

Public Open House Summary

Meeting Details

June 5, 2017
6:00 – 8:00 pm
Silver Cloud Inn
1100 Broadway

Meeting Purpose

Sound Transit in partnership with the First Hill Improvement Association (FHIA) called a public meeting to inform the neighborhood about an upcoming development opportunity on Sound Transit’s surplus property located in Seattle’s First Hill neighborhood. Sound Transit also discussed its commitment to equitable transit-oriented development practices in light of the passage of Sound Transit 3 (ST3) system expansion plan and sought to confirm community goals developed by FIHA’s land use and open space committee for the property. In addition, Sound Transit hoped to solicit feedback from the community on specific elements of the future development—including affordable housing, ground floor uses, and urban design features—to inform the development of its request for proposals (RFP). Sound Transit shared information about the property including site characteristics and other considerations that affect the site’s future development and the project schedule. FHIA shared neighborhood demographic statistics and highlighted the neighborhood’s need for additional affordable housing.



Background

Sound Transit acquired two adjacent properties in 2001 for the First Hill light rail station and surplused these properties in 2016 in preparation to offer them for transit-oriented development (TOD). The properties are bounded by Madison Street to the south, Boylston Avenue to the west, an alley to the east, and an adjacent property to the north.



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This summer, Sound Transit is reaching out to developers to solicit proposals for TOD on this property. Sound Transit's site is proximate to the Seattle Streetcar on Broadway and future bus rapid transit route along Madison providing a quick connection to the Capitol Hill Light Rail Station. TOD is a land development pattern that integrates transit and land use by promoting transit ridership while supporting community land use and development visions. Under the ST3 System Plan, this development is part of Sound Transit's regional equitable TOD strategy for diverse, vibrant, mixed-use, and mixed-income communities adjacent to transit. To guide the development of this site and inform the RFP, Sound Transit and FHIA invited the community to provide input on affordable housing, ground floor uses, and urban design features.

Attendees

Approximately 72 members of the public were in attendance.

Staff supporting the event included:

Sound Transit:

Community Outreach – Andrea Burnett, Wilbert Santos, Paige Johnson

Government & Community Relations – Trinity Parker

Planning, Environment and Project Development – Brooke Belman, Sarah Lovell, Sloan Dawson, Thatcher Imboden

Communications – Kimberly Reason

First Hill Improvement Association: Alex Hudson – Executive Director

3 Square Blocks (Community Engagement Consultants to Sound Transit): Rebecca Fornaby, Marcia Wagoner, Julia Walton

Agenda

6:00 pm Open House

6:30 pm Presentation

- Welcome: Marcia Wagoner – Community Engagement Consultant, 3 Square Blocks
- *First Hill: A Neighborhood in Transition:* Alex Hudson – First Hill Improvement Association, Executive Director
- *First Hill TOD Opportunity:* Sarah Lovell – TOD Manager, Sound Transit
- Introduction to Project Priorities Activity: Marcia Wagoner

7:00 pm Project Priorities Activity



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8:00 pm Adjourn



Presentation Highlights

First Hill: A Neighborhood in Transition

- There is a strong need for more affordable housing in First Hill
 - Average rent is \$1,790
 - There are 1,750 existing affordable residential units that house 22% of First Hill's residents
 - Only 310 (7%) of the 4,474 new units (proposed and under construction) will be affordable
- Community priorities for the TOD site:
 - Site provide 100% affordable housing
 - Affordability be set at 60% of the area median income (AMI)
 - Site include retail and community space
 - Site include family-size units

First Hill TOD Opportunity

- ST3 System Plan calls for Sound Transit to implement a regional equitable TOD strategy. Goals of that strategy include:
 - Creating diverse, vibrant, mixed-use, and mixed-income communities adjacent to Sound Transit stations
 - Reducing of affordable housing development costs
 - Increasing transit ridership
 - Providing of space for small businesses or other uses that comprise a diverse, vibrant, mixed-use, mixed-income TOD
- In First Hill, affordable housing would serve anyone making 80% AMI or less
- Sound Transit acquired the properties in 2001 for the First Hill light rail station and declared them surplus them in 2016 in preparation to offer them for TOD
- The 21,000 sf site is zoned to support housing with a development capacity of 250+ units
- Nearby transit includes the Seattle Streetcar, future Madison bus rapid transit route, and quick connection to the Capitol Hill Light Rail Station
- First Hill has a median household income of \$38,000 and 42% of residents are retired
- TOD analysis indicates:
 - High market demand, high land value
 - Substantial gap in funding needed for affordable housing
 - Property large enough for one building (up to 15 stories)
 - Up to 250 housing units anticipated
 - Storefronts required on Madison
- TOD process
 - What could TOD look like?
 - What should TOD accomplish?
How well does the TOD proposal accomplish these goals?
- TOD schedule
 - Summer 2017: Collect community input, write RFP, select developer

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- Late 2017: Negotiate deal points
- 2018 – 2019: Developer design and permit
- 2020: TOD construction

Participant comments

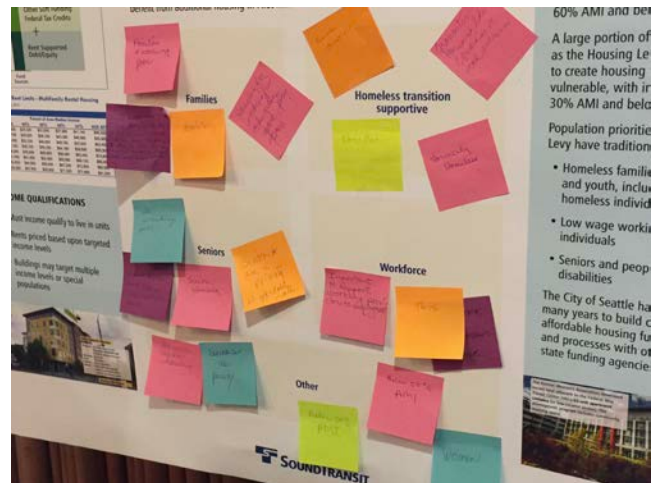
Sound Transit collected feedback through comment cards and a project priorities activity—a set of interactive exhibits prompting participants to post sticky notes on a series of boards to share their thoughts about affordable housing, ground floor uses, and urban design features of the future development. Participants placed roughly 150 sticky notes on the exhibits and submitted 15 comments (including two letters).

Affordable Housing

The exhibit board asked participants to indicate which populations would benefit most from the construction of additional affordable housing in First Hill and provide a reason for their answer. The groups that received the most support were: family and workforce housing (12 sticky notes each), followed by senior housing (10), and homeless transition supportive housing (8).

Sticky note comments in favor of additional housing for families explained that this group is “central to preserving a vibrant, diverse neighborhood for all,” and that “costs for large units are prohibitively high,” while “availability of larger units is very low.” Comments in favor of additional workforce housing explained that “workers should be able to live near their work so they don’t have to rely on or pay for increasingly expensive transit,” and commenters would like to see “housing for workers employed by the hospitals and other institutions.” Comments supportive of affordable housing for seniors explained that the site’s proximity to health services makes it well suited for senior residents, who would use those services frequently and benefit from the short distance. Participants in favor of homeless transition supportive housing offered Mary’s Place, YouthCare, and the Compass Housing Alliance as examples of what they would like to see in the development. Suggestions for other groups in need of affordable housing in First Hill included those earning below 50% of the area median income (AMI), women, and low income students at Seattle University.

Comment forms received indicated additional support for 100% affordable housing, as well as units for those earning below 50% AMI and low-income university students.



First Hill

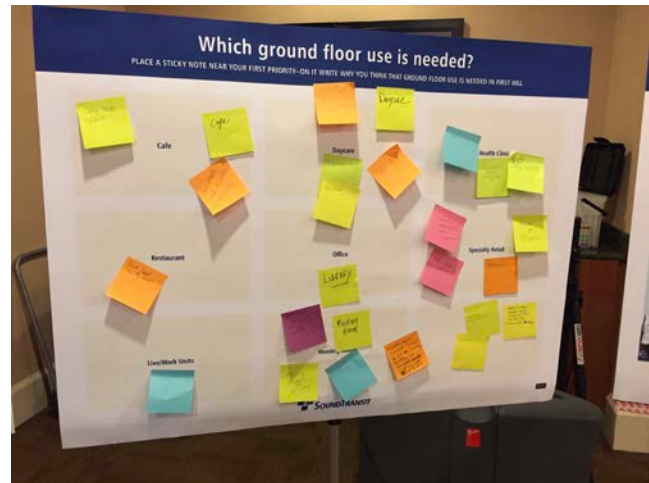
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Ground Floor Uses

The exhibit board asked participants to indicate which ground floor uses were most needed in First Hill and provide a justification for their answer. The uses that received the most support were specialty retail (13 sticky notes), followed by café/restaurant (11), daycare (9), health clinic (7), meeting room (6), live/work units (2), and office (1).

Sticky note comments supportive of specialty retail suggested a fitness center, book store, bike shop, and dog boarding facility. Several comments specified the need for locally-owned, small retail to replace retail that is being displaced by new development in First Hill. Several comments supporting a café or restaurant explained that a café would offer much-needed gathering space and contribute to a sense of community. Roughly half of comments in support of a daycare on the ground floor specified that the daycare should be affordable. Comments supporting a health clinic suggested hygiene and bathroom facilities for those experiencing homelessness, family services, and a walk-in clinic. Two comments questioned whether a clinic would be the best addition to First Hill given the high number of existing health-related services in the neighborhood. Comments supporting a meeting room explained that there is a need for affordable community space as well as space for recovery groups to meet. Other suggested ground floor uses included a veterinarian, community kitchen, and library. Several comments expressed a need for parking in First Hill, and others advocated for active ground floor uses that will make streets safer during the day and night.



Comment forms indicated additional support for active ground floor uses. Proposed uses include retail and services for residents—such as a cobbler or tailor—and an affordable grocery store. Several comments advocated against including parking in the development to preserve space for affordable units. One comment proposed including office space for FHIA.

Urban Design

The exhibit board asked participants to identify the urban design elements that characterize First Hill and provide a brief explanation. *While many comments identified existing urban design elements that characterize First Hill, other comments indicated desired elements.* The most commented-on characteristic was open space (12 sticky notes), followed by trees (11), walkability (9), and architecture (3).

Open Space

Comments identifying existing urban design elements that characterize First Hill included, the “feel of open space related to the buildings,” “limited open space,” and “green space despite density.” Desired elements included “open



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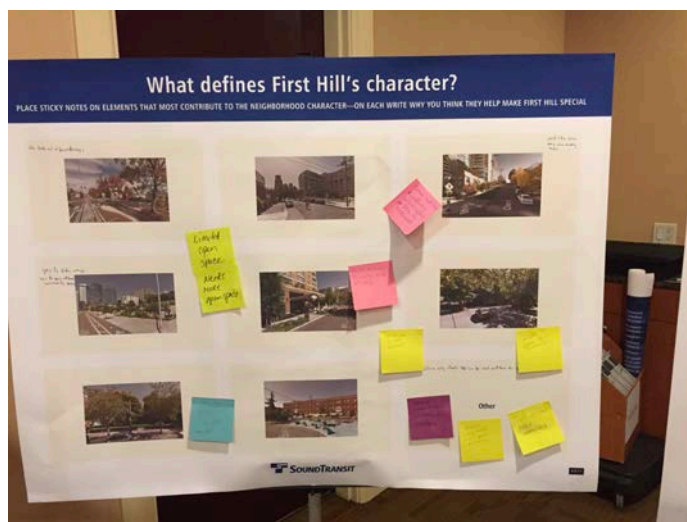
outdoor community space,” “some set back and gathering social space between building and sidewalk,” and “park-like areas along slow-moving roads.”

Trees

Comments identifying existing urban design elements that characterize First Hill included “wonderful old trees” and “urban tree canopy,” while desired elements were similar, including “more green on First Hill—not just a flow-through neighborhood,” “green green green trees trees trees!”

Walkability

Comments identifying existing urban design elements that characterize First Hill included “quiet, walking-friendly side streets,” and “pedestrian green space along 8th Ave.” Comments about desired elements included a request for better pedestrian crossings on Spring and Seneca in anticipation of increased activity on Madison with the arrival of the bus rapid transit route.



Architecture

Sticky note comments identifying existing urban design elements that characterize First Hill included “tall, set-back towers” and “tall residential.” One comment requested that future development “integrate existing architecture into design.”

While several comment forms indicated that “a large monolith of a building will detract from the neighborhood” and render Madison Street “a walled-off canyon,” others wrote, “Please allow this development to be much taller! More units mean more affordable units! Upzone! First Hill is a high-rise residential neighborhood.” Finally, several comments requested the development mitigate its height by “[including] a moderate setback on the second, third, and seventh floors” as well as “sidewalk setbacks with seating” to “help with livability.”

Other

One comment identified “history” as an existing characteristic of First Hill. Suggestions for future elements included “safe bike space” and “playground for kids.” One comment form advocated for “provisions for dog walkers.”



Next steps

The next step will be to use the feedback gathered through these activities to inform an RFP and select a developer for the project. Sound Transit will update the public as the process continues. Additional opportunities for public comment will be offered after a developer is selected.

Public Open House Comments

Project Priorities Activity

Which type of affordable housing is needed?

Families (12 in favor)

- Families and working poor
- Absolutely
- I know several families struggling to stay on First Hill, valued contributors at Virginia Mason, the NW School, and other non-profits, etc. They are central to preserving a vibrant, diverse neighborhood for all
- Specifically single-parent families
- Families
- Costs for large units are prohibitively high
- Availability of larger units is very low
- Families
- Families
- Families
- Family
- Family units

Homeless transition supportive (8 in favor)

- Formerly homeless
- Transition housing like Compass or other
- Mary's Place
- Formerly homeless
- Hygiene centers and bathrooms
- Homeless supportive program and lodging
- Homeless support
- Homeless transition supportive

Seniors (10 in favor, 1 against)

- Senior housing
- Seniors are a priority—at an affordable rate
- Seniors are a priority
- Seniors as priority
- No more senior housing
- Seniors need and deserve affordable housing close to transit, healthcare providers
- Seniors
- Low income senior housing
- Seniors who need access to medical clinics

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- Low income seniors because neighborhood offers services and short distance to the site
- Low cost affordable housing for seniors

Workforce (12 in favor)

- Housing for working poor
- The working poor
- Important to support working “poor” close to employment
- Workforce is necessary for Seattle
- This
- Workforce
- Affordable housing for workers employed by hospitals and other institutions
- Affordable housing for workforce
- Affordable for those who work in First Hill
- Workers should be able to live near where they work so they don’t have to rely on/pay for increasingly expensive transit
- Walking improves health outcomes
- Workers

Other (7 sticky notes)

- Below 50% AMI
- Women
- Low income students from Seattle U
- Below 50% AMI
- 100% affordable
- People who live in affordable housing use transit more than high income residents
- Interfaith

Which ground floor use is needed?

Café/restaurant (11 in favor)

- Brew pub with good food
- Great for community gatherings
- Vitality both daytime and nighttime
- There is a shortage of restaurants in dense First Hill
- Café/restaurant social meeting place
- Coffee shops with internet
- Café
- Café would add a sense of community
- Fast food
- Healthy food
- Restaurant

Live/work units (2 in favor)

- Important to reduce commute distance

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- Nice option

Daycare (9 in favor, 1 against)

- Daycare already on Boylston and Spring
- Affordable daycare is very important
- Affordable
- If the building includes families, day care makes sense
- Affordable daycare
- Daycare that is affordable
- Daycare
- Yes! Yes!
- Very important!
- Daycare

Office (1 in favor)

- With daycare available

Meeting room (6 in favor)

- A community organizing/meeting space besides 1st [illegible] is important
- Need affordable community spaces
- Meeting room
- First-floor community day activity center
- Community building
- Meeting rooms for recovery

Health Clinic (7 in favor, 2 against)

- If the building includes families, a low-cost health clinic makes sense
- We're in "pillville," do we need another clinic?
- [Star indicating support for comment above]
- Yes, we do need a walk-in clinic!
- Hygiene and bathrooms
- Yes!
- Essential services for families
- Very important!
- Mixed homeless shelter and health clinic (or other daytime use)

Specialty retail (13 in favor)

- Vitality in both daytime and nighttime
- Apple store—we can dream!
- Need to replace specialty retail being forced out by other FH development
- Retail place for stores which will leave Madison during and after BRT
- Book store
- Small, affordable retail
- Yoga or fitness
- Fitness



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- Bike shop
- Dog boarding
- Bike shop
- Local businesses! Sized and priced accordingly
- Health club with pool, etc.

Other (10 sticky notes)

- People at 60% AMI need food, not Whole Foods
- If you live in First Hill, there's no place for your guests to park
- Veterinarian
- Sufficient parking
- Library
- Dog park
- No more banks or credit unions
- Interfaith
- Indoor garden/rainforest
- Community kitchen

Urban Design: What defines First Hill's character?

Open Space (12 sticky notes)

- Feel of open space related to the buildings
- Safe open space
- Small parklets, places to sit
- Park space needed in 8th/9th and Marion/James
- Limited open space—needs more open space
- Yes to open outdoor community space
- Some set back and gathering social space between building and sidewalk
- More open space
- Park-like areas along slow-moving roads
- Open-park
- Communal
- More open space

Trees (11 sticky notes)

- Urban tree canopy
- Green green green trees trees trees
- Trees—greenway
- More green on First Hill—not just a flow-through neighborhood
- Trees
- Trees—green space
- Green space despite density
- Wonderful old trees
- More green everywhere on First Hill



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- Like shade
- Trees

Walkability (9 sticky notes)

- Pedestrian-friendly
- Inviting pedestrian walkways
- Pedestrian green space along 8th Ave
- Walkability
- Proximity to Downtown
- With BRT on Madison, traffic will shift to Spring and Seneca—need better pedestrian crossings
- Like wide walkways
- Quiet, walking-friendly side streets
- Walkable side streets

Architecture (3 sticky notes)

- Integrate existing architecture into design—blending
- Tall, set-back towers
- Tall residential

Other (8 sticky notes)

- Best word to describe First Hill is DESOLATE—no people, except during work hours. Not a person to be seen on weekends.
- Benches
- Traffic flow along Boylston
- Playground for kids safe from streets
- Transit improvements beyond present connections
- History
- Safe bike space
- Yes to bike ways