

## LAND USE—ZONING, LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

### *AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT*

#### **SUMMARY OF EXISTING LAND USE AND ZONING**

The study area includes land south of the Downtown office core and east of Alaskan Way, including the entire Pioneer Square and Chinatown/International District neighborhoods, the northern periphery of the Greater Duwamish Manufacturing and Industrial Center (MIC), and the western periphery of the Jackson Place neighborhood at Rainier Avenue S. This diverse area is many things to many people, including: a center of historic and cultural heritage, art and tourism; a place to live and work and conduct business; an entertainment center; a transportation hub; and a corridor for commerce and industry.

#### **Land Use Patterns**

An overview of South Downtown's land use patterns begins with its neighborhoods and districts.

#### **Pioneer Square**

Pioneer Square adjoins the Downtown office core and government core, extending as far north as Columbia Street and as far south as S. Royal Brougham Way. This historic district is characterized by an extensive and varied assemblage of century-old buildings, most with brick and stone facades and distinctive architectural qualities (see the Historic and Cultural Preservation section of this chapter for additional discussion). Typical buildings range from 20 feet up to 100 feet in height. Several taller buildings are located along the 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue corridor and along S. Jackson and S. King Streets. In the Occidental Park vicinity and eastward to around 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue S., lower-height buildings are most common, in the range of approximately 10 to 50 feet. Interspersed throughout the district are approximately 30 properties used as parking lots, garages or with other structures that are considered non-contributing to the historic district. This creates a land use pattern with numerous buildings developed to the property line, but also occasional gaps in the continuity of streetfront uses created by vacant lots.

Complementing this pattern and creating localized open space nodes are Pioneer Place Park, Occidental Park, the Occidental pedestrian mall, Fortson Square and City Hall Park. The combination of a change in street grid orientation and a continuation of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Extension at an angle from the dominant Pioneer Square street grid creates several triangular blocks and triangular spaces along 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Extension until it intersects with 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. at S. Jackson Street. South of S. King Street, the northern parking lot of Qwest Field creates a large open space, bordered by Qwest Field to the south, railroad tracks and King Street Station to the east, and buildings along Occidental Avenue S. and S. King Street. Along 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue S. south of S. King Street, an architectural style and building pattern compatible with Pioneer Square extends to uses on both sides of the street for approximately two blocks and then only on the east side of 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue S. to S. Royal Brougham Way. The west side is part of the Greater Duwamish MIC.

The mix of street-level uses in Pioneer Square includes many retail businesses devoted to tourism and specialty goods, art galleries, restaurants, bars and nightclubs, and social service agencies. Upper-story uses include a variety of offices, artist live-work spaces, social services, housing and assorted commercial uses. Some upper-story floors in historic buildings may be under-utilized or vacant. Residential uses are not very visible in the mix of uses, except the Florentine Condominiums south of S. King Street and subsidized housing structures such as the Morrison and Frye Hotels on Third Avenue near the King County Courthouse. However, recent renovation or new construction is bringing an increased inventory of residential uses in some vicinities, including the Lowman Building apartments (near 1<sup>st</sup> and Cherry),

the Tashiro Kaplan Building (at Prefontaine Place), and the Quintessa Apartments near 2<sup>nd</sup> and Yesler Way. The Smith Tower is also in design and permitting for conversion to residential uses.

King Street Station provides a hub for regional commuter trains, Amtrak and other train traffic. The bus tunnel stations accessed in Pioneer Square via 3rd Avenue entrances and near Union Station at 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue S., and various surface bus stops nearby King Street Station complement this hub by providing bus and eventual light rail transit service that generates daily commuting activity in the vicinity.

### **Chinatown/International District**

This neighborhood and historic district adjoins the Downtown office core and government center, east of Pioneer Square between approximately Yesler Way to the north and S. Charles Street to the south. Its boundaries extend from 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. east to Rainier Avenue S., also encompassing the Little Saigon neighborhood described later. The Chinatown and Japantown vicinities west of I-5 are characterized by a varied assemblage of buildings, many with brick and stone facades and historic architectural character, located within a north-south-east-west gridiron street system. Most of the buildings range from 10 feet to approximately 60 feet in height; in Japantown a few residential buildings range up to approximately 150 feet. The architecture and use patterns in these areas reflect the cultural heritage of the Asian American communities of Seattle, and have historically served as a business and activity center for those communities. Street-level uses include a wide variety of restaurants, customer service offices, specialty goods stores, grocers, banks, a post office, private associations and social service providers. Upper-level uses include several buildings with residential uses, others with office or service uses, private associations, and a number of buildings with vacant or under-utilized upper floors.

Physically, the land use patterns include the densest core of historic buildings within a National Register Historic District that extends approximately between S. Main Street, S. Weller Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. and I-5. This encompasses the active east-west corridors of S. King Street and S. Jackson Street. The vicinity centered at 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. and S. Main Street is known as Japantown or Nihonmachi, with a collection of buildings identified as a center of Japanese-American architectural and cultural heritage. Between approximately S. Main Street and Yesler Way to the north along 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S., the pattern of use is primarily in apartment buildings of varying ages and heights, interspersed with parking lots, and other uses such as the Nippon Kan Theater commercial building. In this same vicinity between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. is a lightly developed vicinity including surface parking lots that is a transitional area between Pioneer Square, Downtown and this neighborhood. A new Emergency Operations Center and fire station, under construction, will occupy one of the blocks in this vicinity.

At the west perimeter of the Chinatown neighborhood south of S. Jackson Street, a series of large office buildings and Union Station form an employment center and a physical “edge” that is penetrated by a few pedestrian walkways most notably at S. Weller Street, connecting to the Weller Street Bridge west of 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.

South of S. Weller Street in the Chinatown neighborhood, the character of development includes a mix of newer residential/mixed-use buildings, parking lots and utilitarian single-use buildings, as well as the Uwajimaya mixed-use grocery/retail and apartment complex. Compared to Pioneer Square, the Chinatown/Japantown neighborhood as a whole is less densely developed, and includes more parking lots and vacant or lightly developed properties in its land use mix.

### **Little Saigon and Jackson Place**

This neighborhood, east of I-5, is the easternmost extension of the Chinatown/International District neighborhood and the Downtown Urban Center. It is characterized by a varied mixture of predominantly

commercial buildings, ranging from warehouses and poultry processing, to grocery stores, small businesses, social service agencies, small office buildings, churches, and the mixed-use Pacific Rim Center. Most of the buildings range from approximately 10 to 30 feet in height. Physically, this vicinity is characterized by its long east-west blocks, the intersecting S. Jackson Street and 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. corridors, and a terraced topography bounded by upslopes north of S. Jackson Street and downslopes south of S. Lane Street.

Little Saigon is identified as a key center of Vietnamese-American community business and cultural activity in Seattle. Many households take advantage of the clustering of businesses, restaurants, and nearby religious facilities to make this neighborhood a multi-stop destination, especially on weekends. In addition, this area is considered a point of entry where immigrants can find an economic foothold in the workforce and business world.

The most active business center is located at 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. and S. Jackson Street, with several small-scale commercial buildings providing space for numerous businesses, service providers and restaurants. Several of these uses include parking for automobiles between the street and the building. Along S. King Street is a diverse mixture of retail, warehouse, wholesale, goods and services uses, along with the historic Victorian Row Apartments. Along S. Weller Street, uses include the Leschi Center that provides services to Native Americans, and a variety of light industrial, commercial, and office uses east of 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. In the southeast corner of this vicinity is the Goodwill property south of S. Weller Street and west of Rainier Avenue S.

To the east of this vicinity across Rainier Avenue S. are the Jackson Place residential neighborhood and S. Jackson Street commercial corridor, to the north is the Yesler Terrace residential community and to the southeast is the continuation of the Rainier Avenue S. commercial/industrial corridor. The southeast-northwest angle of Boren Avenue S. provides an approximate northern edge to Little Saigon, connecting with Rainier Avenue S. and S. Jackson Street to form a five-way intersection. Commercial uses are located along both sides of Rainier Avenue S., and within a narrow transitional area immediately to the east of Rainier Avenue S. that is part of the Jackson Place vicinity. In this vicinity, the topography toward the east defines a transition in land use to low-density residential uses and provides territorial views for occupants. The Seattle Housing Authority is beginning to evaluate future development actions in the Yesler Terrace vicinity north of Main Street and east of I-5.

### **Stadium Area and “south-of-Dearborn”**

These study areas lie at the northern bounds of the Greater Duwamish MIC, extending as far south as S. Holgate Street in the 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue S. vicinity and S. Royal Brougham Way elsewhere. Functionally, these vicinities serve as a transitional area between Downtown neighborhoods to the north and the industrial area to the south, accommodating a variety of industrial and commercial uses. In addition to the Qwest Field Event Center and Safeco Field complexes, the mix of industrial and commercial uses includes restaurants, warehouse/distribution, home products retail stores, wholesale, parking lots and offices. The WOSCA property extends north of S. Royal Brougham Way on the west side of 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue S. in this vicinity, representing the northernmost extension of the MIC. The 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue S., 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue S., S. Royal Brougham Way and Occidental Avenue S. corridors are intermittently affected by stadium and event center activities, such as 80+ baseball games a year, 10 football games a year, and numerous other regularly scheduled soccer, tradeshow and concert activities. These events bring large volumes of pedestrians and related festival-style street vending that intermittently affect traffic congestion and the efficiency of business activities.

South of S. Dearborn Street in the Airport Way S. vicinity, uses include warehouses, printing, automobile repair, City operations yard, food preparation and distribution, as well as the William Booth Center (transitional housing), the vacant former Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) building, and parking lots. Typical buildings in these vicinities range from 10 to 20 feet in height.

The largest nearby uses west and southwest of this vicinity are the Port of Seattle Terminal 46 container terminal and Seattle International Gateway (SIG) Railyard. These facilities provide for movement of large volumes of goods into and out of the country via container traffic by ship, truck and rail. Truck movements to and from the terminal occur via all streets in the local network, including movements that transfer goods to and from trains. A “tail track” that extends north-south near Alaskan Way allows for connection of railcars and other train movements. East of the stadiums, a Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railyard and rail corridor serves Sound Transit, Amtrak and other rail service to/from King Street Station; at-grade rail crossings intermittently affect traffic on Royal Brougham Way and S. Holgate Street. Also adjacent to the study area at S. Atlantic Street, the Bemis Building provides live/work space for more than 30 tenants. East of 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. and south of S. Royal Brougham Way, the dominant uses near the study area are transportation-oriented, primarily related to the King County Metro bus base.

## **Zoning Patterns**

### **Pioneer Square**

The Pioneer Square neighborhood is uniformly zoned “Pioneer Square Mixed” (PSM), denoting a Special Review District and neighborhood-specific zone regulations. The PSM zone accommodates a wide variety of uses, but prohibits several types of heavy commercial and light industrial uses. Four different height districts are present in Pioneer Square: a 100-foot district, an 85/120-foot district, a 100/120-foot district, and a 245-foot district (the latter primarily at the Smith Tower property). The 100-foot district is the most prevalent, covering most of the area between Columbia Street and S. King Street. The 100/120-foot district lies predominantly east of Second Avenue Extension south of Yesler Way. The 85/120-foot district lies south of S. King Street in the stadium vicinity, including the North Lot of Qwest Field and properties along the east side of 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue S. south to Royal Brougham Way (see Figure 3-1). The maximum 120-foot height may be achieved in these areas only if 75% of the floor area of a building is in residential use.

### **Chinatown/I.D. West of I-5**

This area is zoned “International District Mixed” (IDM) or “International District Residential” (IDR), denoting a Special Review District and neighborhood-specific zone regulations. The IDM and IDR zones accommodate a wide variety of uses, but prohibit several types of heavy commercial and light industrial uses. The IDR zone encourages residential uses. Three different height districts are present in the IDM zone: a 75/85-foot district, a 100/120-foot district, and a 150-foot district. The 75/85-foot district is the most prevalent, covering the central area between the north side of S. Jackson Street to S. Dearborn Street, and from 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. east to I-5. The 100/120-foot district lies north of S. Jackson Street in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue vicinity, adjacent to the similar height Pioneer Square zone. In both the aforementioned zones, the maximum heights may be achieved in these areas if 50% of the floor area of a building is in residential use. The 150-foot district defines the Union Station office development vicinity between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenues S., between S. Jackson Street and Airport Way S. (see Figure 3-1).

### **Little Saigon**

This area east of I-5 includes two commercial zones and one industrial zone that are unusual in their application to areas within the Downtown Urban Center. The “General Commercial 1” (C1) zone is























