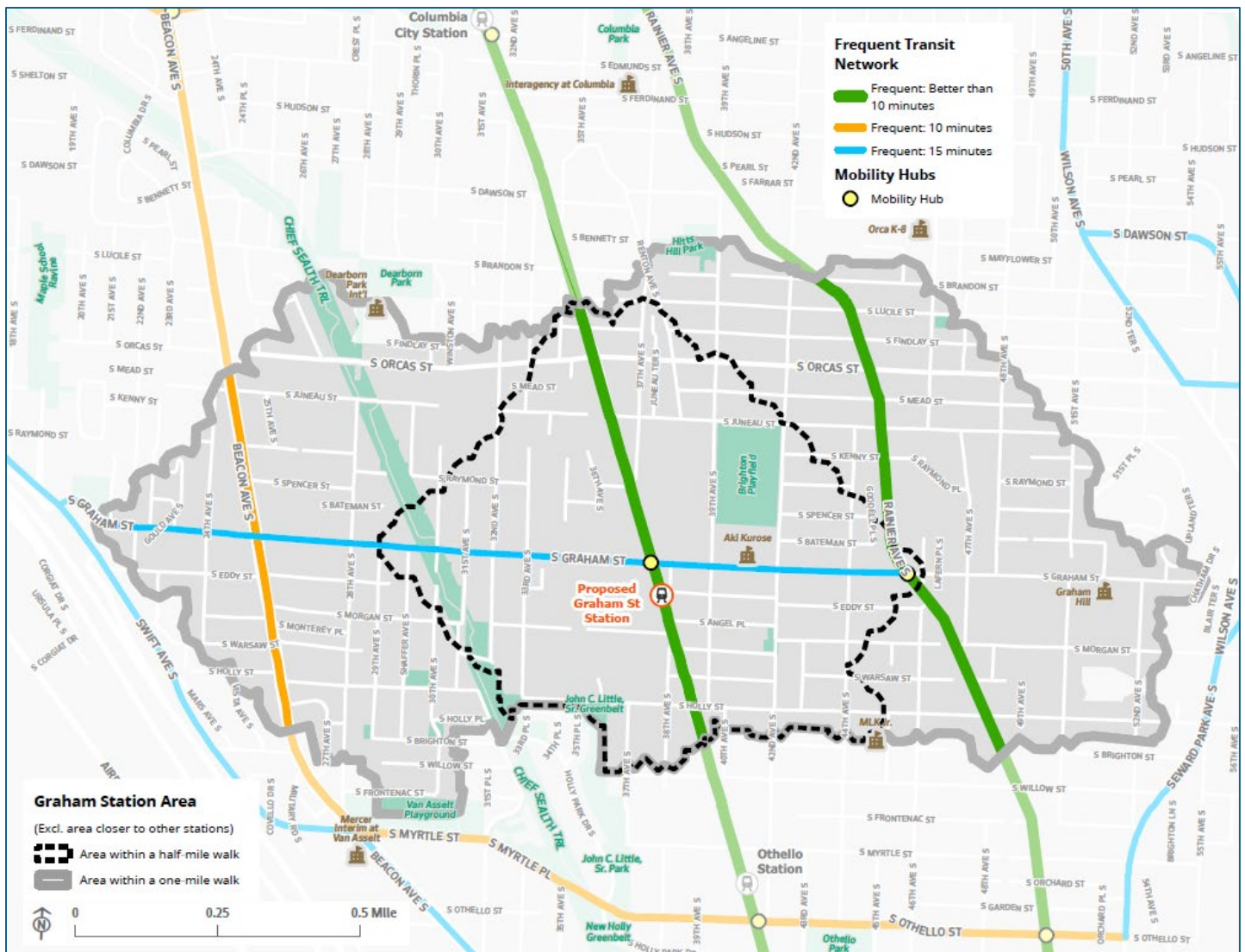


Transit Network

The existing transit network in the Graham Street Station area includes north-south fixed transit service by King County Metro buses. Existing frequent transit routes run on ML King Jr Way S (Route 106), Rainier Ave S (Route 7), and Beacon Ave S (Route 36). King County Metro also runs an on-demand service, Metro Flex, that connects people from the Othello station to destinations as far north as S Orcas St. .

The Seattle Transportation Plan identifies an updated future frequent transit network. In addition to the existing frequent transit routes which all travel the north-south direction we are currently studying an east-west bus route along S Graham St. The addition of a new light rail station at S Graham St and ML King Jr Way S will add additional regional connectivity by high-capacity transit. It will bridge the 1.6 mile gap between the existing Columbia City and Othello light rail stations and increase neighborhood access to the larger Link light rail network.

The Seattle Transportation Plan also identified Community and Mobility Hubs where S Graham St intersects with ML King Jr Way S and at the intersection of S Graham St and Rainier Ave S. Community and Mobility Hubs combine transportation options, information, and community spaces and are located along major transit routes. These are spaces where people may be waiting for transit or transferring between different routes or types of transportation.



Large vehicles need access to many of our streets for delivery, utility and services access, and for emergency response. In the Graham Street Station area, ML King Jr Way S and Rainier Ave S are designated Truck Streets, which help get critical goods and services to businesses and people in South Seattle. These streets provide vital connections for businesses to the region.

Freight Network

- Major truck street
- Minor truck street

Emergency Response

- Tier 1 Routes
- Fire Station

Graham Station Area
(Excl. area closer to other stations)

- Area within a half-mile walk
- Area within a one-mile walk

Vehicle Network – Pavement Condition

The condition of roadways is measured using a Pavement Condition Index (PCI). The PCI uses cameras and sensors to record pavement distress and measures pavement structural integrity and operational surface condition. The PCI helps us determine if roads need routine or preventive maintenance, major maintenance, or will need to be reconstructed.

