



TACOMA PUBLIC LIBRARY EASTSIDE & HILLTOP SITE FEASIBILITY STUDY

June 2023

Tacoma Public Library Eastside & Hilltop Site Feasibility Study was produced by SHKS Architects for Tacoma Public Library. It is intended to assist in site selection for the Eastside and Hilltop Library projects and to guide design/build teams during the design process.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2011, Tacoma Public Library's (TPL) Martin Luther King Jr. and Swan Creek libraries were closed due to budget cuts. TPL is intent on restoring library service to these communities, creating lasting social infrastructure, and strengthening the livability of Hilltop and Eastside. This study, based in part on the findings of the 2022 TPL Feasibility Study, investigates each neighborhood for new library locations using already gathered community input, urban design principles, and land acquisition and site requirements in tandem with the infrastructure, programming, and sustainability goals of 21st-century libraries.

EASTSIDE

Site A in Eastside is located at Portland Avenue Park, and is owned by Metro Parks Tacoma. This site offers an opportunity for TPL to co-locate with a valued public amenity. Site A was found optimal for a library in the Eastside neighborhood based on proximity to transit, adjacency to a well-used park, the potential of co-location with another organization, ease of access, and proximity to a wetland and First Creek. Further, a library at Portland Avenue Park has the potential to activate Portland Avenue and provide a resource for a diverse community that has expressed a desire for library services, meeting space, and the civic commitment a public institution represents.

Site B is located to the east of the Portland Avenue Reservoir. This site would require purchasing land from private owners, and would give TPL freedom in design and programming. However, it is not prominently located to support the Eastside community and is less feasible than Site A.

HILLTOP

In the Hilltop neighborhood, Site C is located at what is known as the former Rite Aid site at a central Hilltop intersection. A library at this location would bring services and a civic institution to this underserved and growing community. The current owner of the site, Forterra, has shown interest and support for co-locating a library with multi-family housing. The benefits of this arrangement are many. A ground floor location at this busy corridor would provide an unparalleled level of public, non-commercial activity; a public library in the center of the densifying Hilltop neighborhood would represent a firm civic commitment; the library would expand the amount of public space in Hilltop in a way that no other public or private institution could.

Site D is located at People's Center and, like Site C, offers the opportunity to locate a library near Hilltop's main commercial center. However, the presence of the existing community center and the adjacent church challenges the site's feasibility. Across MLK Jr. Way, the hospital parking garage adversely affects the pedestrian experience closing the block from the full benefit of a public library. While future Hilltop development is likely to concentrate along the light rail line on MLK Way, the existing small-scale residential fabric west of People's Center creates a less urban setting for a library to serve a vital, growing neighborhood.

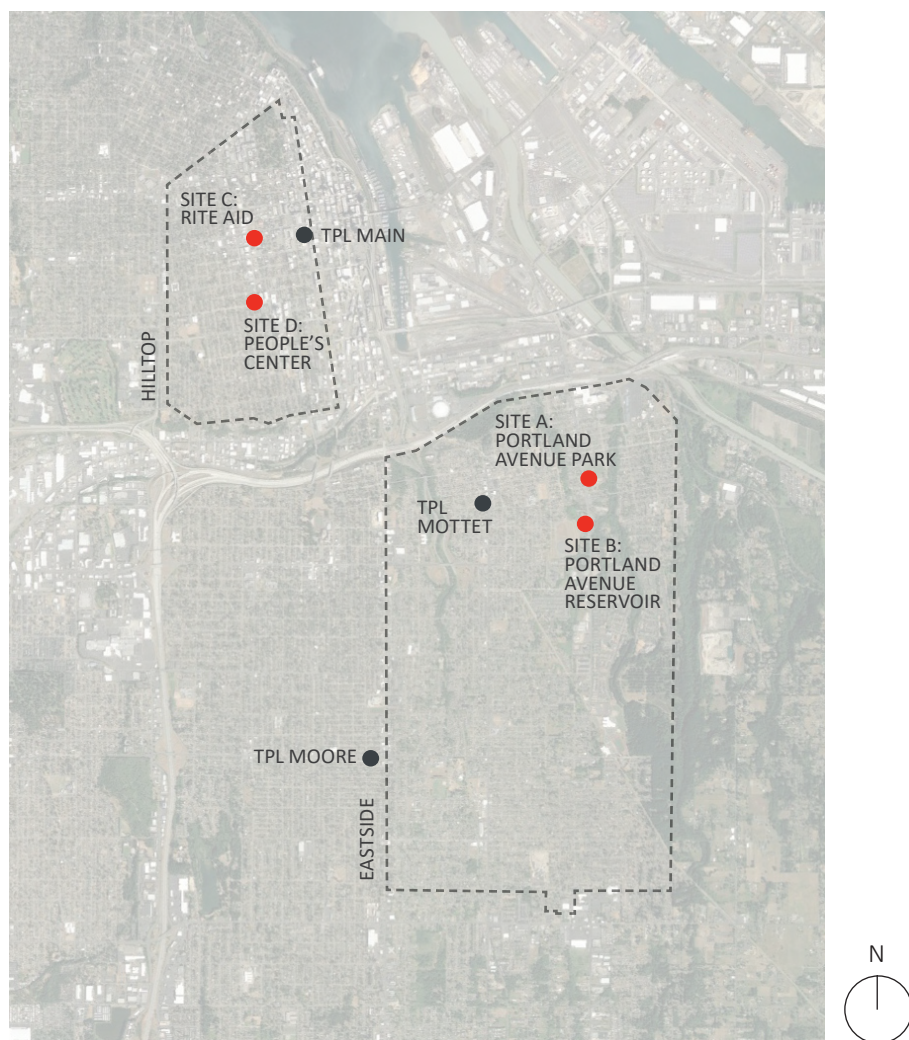


Figure 1. Site study locations and existing TPL branch libraries.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Library services in Tacoma’s Eastside and Hilltop neighborhoods are limited. Tacoma Public Library (TPL) previously operated full-service branches in both neighborhoods, but the facilities were closed in 2011 when the City of Tacoma faced financial challenges brought on by the Great Recession. The Eastside and Hilltop communities are historically underserved areas of Tacoma and the removal of these libraries signaled further civic disinvestment. Prior to closing, the libraries provided space for gathering and learning, and the loss of these resources was felt sharply by the residents. There is strong community support to bring the libraries back.

TPL is intent on restoring library service to Eastside and Hilltop. In 2021, a project was initiated to study the feasibility of restoring services in each neighborhood. The communities overwhelmingly expressed a desire for physical, “brick and mortar” libraries to be restored. The vision includes buildings that accommodate traditional learning resources as well as innovative programming such as makerspaces, teaching kitchens, and small-business centers. Local cultures would be celebrated, and attention focused on making each library open and welcoming to all.

As the first libraries built in Tacoma in more than 20 years, new branches in Eastside and Hilltop would be model facilities in the South Sound. Returning libraries to these neighborhoods would represent an important investment in each community as well as the City of Tacoma as a whole.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Eastside and Hilltop neighborhoods are located on the ancestral lands of the Puyallup and Nisqually Tribes. In 1854, white settlers took much of the land by forcing the tribe to sign the Medicine Creek Treaty. The treaty pushed the tribe onto a small reservation at the mouth of the Puyallup River. In 1887 much of the reservation was broken into allotments, again by white settlers, and procured by non-tribal entities.

The Puyallup and Nisqually people are still here today. They live, work, raise their children, take care of their community, practice their traditional ways – just as their ancestors did.

COMMUNITY INPUT

From 2021-2022, TPL worked with BERK Consulting, Fehr & Peers, SHKS Architects, and Susan Kent Consulting to determine the feasibility of restoring library services to the Eastside and Hilltop neighborhoods. The study focused on socio-cultural implications and included community surveys, workshops, listening sessions, and engagement of local partners. Additional considerations included transportation and access, partnerships, staffing, and financial feasibility.

The findings were published in the *Tacoma Public Library Eastside & Hilltop Feasibility Study: Final Report* (referenced here as the *TPL Feasibility Report*) in September of 2022 and detailed strong support for returning full-service libraries to Eastside and Hilltop. The report also included recommendations for potential locations, guiding values, and next steps.

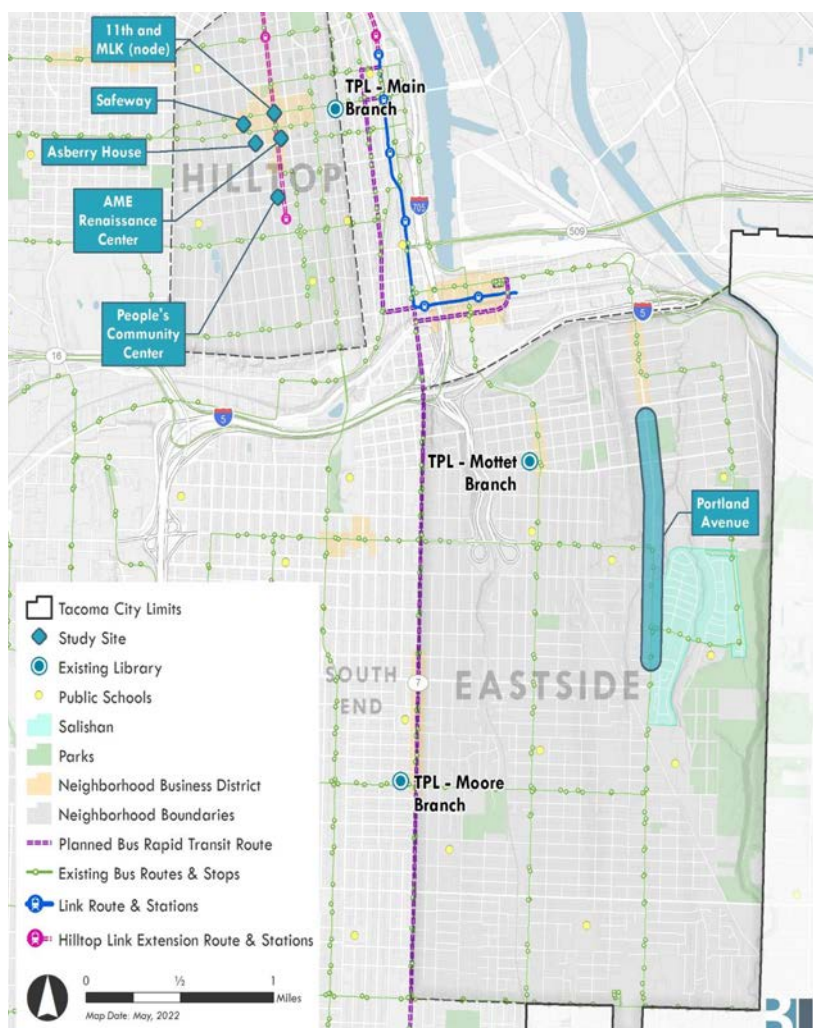


Figure 2. Potential library sites identified in the *TPL Feasibility Study*. Source: BERK, 2022.

IMPETUS FOR STUDY

Given the strong support demonstrated in the *TPL Feasibility Report*, the next step is to identify feasible sites. Due to escalating real estate values in Tacoma, the report recommends acquiring sites as a top priority. Once sites are procured, design teams can begin to work with TPL and the community on the design of each library.

This site study examines the most promising locations and provides a framework to determine the best site for each library. It remains grounded in the community-based findings of the *TPL Feasibility Report* while looking deeper into the benefits of specific locations.

PROGRAM

TPL plans to bring 21st-century programming and services to the Eastside and Hilltop neighborhoods. The *TPL Feasibility Report* explains:

Now more than ever, the public library is about inspiration and creativity, engagement and community involvement, digital inclusion (bridging digital divides in technology access, learning, and mastery), building partnerships, and formal and informal learning.

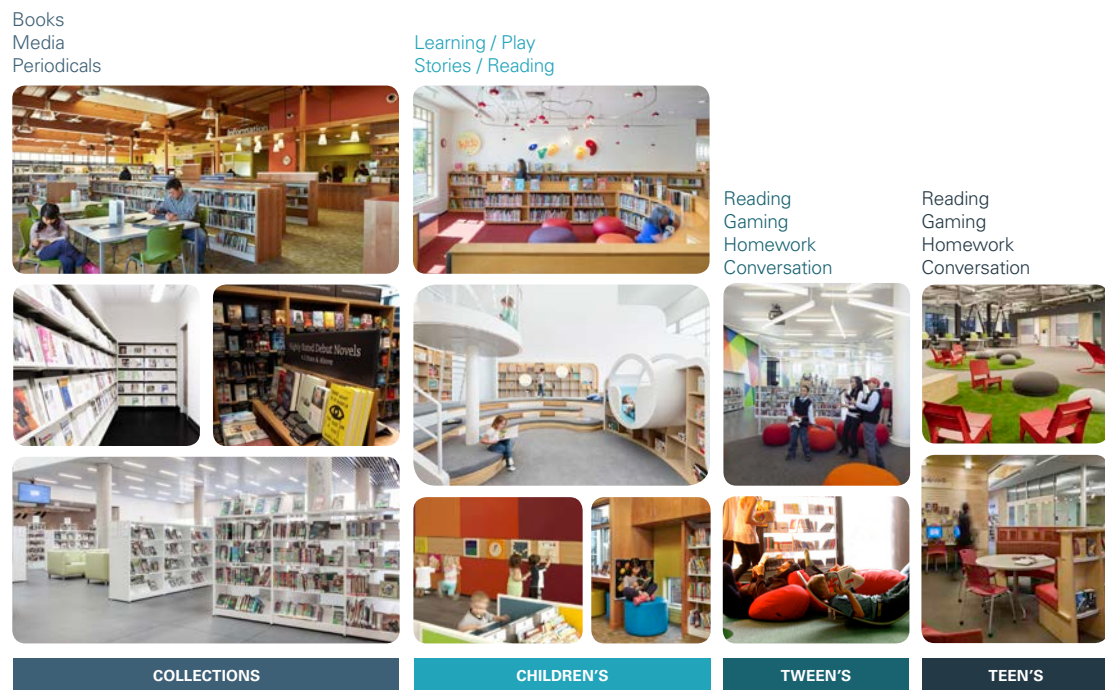
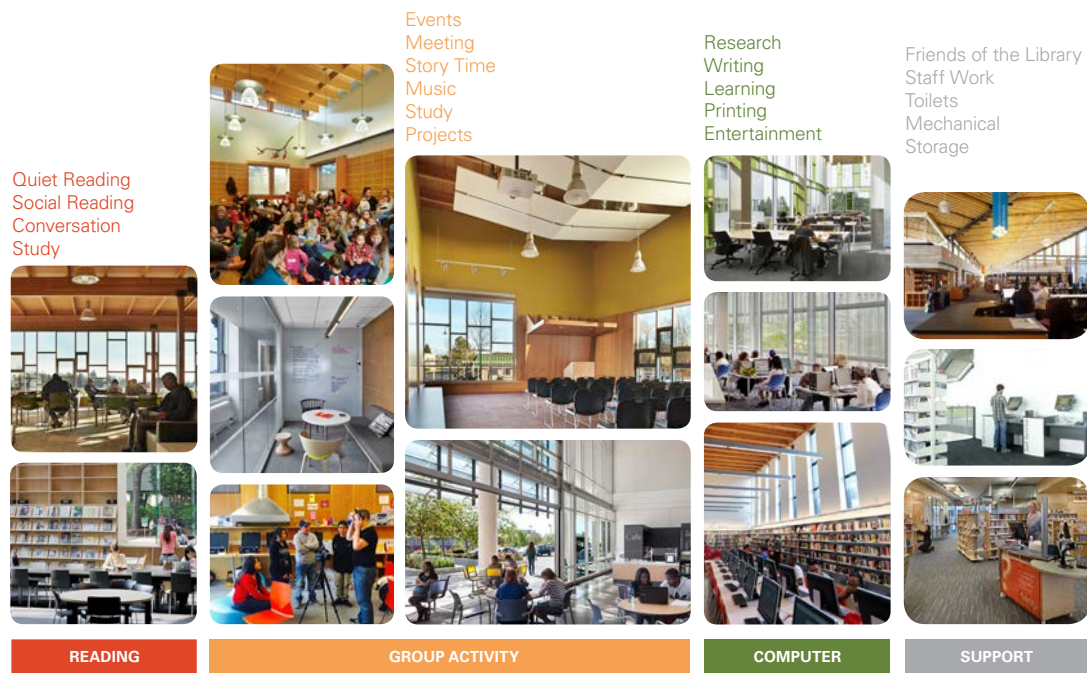


Figure 3. An example of programmatic spaces for a 21st century library. This diagram was developed for the Sedro-Woolley Library, and was used during the design process to determine the type and size of spaces to best serve the community.

As Tacoma looks to the future, it should provide library facilities that rise to the potential that contemporary, best-in-field libraries create for connecting people to resources and to other community members.

This site study uses a preliminary list of programmatic spaces to test each site's capacity. A general understanding of activities and their adjacencies helps to determine if a 21st-century library can be accommodated. General programming includes space for: innovative collection display, age-specific learning, gathering, and technical resources. The program will adapt and change during the design process to reflect each neighborhood's vision.



SITE CONSIDERATIONS

Each site in this study is evaluated through the following four lenses:

community vision, urban context, land acquisition, and site requirements.

These considerations can also be used as a framework to evaluate additional sites that may arise in the future.

COMMUNITY VISION

The *TPL Feasibility Report* identified several common values voiced during community engagement sessions: community investment, safe and supportive spaces, access to resources, and community connections. Libraries are public spaces, and site selection must promote the priorities of the community.

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

“A library is an important investment in social infrastructure that both symbolizes that the community is valued and promotes civic pride, public safety, and community prosperity and well-being.”

A public library represents a commitment to a place. It offers a resource and a refuge to its immediate surroundings, neighborhood, neighbors, and visitors. Site selection must promote these qualities as a priority.

SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SPACES

“A library should be a space where everyone is welcome, especially young people. It should be a place that is designed by and for the community served.”

The site should be located in a safe area. The location should have a variety of activities happening throughout the day and evening that provide communal safety and signal opportunity and access. It should be clearly public to welcome people of different backgrounds and ages.

ACCESS TO RESOURCES

“A library is a place to connect to other community resources and can provide tools to do so (e.g., computer labs, printing, and copying). Unlike other government offices and institutions, it is a judgment-free hub. It preserves culture and community history through collections and services that are delivered in languages that reflect the makeup of the community.”

To connect the community with library resources, the location must be accessible via multiple modes of transportation. The site should support movement for everyone within the building, parking, and exterior site.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

“The library is a ‘third place’ after home and work or school to meet friends or spend time with family, hold events, and otherwise bring people together. It is a multigenerational space with something for everyone, so that all ages can enjoy its benefits.”

The site should accommodate meeting rooms, event spaces, and informal gathering areas. It should provide space for people of all ages to spend time both inside and out. Ideally these communal spaces will be visible from the public sidewalk or roadway.

URBAN CONTEXT

Urban design principles are used to determine how the location of a library can support the neighborhood fabric. In addition, the City of Tacoma has created planning guides to assist with equitable project siting and development. These interweave strategies for environmental, social, and economic sustainability. Community concerns voiced in the *TPL Feasibility Report* about gentrification also help to steer siting decisions towards locations that support existing communities rather than displace them.

ONE TACOMA

One Tacoma is a comprehensive plan that guides development within the City of Tacoma. It includes guidance for urban form, design, housing, environmental standards, and other elements of urban growth. The plan provides an outline for future zoning, density, and neighborhood character. It is a tool that can help determine if a site can optimally serve the community at a given location and support a library into the future. *One Tacoma* also considers regional plans including Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies, and VISION 2040.

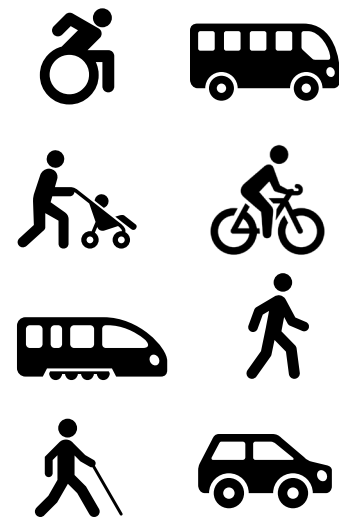


Figure 4. Accessibility factors into several site considerations; equitable access is an important value for community members and TPL.

SITE CONSIDERATIONS

HOME IN TACOMA

The *Home in Tacoma* project is part of Tacoma's Affordable Housing Action Strategy. Its purpose is to create more affordable housing throughout the city by implementing new zoning standards. Generally, the zoning allows for greater housing density and increases flexibility within residential zones to allow for a larger number of potential library sites.

HILLTOP SUBAREA PLAN

The *Hilltop Subarea Plan* addresses the development potential for the area along Martin Luther King Jr. Way (MLK Jr. Way). It was developed with input from the Hilltop community and adopted in 2013. It consists of goals and actions designed to support businesses, transportation, community health and well being, neighborhood history, and local art. These goals also help to determine where a library would have the greatest impact and how its design could help support Hilltop values.

CITY OF 2030 TACOMA CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

The *2030 Tacoma Climate Action Plan* was developed in response to the growing climate crisis and its heightened impact on underserved communities. Goals outlined in the plan aim to reduce greenhouse emissions while strengthening Tacoma's neighborhoods.

This study evaluates sites on their potential to help meet the *Climate Action Plan* standards and promote climate resilience. This includes characteristics such as access to daylight, transportation options, and walkability.



Figure 5. The *Home in Tacoma* plan aims to provide affordable options for “missing middle housing” through multiple housing types and sizes. It also increases the flexibility of use, making additional sites feasible for a library. Source: City of Tacoma, *Home in Tacoma*.

LAND ACQUISITION AND CO-LOCATION OPPORTUNITIES

In order to build new libraries, property must be acquired in the Eastside and Hilltop neighborhoods. Using data from this site study and the *TPL Feasibility Report*, TPL is considering a range of procurement options including traditional sales agreements, co-location, and partnership opportunities. These three methods of land acquisition are briefly explored in this study, all of which were initially suggested by community members in the *TPL Feasibility Report*. The Eastside and Hilltop branches may require different methods depending on the options available in each neighborhood.

TRADITIONAL SALES AGREEMENT

Directly purchasing land through a traditional sale agreement gives TPL latitude in the design and operation of a branch library. The land would also be an asset for TPL allowing for future growth or change. The main challenges of a conventional land purchase are costs and the availability of feasible sites.

CO-LOCATION WITH A PUBLIC OR NON-PROFIT ENTITY

There are numerous examples of libraries in the US that have co-located with other public organizations including schools, fire stations, municipal buildings, and parks. Co-location strategies can lower land acquisition costs, maximize use of publicly owned land, and maximize public programming. However, co-location may increase parking, site, and infrastructure needs.

PARTNERSHIP WITH A MIXED-USE DEVELOPER

Libraries can take advantage of space within mixed-use developments. While housing units are often located on higher levels, libraries benefit from the public connection at ground level. Several options for buying, leasing, or creating a condominium agreement exist. The co-location with other uses can increase parking, site, and infrastructure needs.

SITE REQUIREMENTS

Basic site requirements, such as zoning and size, help to narrow down potential library locations; each site must be able to accommodate the library building, parking, exterior programming, and associated infrastructure. Further considerations such as access, views, and user experience are important for understanding the site as a whole, and are discussed further within the individual site studies.

SITE CONSIDERATIONS

ZONING

Current zoning is determined by the Tacoma Municipal Code and is expected to change to reflect the *Home in Tacoma Project's* updated zones and definitions. This anticipated change in zoning will increase housing density in most neighborhoods and is likely to be adopted by 2025.

In this study, zoning requirements are considered for library uses as well as for potential partnership uses. The scale of surrounding zones is also studied to develop massing and siting opportunities for each site.

BUILDING SIZE

The *TPL Feasibility Report* outlines a size range for each library that will best serve the Eastside and Hilltop neighborhoods respectively. For the purposes of this study, the building is represented as a simple rectangle.

EASTSIDE

Area: 12,000 - 14,000 square feet

Levels: 1 level, possibility of 2nd level for co-located organizations

HILLTOP

Area: 20,000-30,000 square feet

Levels: 1-2 levels

PARKING

New building projects in the City of Tacoma must provide off-street parking. The quantity of parking spaces is based on the building's use and may be reduced in consultation with the City of Tacoma.

2.5 spaces per 1000 square feet (per TMC 13.06.090.C)

300 square feet* / parking space

EASTSIDE

Parking Spaces Required: 30-35 spaces

Parking Area: 9,000 – 10,500 square feet

HILLTOP

Parking Spaces Required: 50-75 spaces

Parking Area: 15,000-22,500 square feet

*300 square feet per parking space is a rule of thumb that includes drive aisles. Irregular shaped parking lots may require additional space.

ADDITIONAL SITE AREA

Each library requires space for site features including landscape, seating, bike parking, signage, and accessible walkways. Building systems such as water catchment, energy-capturing technology, garbage and recycling enclosures, and utility connections will also need space on the site. For this study, property setbacks are not included in the “additional site area,” and are considered individually for each site.

Additional site area is estimated at a minimum of 30% of the building square footage. Library programming may call for additional exterior space for teaching gardens, play structures, and public art.

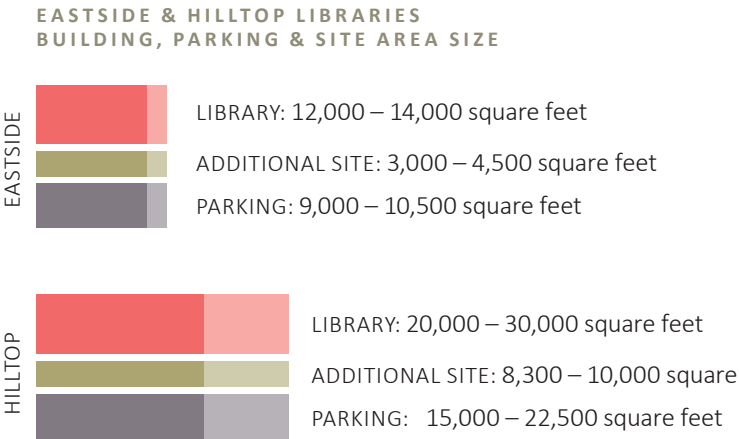


Figure 6. Size requirement composite diagram for the building, parking and site. The Eastside and Hilltop Libraries each have a range of building sizes suggested, which are represented here.

SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

Sustainability goals for the Eastside and Hilltop libraries should reflect the values of TPL and the community, funding source requirements, energy codes, and climate data for the City of Tacoma. The goals are set during the site selection process to ensure each location can take advantage of sustainable strategies. These strategies include daylighting, natural heating, cooling and ventilation, energy collection, walkability, and access to public transportation.

TARGET EUI

A building's energy usage is measured by EUI (Energy Use Intensity). It is the "miles per gallon" of the building industry, found by dividing the amount of energy consumed in one year in BTUs (British Thermal Units) by the building's area in square feet. In order to reduce energy consumption, a building's baseline EUI is determined and then a lower EUI is set as a target.

For the Eastside and Hilltop libraries, the EUI target is a 90% reduction from each building's baseline energy usage. This is based on the *AIA 2030 Challenge* reduction targets which call for new buildings to reduce energy consumption by 90% if constructed in 2025 (and by 100% in 2030). The *2030 Challenge* aligns with City of Tacoma's goals for climate action.

EASTSIDE & HILLTOP LIBRARIES BASELINE EUI & TARGET EUI

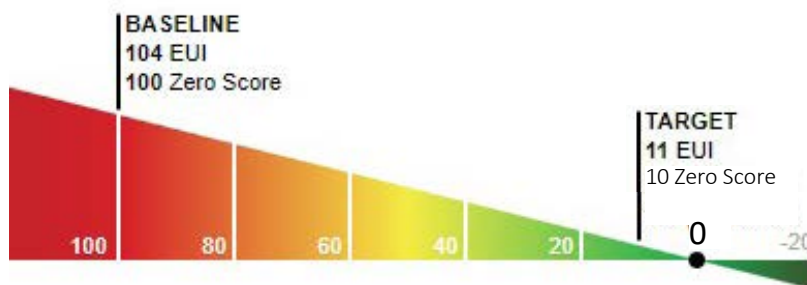


Figure 7. The target EUI for both the Eastside and Hilltop libraries is 11, a 90% reduction from the baseline EUI. Source: Zero Tool.

CLIMATE DATA

Special attention is paid to the local climate during site selection and building design in order to reach the target EUI. Tacoma is in a cool marine climate zone, characterized by cool temperatures, frequent cloud cover, and four moderate seasons. Climate data for Tacoma shows that heating should be prioritized for the majority of the year, and cooling is needed only in the summer months.

INCENTIVES

Local, state and federal incentives exist to help reduce the cost of sustainable technologies. Public organizations such as libraries are eligible for additional cost reductions and reimbursements. For example, through the recently passed Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), the Eastside and Hilltop libraries can receive a direct payment for up to 40% of the cost of installing efficient technologies.

Available incentives can be found at [**www.dsireusa.org**](http://www.dsireusa.org).

ASARCO SMELTER PLUME

For more than 100 years the Asarco Company copper smelter in Tacoma exhausted toxins that have polluted surrounding soils. Arsenic and lead were carried across the South Sound by the wind and are still present. Data shows that the level of contamination is low in both the Eastside and Hilltop neighborhoods at under 20 parts per million. Soil testing is not required, but can be done to determine if remediation and safety measures are needed on each site.

EASTSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

LOCATION

The Eastside Neighborhood is in the southeastern corner of Tacoma, bordered by the I-5 freeway to the north, Swan Creek Park to the east, Midland to the south, and Tacoma's South End Neighborhood to the west. It is primarily a residential area with single-family homes, small businesses, and green spaces formed by tributaries of the Puyallup River.

NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY

While the Eastside neighborhood's history is more complex than can be covered in this report, a brief historical overview is included here for context. TPL's Northwest Room can be contacted for additional resources and research.



Figure 8. Eastside neighborhood within the City of Tacoma.

PUYALLUP TRIBE

The Eastside Neighborhood is located in an area that was important for the Puyallup and Nisqually Tribes due to its connection with the Puyallup River. In 1854 white settlers took much of land by forcing the tribe to sign the Medicine Creek Treaty, which pushed the tribe onto a small reservation at the mouth of the Puyallup River. In 1887, much of the reservation was broken into allotments, again by white settlers, and sold to non-tribal entities. The Puyallup Tribe continues to live on and care for its traditional lands. Known for its activism, especially from the 1970s to today, the Tribe has advocated for tribal fishing rights, land claim settlements, environmental protections, and Lushootseed language revival.

INDUSTRY

In 1883, the first homes and businesses for white settlers were built in the Eastside area. The land was in close proximity to the industrial hub of the Port of Tacoma, and attracted employees from workyards across the Tideflats. A railroad line ran through the Eastside from the Tideflats south to the town of Bismark (now Hillsdale), which was the site of several lumber mills. With the industry boom of the 1910s and 1920s, the Eastside area grew as a neighborhood for the working class and immigrants.

SALISHAN

Salishan was constructed in the early 1940s with federal support to house World War II workers employed at nearby McChord Field, Fort Lewis, and the Commencement Bay shipyards. Because Salishan had been developed as a federal project, the government required that it either be sold to a private party or converted to low-income housing after the war. The Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) urged City Council to make homes in Salishan available to low-income families but was opposed by the Tacoma Real Estate Board and other groups who were concerned with surrounding property values and the lack of tax revenue that would be generated. In 1951, the City Council ordered that 900 Salishan homes be made available as low-income housing.

As one of the first intentionally integrated neighborhoods in Tacoma, diversity by race, language, ethnicity, national origin, and age quickly became—and has remained—a signature characteristic of Salishan. By 1955, one-third of residents were people of color.



Figure 9. Puyallup Tribe members, 1886. Source: Northwest Room at The Tacoma Public Library, C. E. and Hattie King Collection, King-015.



Figure 10. Railroad viaduct construction on Portland Avenue, 1937. Source: Northwest Room at The Tacoma Public Library, Richards Studio D843-2.



Figure 11. Salishan construction in progress, 1943. Source: Northwest Room at The Tacoma Public Library, Richards Studio D14053-2.

EASTSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER



Figure 12. The Puyallup Tribe's Emerald Queen Casino.



Figure 13. Typical Eastside residential street.



Figure 14. Tacoma Fire Station 11.



Figure 15. Typical Salishan homes.



Figure 16. Earthwise Architectural Salvage.



Figure 17. Eastside Community Center.

THA maintained the original Salishan buildings as affordable housing until 2001 when it began the process of removing the deteriorating structures and replacing them with new homes. This project was completed in 2011, and today Salishan is “a mixed-income, mixed-use neighborhood of affordable and market-rate rental units, single-family homes for sale, commercial buildings, and parks.”

EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

Today the Eastside neighborhood is known for its diverse community, proximity to Swan Creek, affordable homes, and continued connection with the Puyallup Tribe. Its main neighborhood nodes are McKinley, Upper Portland Avenue, and Lower Portland Avenue which is centered around the tribe's Emerald Queen Casino. The area is dominated by single family homes dating from the early 1900s, small businesses, and parks.

FUTURE CHARACTERISTICS

Future planning outlined in the *One Tacoma Plan* shows the majority of growth in the Eastside neighborhood occurring around its current nodes, as well as increased housing density along its major thoroughfares.

PORTLAND AVENUE

Portland Avenue is the Eastside's easternmost thoroughfare. It is an active roadway that currently prioritizes vehicle movement and is lacking in pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure. From north to south, Portland Avenue connects to the Tideflats, I-5, the Puyallup Tribe's Emerald Queen Casino, Lower Portland Avenue, Salishan, Upper Portland Avenue, and SR-512.

The *One Tacoma Plan* envisions Portland Avenue remaining as a major vehicle arterial. While this presents challenges for siting a library along the roadway, the plan also includes policies to improve safety, transit options, tree plantings, and pedestrian experience on avenues. For example, Policy UF-10.6 states, "Encourage public street and sidewalk improvements along

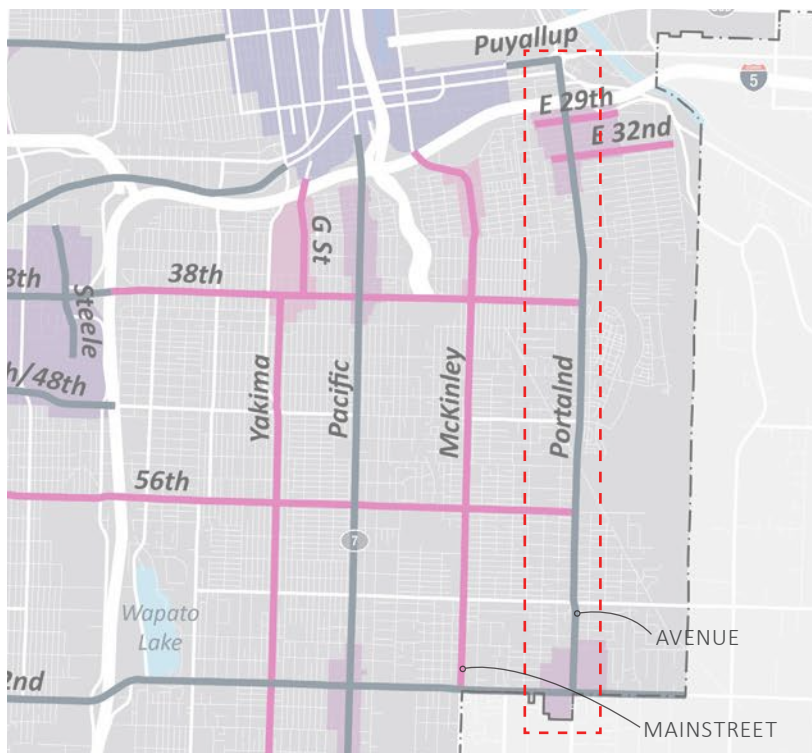


Figure 18. *One Tacoma Plan* Corridors. Portland Avenue is designated as an Avenue and prioritizes vehicle transit. In contrast, Mainstreets prioritize commercial and pedestrian experiences.

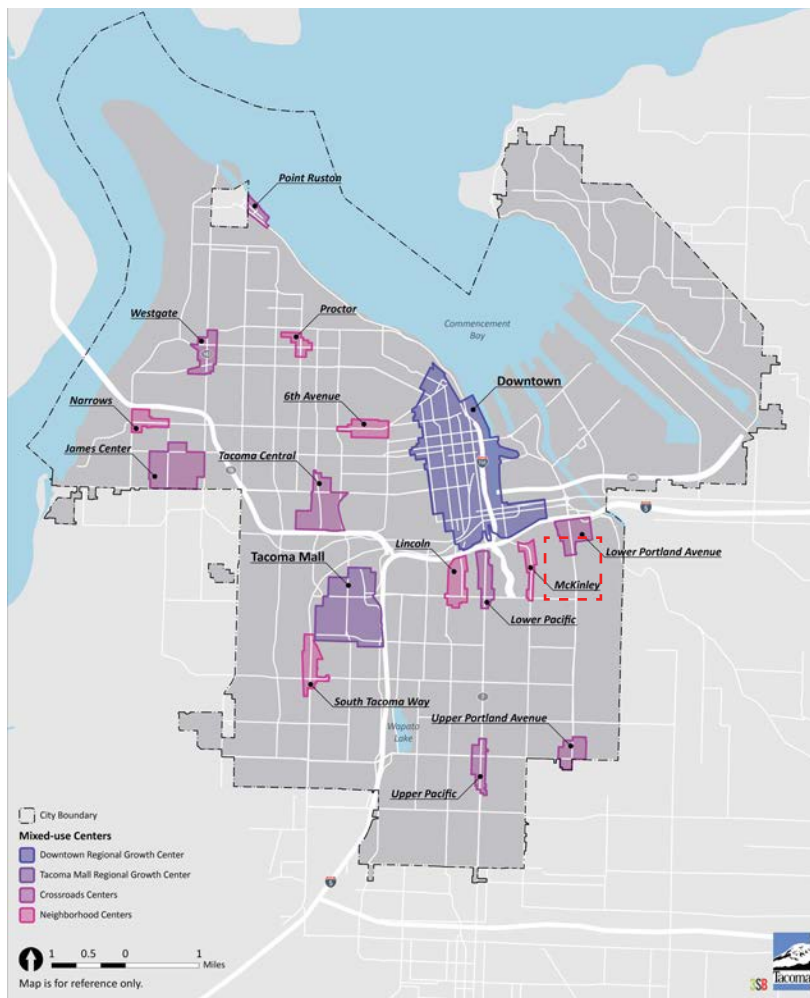


Figure 19. One Tacoma Plan Centers showing the location of the Lower Portland Avenue area within the larger context of the city. Source: City of Tacoma.

Avenues to support the vitality of business districts, create distinctive places, provide a safe and attractive pedestrian environment, and contribute to creating quality living environments for residents.”

LOWER PORTLAND AVENUE

The *One Tacoma* plan creates guidance for the Lower Portland Avenue Crossroads Center located at the Portland Avenue Interchange, south of I-5. Portland Avenue is a high-volume arterial with high visibility and access from I-5, and is currently an uninviting pedestrian space with large billboards and little vegetation. The Lower Portland Avenue Crossroads Center is next to the Puyallup Tribe’s Emerald Queen Casino and other tribal businesses, meaning much of the eastern portion is vacant, leaving room for more development by the Puyallup Tribe. The southern and western portions of Lower Portland

Avenue feature 120 mostly single-family homes. Future development of Lower Portland Avenue will be largely driven by the Puyallup Tribe and will likely take advantage of the site's freeway visibility.

VICINITY BUILDINGS

LIBRARIES

Vicinity libraries include TPL's Mottet and Moore branches. Mottet is located approximately one mile to the west of both sites. While the distance is relatively close, a steep hill along East Fairbanks St. makes for a formidable separation in between. The incline is challenging for walkers and cyclists, and there are no direct transit connections. Furthermore, the areas are characteristically distinct: Mottet is a historic building in a tranquil setting, while Portland Avenue Park is a hub of activity. The Moore Branch library is three miles to the southwest, and no direct transit lines exist between the sites and the Moore branch.



Figure 20. Map of the Eastside neighborhood and vicinity libraries.



Figure 21. TPL's Mottet Library. Source: TPL.



Figure 22. Roosevelt Elementary School.



Figure 23. Puyallup Tribe Elder Wellness.
Source: Puyallup Tribe.



Figure 24. Vicinity homes.



Figure 25. P&J Deli mart at Portland Avenue and East Fairbanks Street.

SCHOOLS

Vicinity schools include four public elementary schools within one mile. The Safe Routes Partnership suggests that kindergarteners can walk a half mile and older elementary students can walk up to one mile.

PUBLIC SERVICES

Limited public services exist in the immediate vicinity of Site A and Site B. The Swan Creek Library was previously within walking distance until it closed in 2011, and services provided by the Portland Avenue Community Center were transferred to the Eastside Community Center in 2018. The community center is now located two miles south of the park near Salishan, and is difficult to access from Lower Portland Avenue due to the lack of transit.

The closest services to the park are concentrated in the Lower Portland Avenue core, 0.5 miles to the north of the park. The area is a hub for the Puyallup Tribe's tribal services as well as the home of the tribe's Emerald Queen Casino.

Because access to services is limited, the area would benefit from extending the string of services farther south along Portland Avenue.

HOMES

The majority of buildings surrounding the sites are single-family homes built between 1900-1940. The houses are generally less than 1,000 square feet and are arranged on narrow lots. Homes have front and back yards, trees, and gardens. Future zoning per the Home in Tacoma Project will allow for higher density housing in the area. Homes will include duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, and multifamily housing.

BUSINESSES

Surrounding businesses are concentrated near the Emerald Queen Casino and Salishan. The few businesses within a five minute walk of both sites include an auto service center and a gas station with an attached convenience mart. Several churches with large parking lots are located along Portland Avenue, the closest being St. Peter & Paul Parish and Eastside Baptist Church.

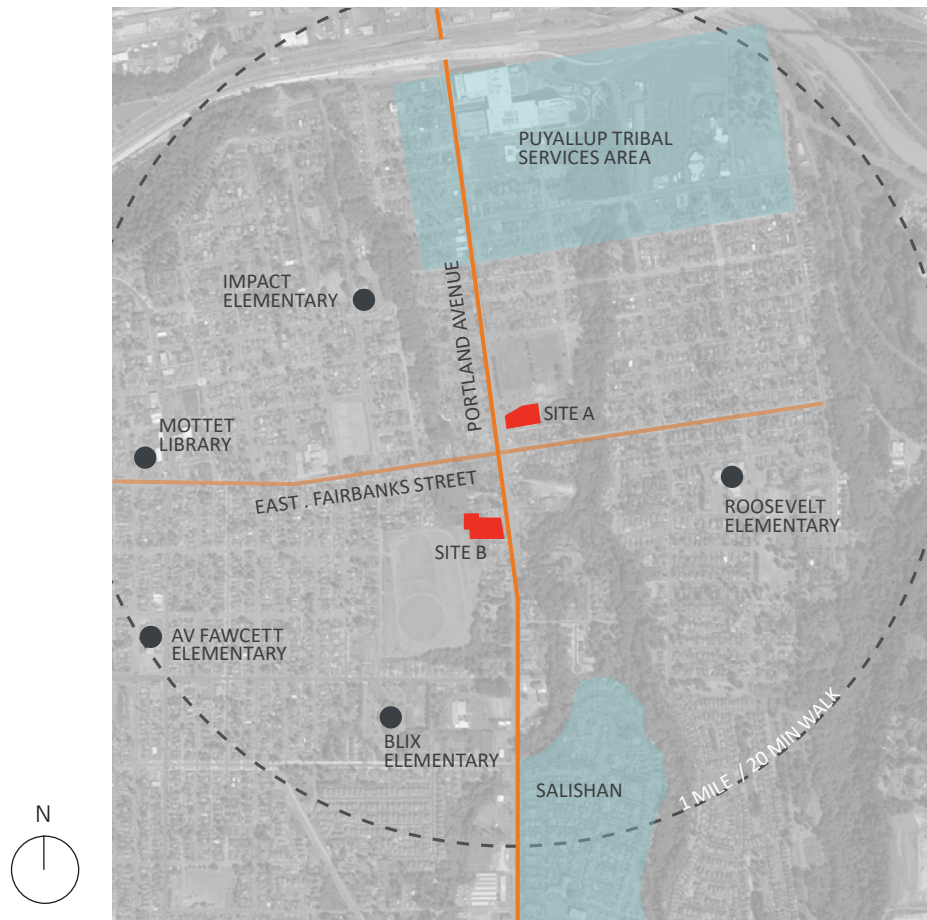


Figure 26. Vicinity schools and neighborhood centers.

The area has a severe lack of grocery and food stores. Future zoning per the *One Tacoma Plan* will allow for additional commercial spaces and types in the zones around Portland Avenue Park.

VICINITY GREEN SPACE

The area contains several types of green spaces. The Portland Avenue Park is an open green space that invites gathering and recreation. Just north of the park is a community garden. The First Creek wetlands and associated watersheds create dense green belts on either side of the park. These provide a connection to nature year-round, and have small trails running along the creek. An action plan for protecting First Creek was developed in 2013 and includes educational nodes, one of which extends from Portland Avenue park.

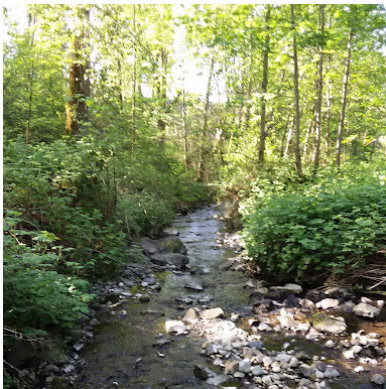


Figure 27. First Creek.



Figure 29. Vicinity green spaces.

VICINITY ARTS AND CULTURE

The majority of public artworks in the vicinity are large murals painted on buildings and fences. The murals are bright and represent the community and local artists. Music, comedy and sporting events take place at the Emerald Queen Casino. The Asia Pacific Cultural Center is temporarily operating out of Portland Avenue Park's community center building. This organization hosts cultural events, workshops, and food experiences. The park grounds can also be used for gatherings and festivals put on by the community. Long-time Eastside residents report that the park has always been a popular spot for youth and adults to come together and be active. The rugby community especially has found a supportive space at Portland Avenue Park and uses it as their home field.



Figure 30. Asia Pacific Cultural Center performance. Source: APCC.

EASTSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD

SITE STUDIES

Two sites were identified in the Eastside Neighborhood as potential library sites. Both are located along Portland Avenue in the area identified by the *TPL Feasibility Study*. Site A is located in the southwest corner of Portland Avenue Park and Site B is located on the west side of Portland Avenue between East Fairbanks Street and 38th Street, east of the Portland Avenue Reservoir.



Figure 31. Site study locations and existing TPL branch libraries.



Figure 32. View of Site A from the southwest corner of Portland Avenue Park.

EASTSIDE SITE A: PORTLAND AVE PARK

SITE CONTEXT

LOCATION

Portland Avenue Park is located in the northeast corner of the Eastside neighborhood in what is known as Lower Portland Avenue. It is bounded by 35th Street to the north, First Creek to the east, E Morton Street to the south, and Portland Avenue to the west. The former Portland Avenue Community Center building is situated in the southwest corner of the park and is accessed from Portland Ave. The park is owned and managed by Metro Parks Tacoma.

SITE CHARACTERISTICS

SITE HISTORY

Portland Avenue Park sits in an area that was an important resource for Puyallup and Nisqually Tribe members due to its connection with the Puyallup River waterways. In the 1930s the land was purchased by Pierce County which then passed it to Tacoma's parks district and it became Portland Avenue Park. Improvements were led by neighborhood organizations including the Portland Avenue Improvement Club and the Kiwanis Club.

In recent history, Portland Avenue Park is a popular place for recreation. Its athletic fields and playground serve people of all ages from the community.

EXISTING SITE AMENITIES

Portland Avenue Park is 13.55 acres of public land operated and maintained by Metro Parks Tacoma (MPT). Its amenities include sports fields, a playground, a picnic shelter, restroom facilities, and a parking lot with 67 spaces. Large trees provide shade at the perimeter, and the SE corner contains wetlands stemming from First Creek. The park is currently open from ½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset.

The Portland Avenue Community Center building lies in the southwest corner of the park adjacent to the main entrance. It was built in 1988 and is 9,300 square feet. The building was closed in 2021 after it was damaged by vandalism and arson.

FUTURE PLANNING

In April 2023 MPT released a master plan for future improvements to Portland Avenue Park. The plan includes renovations and the addition of several activity areas. Parking is expanded to include 103 spaces. The master plan did not consider the community center building. MPT will make minor fixes to the building, and it will remain temporarily occupied by a non-profit organization.

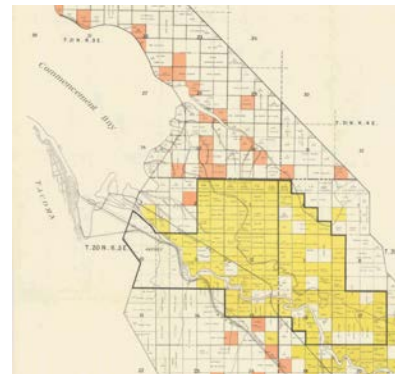


Figure 33. 1892 Puyallup Reservation boundary. Source: WSU Libraries.



Figure 34. Existing community center building at Portland Avenue Park.



Figure 35. Portland Avenue Park master plan. Source: MPT, 2023.

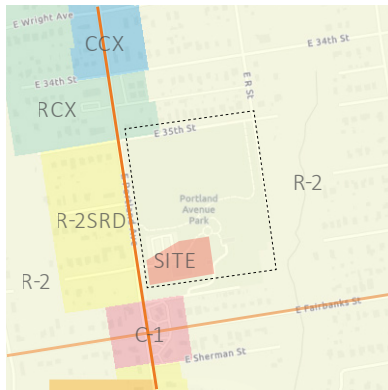


Figure 37. Current City of Tacoma zoning.

EXISTING ZONING

The park is located in a One Family Dwelling (R-2) zone. The adjacent parcels are also zoned primarily for residential use, and allow for additional types of low density housing with limited commercial use. The majority of buildings are limited to a height of 35 ft. However, the Residential Commercial Mixed-Use (RCX) district allows for structures up to 60 ft. Residential zones have a 20-foot front yard set-back, while commercial zones have a smaller setback and can interact with pedestrian walkways more directly. Libraries and community facilities are considered “conditional uses” by the current Tacoma zoning code, but are permitted outright in upcoming zoning changes through *Home in Tacoma*.

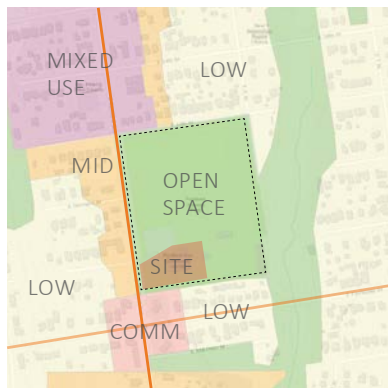
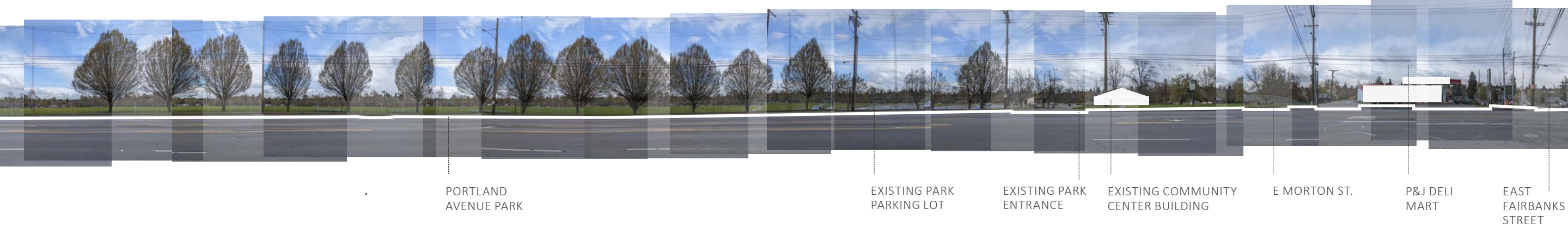


Figure 36. Planned City of Tacoma zoning.

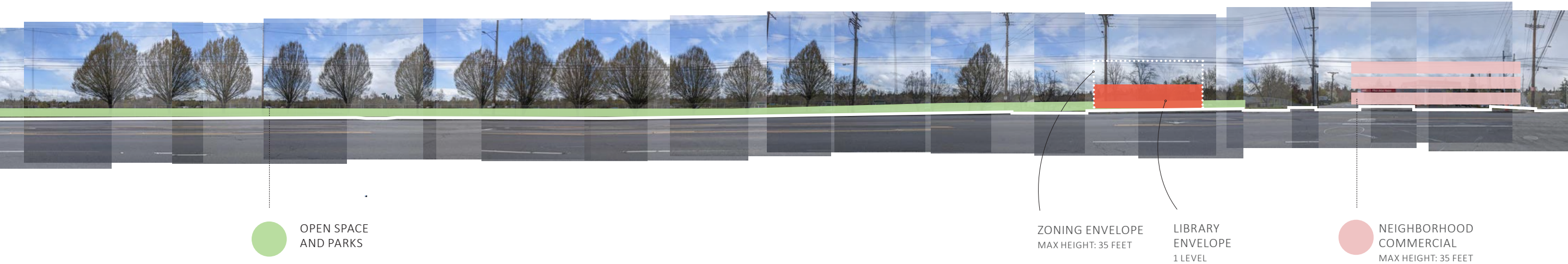
PLANNED ZONING

Under the *Home in Tacoma* project, the area around Portland Avenue Park will be zoned to include duplexes, townhomes, and small multi-family homes. Additional uses such as retail, food, and cultural spaces will have more flexibility in where they are allowed. This offers the potential for bringing resources closer to homes. The park itself will be maintained as open green space.

EXISTING CONDITIONS



PLANNED CONDITIONS



ZONING SCALE

PORTLAND AVENUE: LOOKING EAST

Future zoning maintains the park as a green space. Higher density areas exist to the north and south. The site is located at the south edge of the park that abuts a future Neighborhood Commercial zone. A library building between 20-35 feet tall fits into the scale of the surrounding structures.

Figure 38. Street elevation of Portland Avenue looking east. Existing conditions are detailed above. Planned conditions are detailed below and envision the future building density and height.

EXISTING CONDITIONS



PLANNED CONDITIONS



ZONING SCALE

PORTLAND AVENUE: LOOKING WEST

Single family homes currently line the west side of Portland Avenue. Higher density areas exist where Portland Avenue meets East Fairbanks Street and 35th Street.

Figure 39. Street elevation of Portland Avenue looking west. Existing conditions are detailed above. Planned conditions are detailed below and envision the future building density and height.

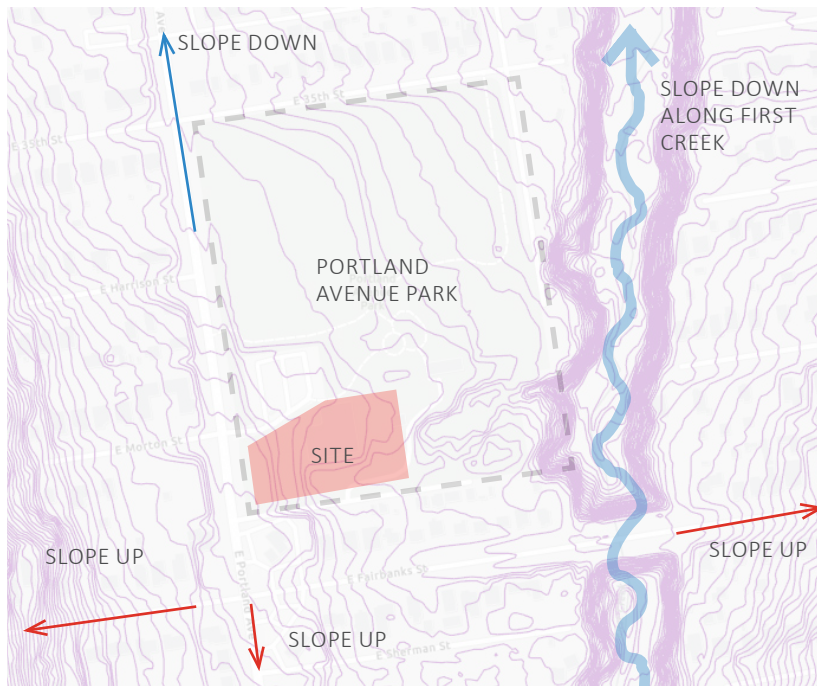


Figure 40. Site topography at 2' intervals. Source: City of Tacoma.

TOPOGRAPHY & CRITICAL AREAS

The site is located in a small valley. Slopes rise to the east, south, and west. The topography drops to the north to meet the Puyallup River and Commencement Bay beyond. Within the park, the grade slopes from Portland Avenue down to the bed of First Creek. The grade drops approximately 10 feet from Portland Avenue moving east across the site.

The First Creek watershed runs along the east edge of Portland Avenue Park. A portion of wetlands covers the southeast corner of the park. The area is listed as wetlands by the City of Tacoma. Structures cannot be built within a wetland buffer zone, the area of which will need to be confirmed with the city. Construction will need to protect the critical area.

EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

Existing utilities adjacent to the site include sewer and stormwater lines. The sewer lines run east to west along East Morton Street and just north of the park's parking lot. The nearest stormwater line runs north/south along Portland Avenue. Directly across Portland Avenue to the west of the site is a substation for Tacoma Power.



Figure 41. Surrounding wetlands. Source: City of Tacoma.



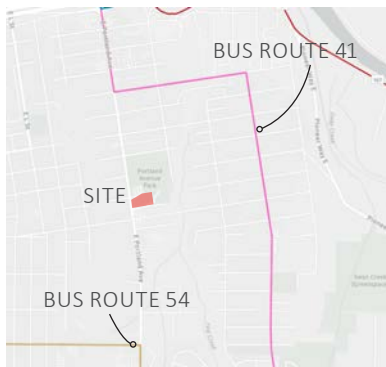
Figure 42. Tacoma utility networks. Source: City of Tacoma.

ACCESS

Transportation options are limited in the Eastside neighborhood, and especially so in the area surrounding Portland Avenue Park. Concerns about getting to and from a library were voiced often in the community surveys performed for the *TPL Feasibility Report*. Additional effort will be needed to improve transit, pedestrian, and cycling routes in the park's vicinity.



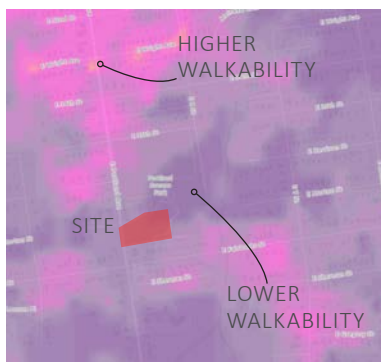
Figure 43. Composite access diagram.



PUBLIC TRANSIT

Public transit is limited in the area surrounding Portland Avenue Park. No bus stops are currently within a 5-minute walk. The closest routes are the 41 and 54, both of which stop approximately 0.5 miles or a 10-minute walk away.

Public transportation provides essential equitable access to a library, and is a high priority for Eastside residents. Combining park and library facilities may draw more transit options to the area.



PEDESTRIAN ACCESS

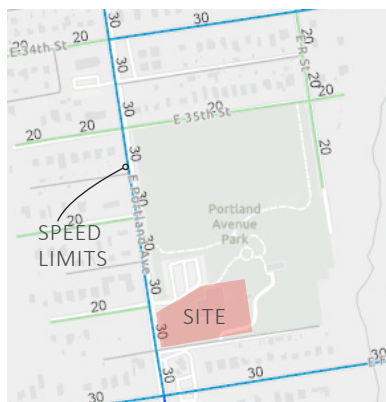
Portland Avenue is lined with sidewalks on both sides. They are in good condition, but have no buffer from the roadway. The speed limit is 30 mph along the park and walking can feel unsafe. The only designated crosswalk in the area is at the intersection of Portland Avenue and East Fairbanks Street.

Curb cuts for mobility are also limited, and the steep terrain makes the surrounding cross streets difficult for people with wheelchairs or mobility challenges. Accessible walking paths within the park are limited to the playground and picnic shelter area. The park's master plan shows expanded walking path options.



BICYCLE ACCESS

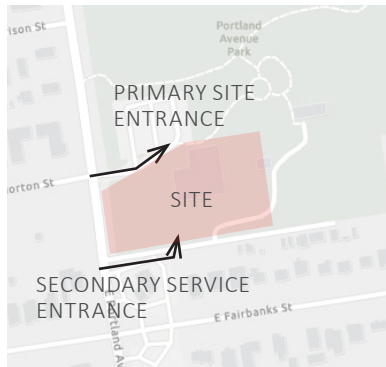
No dedicated bike lanes exist along Portland Avenue or in the vicinity. The city has a planned bike path on Portland Avenue but the timing of construction is unknown.



VEHICLE ACCESS

Portland Avenue is a major north-south arterial and connects to I-5 near the Emerald Queen Casino. Access to Lower Portland Avenue is somewhat limited due to the green belts to the east and west. The watersheds interrupt most cross streets that would connect to Portland Avenue otherwise. East Fairbanks Street, to the south, is the closest major east-west cross street.

EASTSIDE SITE A: PORTLAND AVE PARK



SERVICE ACCESS

The site's main access point for vehicles is through the park's main entrance and along the site's north edge. Since this is a high activity area, it may not be an ideal location for service vehicles and trash enclosures. An alternative option is to upgrade the service entrance from East Morton Street to provide a separate service access point.



PARKING

The surrounding area has little on-street parking. Portland Avenue has no parking along it. The small neighborhood cross streets have some street parking primarily used by residents. The park has a dedicated parking lot with 67 spaces. The master plan shows this being expanded to 103 spaces, with a potential area for a smaller additional lot in the northeast corner of the park. The parking shown in MPT's Portland Avenue Park Master Plan is expected to be sufficient for the combined uses of the park, library, and cultural center, although confirmation with the city's transportation department is needed.

Figure 44. Individual access diagrams for public transit, pedestrian access, bicycle access, service access, and parking. Base map source: City of Tacoma.

SITE EXPERIENCE

SENSORY EXPERIENCE

While site descriptions often focus on visual elements, a person's full experience includes all the senses; memory is strongest through smell, and wayfinding is enhanced through textural changes. A layered examination of sensory elements offers a richer understanding of the site.

SOUND

Portland Avenue is an arterial route with constant road noise. It has four lanes of moving traffic, and no significant sound barriers between the street and the park. The road produces 65 decibels, which is similar in volume to a vacuum cleaner. The east side of the site is significantly quieter at 35 decibels because it is blocked from the street by the existing community center building. Towards the wetlands the sounds of birds, trees, and wind can be heard. Chatter, cheering, and sounds of play can be heard across the park.



SMELL

Grass is the dominant smell at Portland Avenue Park, especially after mowing. To the west, scents of asphalt and car exhaust creep in. To the east, the wetlands smell of growth, moss and bog. When it rains, the site smells of wet soil and rain on pavement.



TOUCH & TEXTURE

Textures include leaves, grass (spikey and soft), sun, wind, tree bark, wet, cold, plastic slides, metal chains of the swings, mud, asphalt, concrete underfoot, and shade.



STREESCAPE

The experience along Portland Avenue changes gradually from the north of the park to the south. The roadway remains a consistent width with four moving lanes of traffic and one central turn lane. Sidewalks on either side comfortably fit two people walking side by side. To the north, the street is lined with deciduous trees and homes are sited closer to the sidewalk. Moving south, both the buildings and trees are farther away from the road.

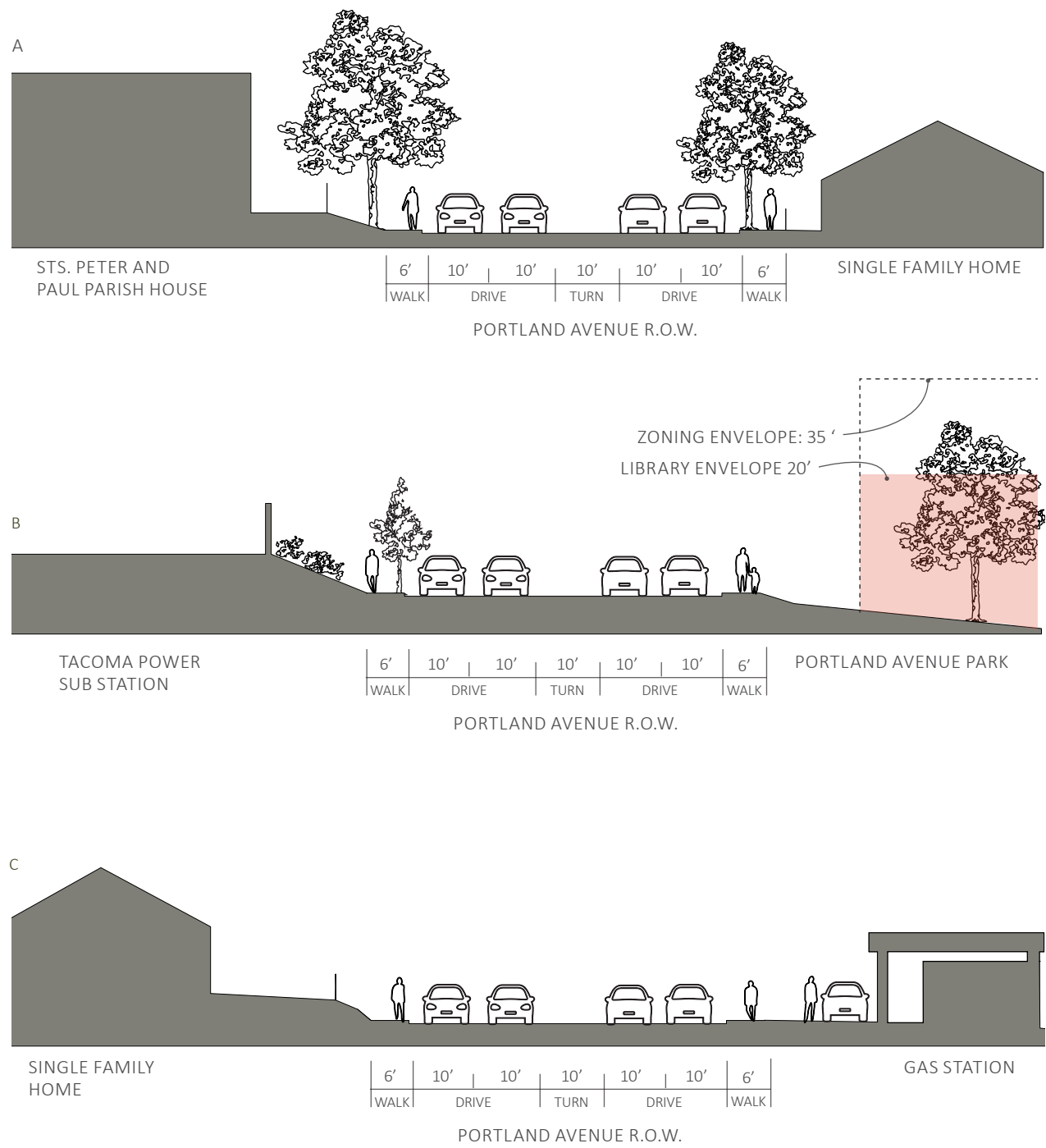


Figure 45. Street sections along Portland Avenue looking north. Distances are approximate.



Figure 46. Street section locations.

APPROACH AND VIEWS

The site is primarily approached from the north or south along Portland Avenue. The site is also visible from within the park. The north edge of the site will be important for welcoming visitors as it is adjacent to the main entrance, parking lot, and park facilities. The west edge along Portland Avenue will orient drivers and visitors arriving by bus and bike.

From within the site, views to the north and east provide glimpses of park activities and the First Creek wetlands. The existing parking lot is directly to the north, and the park's master plan includes planting additional trees throughout. This offers staff clear sightlines to the parking lot while also providing foliage for shade and greenery. The wetlands to the east are a unique and quiet area of the park. They offer a change of scenery from the orderly sports fields of the park.

The south and west edges can emphasize daylighting and screening. Single family homes to the north will benefit from screening and privacy. Portland Avenue to the west is loud and sound mitigation should be prioritized here.

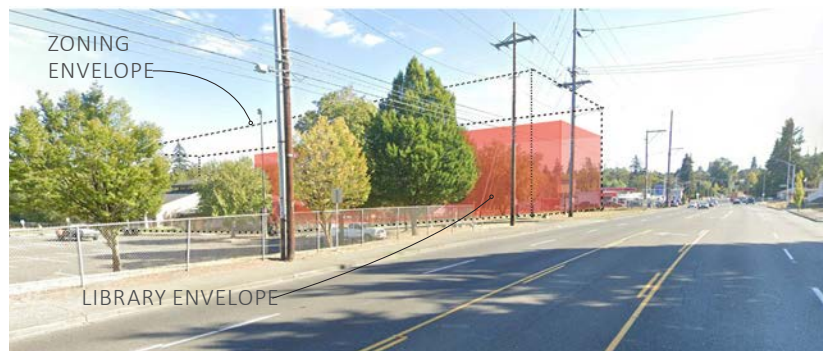


Figure 47. Approach on Portland Avenue from the north.

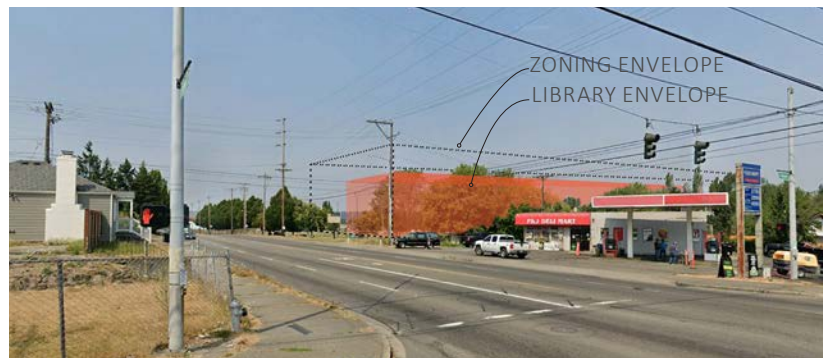


Figure 48. Approach from intersection of East Fairbanks Street and Portland Avenue from the south.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND ELEMENTS

Portland Avenue Park is planted with grass which is consistently mowed. The athletic fields are close-cropped and flat, while the rest of the landscape falls downhill towards First Creek. Poor drainage in the sports fields has been reported by visitors.

The entrance walkway of the community center building includes native plantings adapted to northwest conditions. Educational signage describes the benefits of including native plants in the landscape.

The park contains primarily mature, healthy, deciduous trees. The heights range from 20-40 feet. Where the park meets the First Creek wetlands, the trees are smaller and more dense. Shrubs create a thick barrier, and the landscape is unmaintained except for a small trail that leads to the creek.

MPT's master plan for future park improvements maintains existing trees, and shows more being planted throughout. Additional landscape features include native revegetation areas, a rain garden, and a terraced gathering lawn.



Figure 49. Native plantings and educational signage.



Figure 50. Maintained grass of Portland Avenue park with the First Creek wetlands



Figure 51. Landscape character along Portland Avenue with the sports fields in the background.

LIGHTING & SECURITY

The site is bordered with existing street lighting on both Portland Avenue and E Morton St. Within the park itself, lighting is provided in the parking lot only. The park has a gate at the front vehicle entrance.

Neighborhood safety is enhanced when the presence of community members can be felt throughout the day. This can be achieved through the use of pedestrian walkways, gathering at outdoor seating, etc. Since Portland Avenue is intensely vehicular, common pedestrian street supported by commercial activity is unlikely in the near-term. Cars use Portland Avenue throughout the night, but do not have the same observational benefits as people walking, sitting and gathering.

DAYLIGHT ACCESS

The site has direct access to daylight year-round due to the open space in the park, low buildings in the area, and limited presence of trees. Even as zoning density increases, new 35-foot tall buildings will not block daylight to the south due to the Morton Street R.O.W. The existing deciduous trees provide shade in the summer months, and full sun in the winter. However, additional shading will be needed to control heat gain in the warmer months and reduce heat island effects.

ANALYSIS

SITE SYNOPSIS

The site is strongly connected to park activities at its north edge. The main entrance to the park, the parking lot, and the playground are all located directly to the north, and the playfields extend beyond. Park users will have direct sightlines to the library and vice versa. This edge can enhance the connection between the two and soften the boundary between park and library.

To the east is the quietest area of Portland Avenue Park. The wetlands are dense with vegetation and allow park users a direct connection to a “natural” setting. The adjacency to the wetlands is an opportunity for views, indoor-outdoor connections, tranquility, and innovative programming. Building on the site will require protecting sensitive environmental areas.



Figure 52. Light fixture locations. Source: City of Tacoma.



Figure 53. Site shading on the winter solstice at 3:00 p.m. Source: ShadeMap.

EASTSIDE SITE A: PORTLAND AVE PARK

The south edge of the site runs parallel to several single-family homes. Between the site and the homes is East Morton Street, which is only used by residents as alley access and is a dead end street. The park connects directly to East Morton Street via a small access road on its south edge. This is a possible service entrance for the site, which would remove service activities from the public parking lot. This side of the site can allow privacy for the adjacent homes while taking advantage of the southern exposure. Screening techniques can be combined with energy production and daylighting to maximize the use of the southern edge.

The west side of the site is dominated by Portland Avenue. While the traffic noise is not beneficial for a library, this edge is important to signal the presence of a public resource to passersby. It is the most public facing side and can guide visitors in. The west face can be used as both a sound barrier and welcoming device; the facade can be expressive while providing protection to library users.

MASSING

The site's available building area encompasses the existing community center building and the surrounding open space. Building is required to be set back

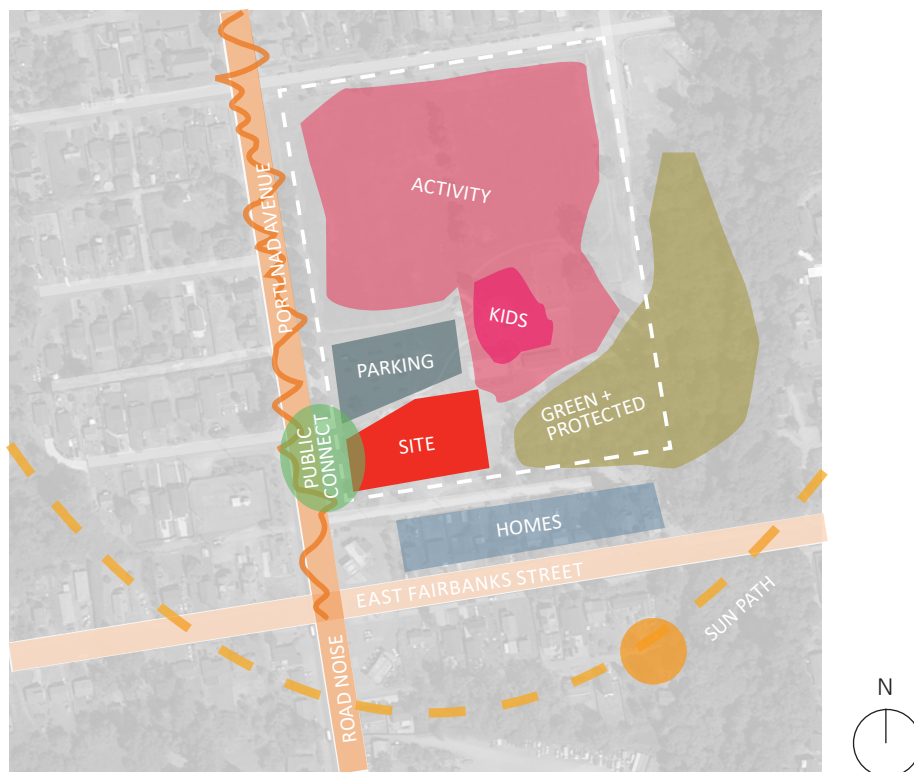


Figure 54. Site synopsis diagram.

from the property line by 20 feet on each side. A 12,000-14,000 square foot library fits into the area with enough room to fit an additional building. For this study the library is shown as a simple rectangular volume. The volume is 70 feet wide from north to south which allows daylight to reach the majority of the floor. Both the library and the additional building are shown having direct relationships to the parking lot, park, and wetlands.

PROGRAMMATIC OPPORTUNITIES

Program opportunities for Portland Avenue Park include:

- Additional building on the site for partner use
- New node in supportive fabric of the Eastside neighborhood
- Connection to physical activities in the park
- Dance and performance
- Food programming including: teaching garden and/or kitchen, seed library
- First Creek research, habitat, and environmental studies
- Non-profit connections: Topography can support space for another organization either partially below grade, or above on a second level
- Art: Makerspace, murals, etc.

FEASIBILITY CONSLUSIONS

The site at Portland Avenue Park is highly feasible for a library in the Eastside neighborhood. Initial talks with MPT began in early 2022, and both parties have expressed interest in collaborating to bring a library to the park. MPT is intent on inviting the Puyallup Tribe into the process. The tribe has, in the distant past, expressed interest in building a cultural center on the same site. The site could accommodate both projects and would form a new cultural hub for the community.

The benefits already provided by Portland Avenue Park are catalyzed by placing a library within it. Linking library resources with park facilities allows for concentrated services and innovative programming. The value extends beyond the site's boundaries as well. With more visitors drawn to Lower Portland Avenue, safety increases and local businesses enjoy new customers. A main challenge of the site is the lack of transit in the area, and combining uses at the location might encourage transit to expand access. Partnerships between the park, library, and cultural center can create a new social hub for the Eastside community.

EASTSIDE SITE A: PORTLAND AVE PARK



Figure 55. Massing site plan.



Figure 56. Massing diagram.

The following points contribute to the feasibility of the site:

- Community support: Eastside residents suggested the site in the TPL Feasibility Report
- Serves an area that cannot easily access other TPL branches
- Location within an existing public space reduces the costs of land acquisition
- Co-location with another public entity maximizes impact of services; MPT is interested in the collaboration, and the 2022 Portland Avenue Park Master Plan would accommodate a library on the site
- The size of the site can accommodate both a library and space for another organization
- Close proximity to the Puyallup Tribe’s services and amenities
- Zoning considers a library as a “conditional use”, and more flexibility is allowed through zoning updates in the near future
- A library of 1-2 levels fits into the surrounding neighborhood scale
- Existing amenities in the park can be enjoyed by library patrons
- Opportunities for innovative programming related to recreation, First Creek, community gardens, etc.
- Topography allows for additional program area beneath the library
- Approach is visible from the north and south along Portland Avenue
- Existing parking lot can support library and park uses
- Additional access point on East Morton Street can be used for service vehicles
- Proximity to the First Creek wetlands provides views and direct connections to nature
- Existing landscape is mature and healthy
- Access to daylight year round

Challenges include:

- Transit options are limited
- Portland Avenue produces constant traffic noise
- Limited buffers exist along Portland Avenue to protect pedestrians from traffic
- Few dedicated crosswalks exist in the area
- The First Creek wetland buffer needs to be determined to ensure the critical area is protected
- Safety decreases in the evening because most public activity is concentrated in daylight hours



Figure 57. View of Site B from the south.

EASTSIDE SITE B: PORTLAND AVENUE RESERVOIR

SITE CONTEXT

LOCATION

The site is situated in the northeast corner of the Eastside neighborhood between Lower Portland Avenue and Salishan. It is bounded by private parcels to the north and south, Portland Avenue to the east, and the Portland Avenue Reservoir to the west. The site consists of two privately owned parcels located to the east of the Portland Avenue Reservoir.

SITE CHARACTERISTICS

SITE HISTORY

The Portland Avenue Reservoir was built to the east of the site in 1957 to serve the industrial activities in the Tideflats. The location for the reservoir was selected due to the elevated topography and limited development in the area at the time. During excavation for the project, the excess soil was deposited on the east side of the reservoir to form an embankment. The slope directly west of the site was created in this process. In 2013 the reservoir was converted from open-air to covered.



Figure 58. Portland Avenue Reservoir and its eastern embankment, 1957. Source: Tacoma Public Utilities.

EXISTING SITE AMENITIES

The site consists of two parcels owned by private entities. The north parcel is 1.18 acres, and the south parcel is 0.54 acres for 1.72 acres total, or 77,700 square feet. The north parcel contains a 1000 square-foot single-family residence that is currently vacant. The south parcel contains a 1,500 square-foot single-family residence that was damaged by vandalism and arson. The house is not occupiable. The remainder of the site is open land that slopes up to the embankment of the Portland Avenue Reservoir.



Figure 59. Existing structure on south parcel.

FUTURE PLANNING

No future plans exist for the two parcels included in the site. The house on the south parcel will likely be demolished due to the extent of damage. The house on the north parcel is in fair condition, but the surrounding lot is in disrepair and not safe for occupancy.



Figure 60. Open land on the west portion on both parcels.

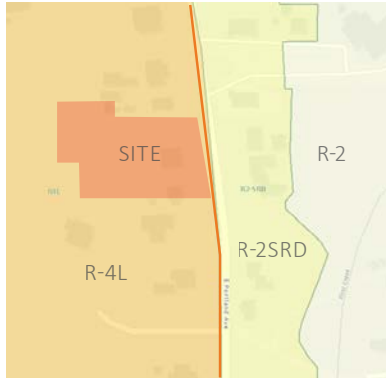


Figure 61. Current City of Tacoma zoning.

EXISTING ZONING

The site is located in a Low Density Multiple Family Dwelling (R-4L) zone. The adjacent parcels are also primarily zoned for residential use, and allow for additional types of low density housing with limited commercial use. All surrounding buildings are subject to a 35-foot height limit. Residential zones have a 20-foot front yard set-back, while commercial zones have a smaller setback and can interact with pedestrian walkways more directly. Libraries and community facilities are considered “conditional uses” by the current Tacoma zoning code, but are permitted outright in upcoming zoning changes through *Home in Tacoma*.

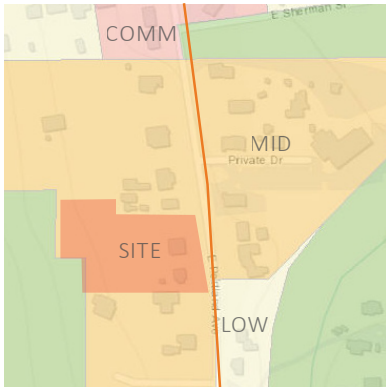


Figure 62. Planned City of Tacoma zoning.

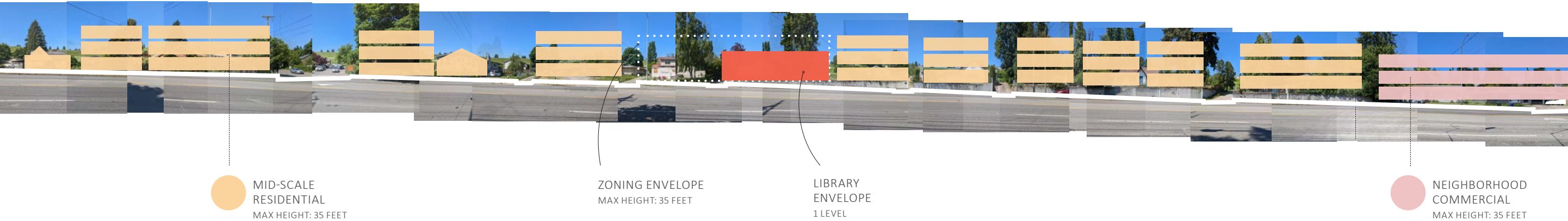
PLANNED ZONING

Planned zoning will not greatly alter density in the area. Under the *Home in Tacoma* project, the site will be zoned as Mid-Scale Residential, which will continue to allow duplexes, townhomes, and small multi-family housing. Additional uses such as retail, food, and cultural spaces will have more flexibility in where they are allowed than current zoning permits. This offers the potential for locating resources closer to homes.

EXISTING CONDITIONS



PLANNED CONDITIONS



ZONING SCALE

PORTLAND AVENUE: LOOKING WEST

Single family homes currently line the west side of Portland Avenue. Churches and some businesses are located in between homes. Future zoning will maintain a 35-foot height limit in the area, or approximately 3 stories, and density will increase slightly.

Figure 63. Street elevation of Portland Avenue looking west. Existing conditions are detailed above. Planned conditions are detailed below and envision the future building density and height.

EXISTING CONDITIONS



PLANNED CONDITIONS



ZONING SCALE

PORTLAND AVENUE: LOOKING EAST

The east side of Portland Avenue is lined with single family homes. Future zoning allows for commercial uses at East Fairbanks Street to the north and at 38th Street to the south. A library building between 20-35 feet tall height will fit into the scale of the surrounding buildings. The function of the library will be distinct from the surrounding single-family homes.

Figure 64. Street elevation of Portland Avenue looking east. Existing conditions are detailed above. Planned conditions are detailed below and envision the future building density and height.

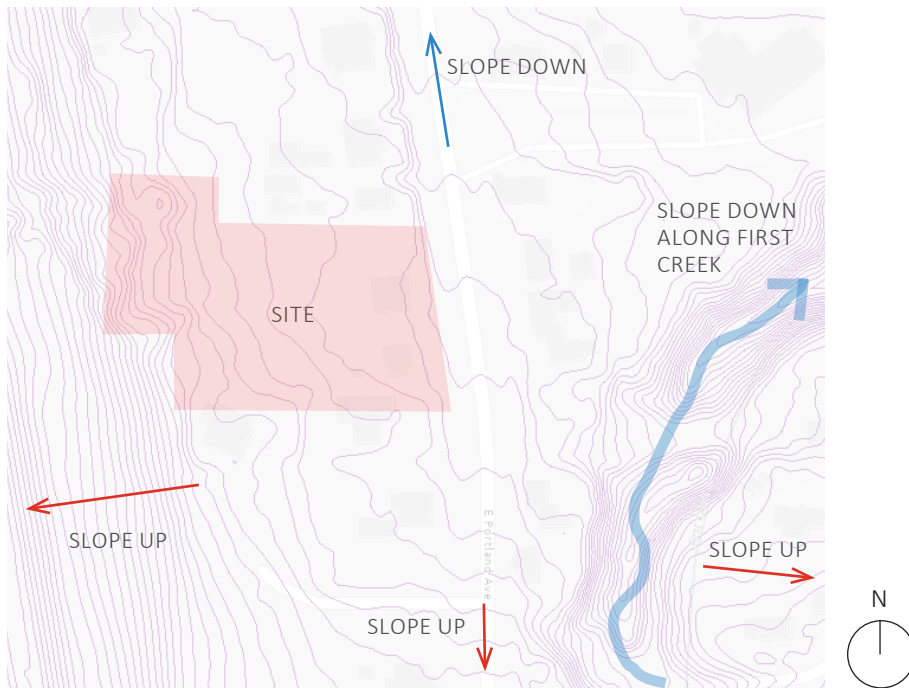


Figure 65. Site topography at 2' intervals. Source: City of Tacoma.

TOPOGRAPHY & CRITICAL AREAS

The site is located in a valley. Slopes rise to the east, south, and west. To the north, the topography drops to meet the Puyallup River and Commencement Bay beyond. First Creek cuts through the area, and forms a ravine. The First Creek watershed runs near the site. A portion of wetlands exists to the east and south, but no wetlands, critical areas, or buffer zones are present on the site.

The Portland Avenue Reservoir is directly east of the site. A steep embankment rises up to a flat area that contains the covered reservoir. The topography within the site is relatively flat on the eastern side and is leveled at the home sites. The land becomes steeper to the west where it meets the reservoir embankment.

EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

Existing utilities include sewer and stormwater lines. Both run north to south along Portland Avenue to the east of the site.

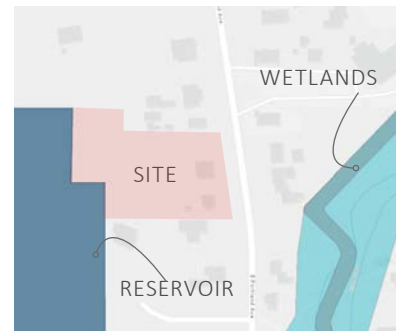


Figure 66. Surrounding wetlands. Source: City of Tacoma.

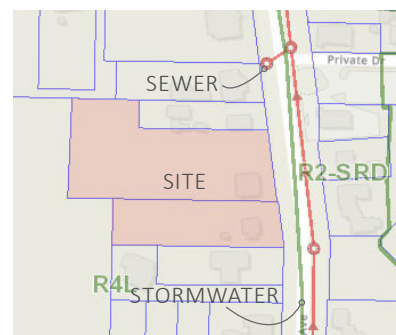


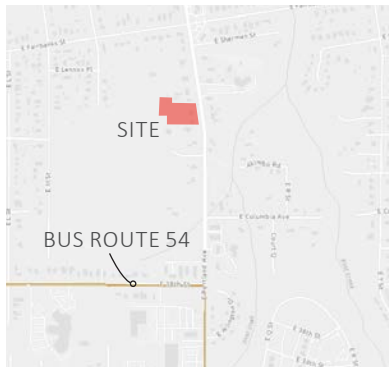
Figure 67. Tacoma utility networks. Source: City of Tacoma.

ACCESS

Transportation options are limited in the Eastside neighborhood, especially in the area surrounding the site. Concerns about getting to and from the library were voiced often in the community surveys performed for the *TPL Feasibility Report*. Additional effort would be needed to improve transit, pedestrian, and cycling routes in the vicinity.

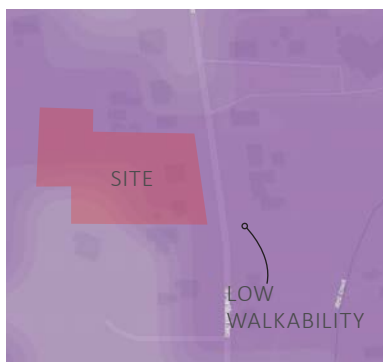


Figure 68. Composite access diagram.



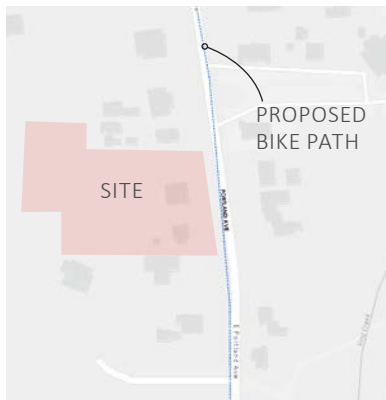
PUBLIC TRANSIT

Public transit is greatly limited in the area. One bus stop for Route 54 exists within a 5-minute walk along a moderate slope. The route connects to the east via 38th street and to the south via Portland Avenue. No other bus lines run near the site. Public transportation provides essential options for equitable access to a library, and is a high priority for Eastside residents. Locating the library close to Portland Avenue Park (0.2 miles south of the site) could draw more transit options to the area.



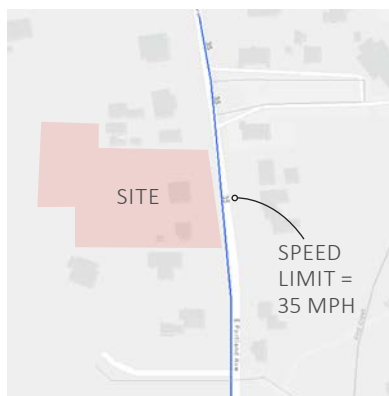
PEDESTRIAN ACCESS

Portland Avenue is lined with sidewalks on both sides. They are in good condition, but have no buffer from the roadway. The speed limit is 30 mph in the area and walking can be unsafe. The only designated crosswalks are located at major intersections. Curb cuts for mobility are also limited, and the steep terrain makes the surrounding cross streets difficult to maneuver for people with wheelchairs.



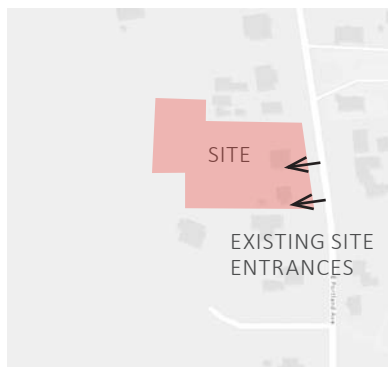
BICYCLE ACCESS

No dedicated bike lanes exist along Portland Avenue or in the vicinity. The city has a planned bike path on Portland Avenue, but the timing of the construction is unknown.



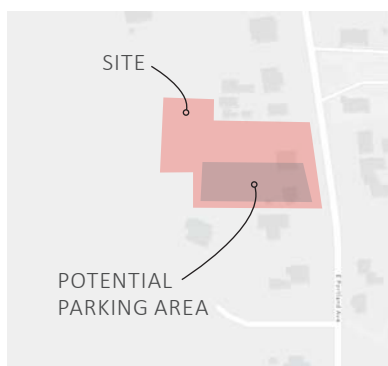
VEHICLE ACCESS

Vehicle travel is efficient along Portland Avenue. It is a major north-south arterial and connects to I-5 near the Emerald Queen Casino. Access to Lower Portland Avenue is somewhat limited due to green belts to the east and west. The watersheds interrupt most cross streets that would connect to Portland Avenue otherwise. East Fairbanks Street to the north and 38th Street to the south are the closest major east-west cross streets.



SERVICE ACCESS

The site's access point for vehicles is on its eastern edge at Portland Avenue. Each parcel has an existing driveway, and either could be developed as a primary entrance. Service access will need to share an entry with visitors.



PARKING

The surrounding area has little on-street parking. Portland Avenue has no street parking, while small neighborhood cross streets have some spots primarily used by residents. Library parking will need to be fully accommodated on the site.

Figure 69. Individual access diagrams for public transit, pedestrian access, bicycle access, service access, and parking. Base map source: City of Tacoma.

SITE EXPERIENCE

SENSORY EXPERIENCE

While site descriptions often focus on visual elements, a person's full experience includes all the senses; memory is strongest through smell, and wayfinding is enhanced through textural changes. A layered examination of sensory elements offers a richer "view" of the site.

SOUND

Portland Avenue is an arterial route with constant road noise. The road produces 65 decibels, which is similar in volume to a vacuum cleaner. It has four lanes of moving traffic, and no significant sound barriers between the street and the park. The west side of the site is quieter at 45 decibels because it is blocked from the street by the existing houses. Towards the reservoir the sound of wind and grasses can be heard. Chatter, activity, and yard equipment can be heard from neighboring homes.



SMELL

Grass and soil are the dominant smells on the site, especially at the reservoir embankment. To the west, scents of asphalt and car exhaust come from Portland Avenue. When it rains, the site smells of wet soil and rain on pavement.



TOUCH & TEXTURE

Textures include leaves, grass, sun, wind, tree bark, wet, cold, asphalt, concrete, and shade.



STREESCAPE

The experience along Portland Avenue changes gradually from the north of the site to the south. The roadway remains a consistent width with 4 moving lanes of traffic and one central turn lane. Sidewalks on either side fit one to two people. To the north, the street is lined with single family homes and small businesses. Moving south, buildings sit further away from the road. The foliage becomes more dense where Portland Avenue meets the First Creek watershed.

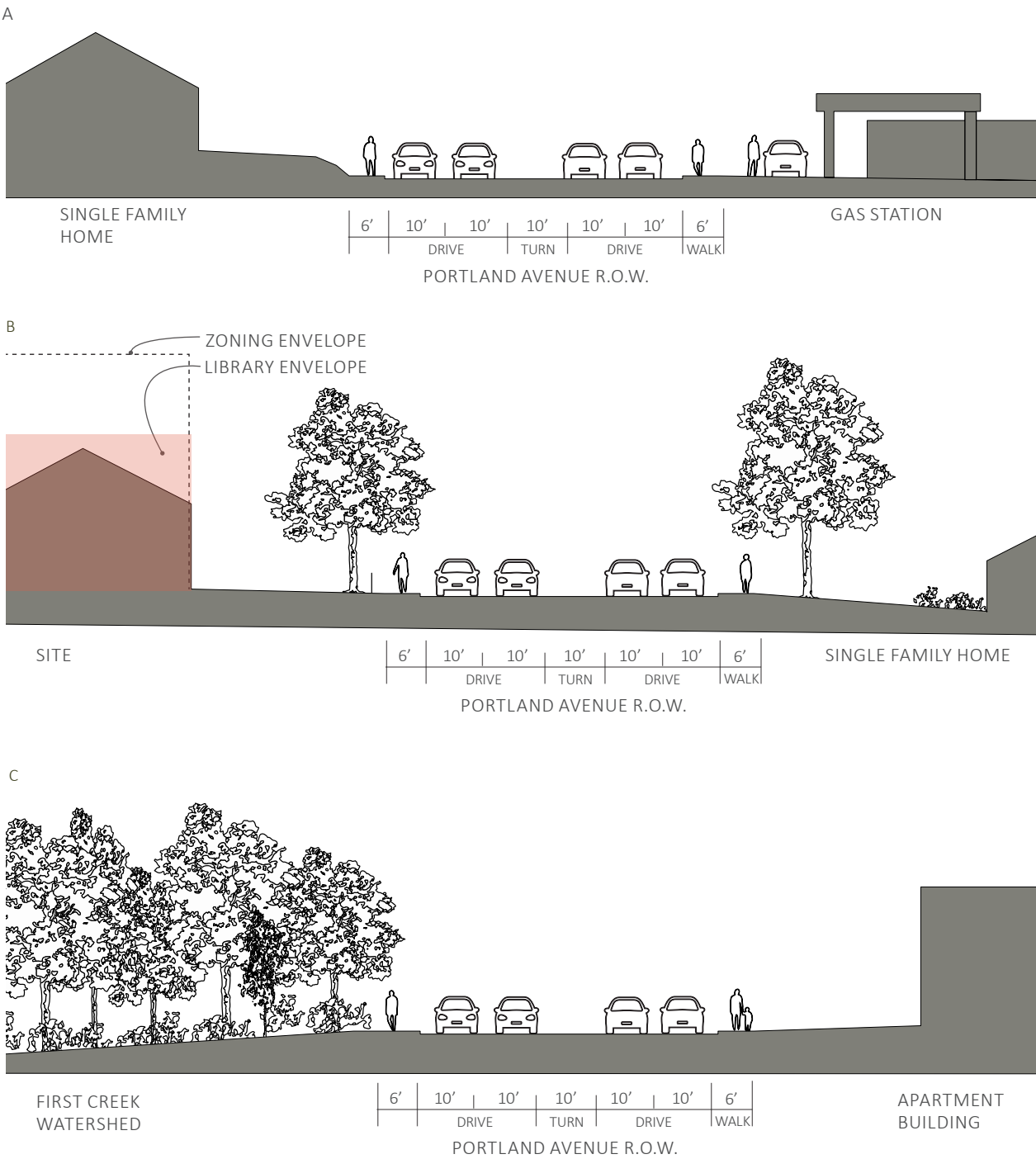


Figure 70. Street sections along Portland Avenue looking north. Distances are approximate.

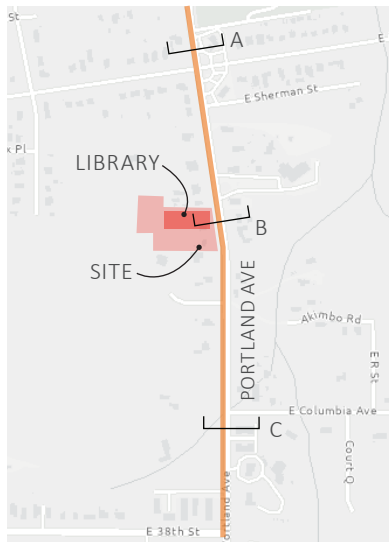


Figure 71. Street section locations.

APPROACH AND VIEWS

The site is approached at its east edge from the north or south along Portland Avenue. This is the only public-facing edge, and would be important for orienting drivers and visitors arriving by bus and bike. From the north, the site is partially obscured by the existing homes and foliage in the area. From the south, the site is clearly seen on the approach.

From within the site, views to the east show the activity along Portland Avenue. While the road is mainly a vehicle thoroughfare, churches, and pedestrian walkways diversify the activity. The First Creek watershed creates patches of dense wooded areas and forms a green backdrop to the east.

Views to the west meet the steep embankment of the Portland Avenue Reservoir. It is covered in tall grasses and native shrubs. The absence of buildings, structures, and trees provides a sweeping view of the sky. The north and south edges of the site can prioritize daylighting and screening over views. Single family homes on both sides will benefit from privacy.

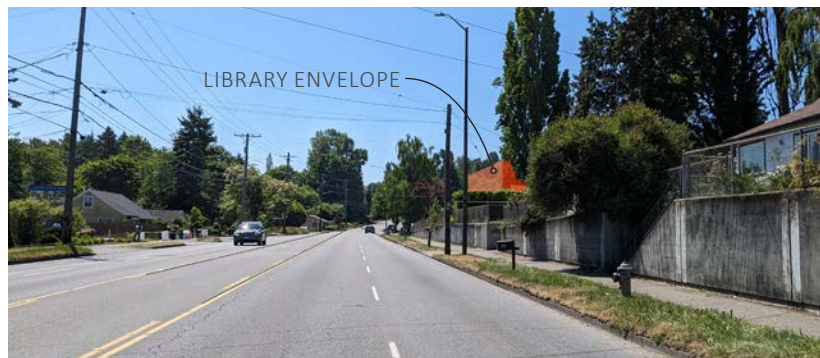


Figure 72. Approach on Portland Avenue from the north.



Figure 73. Approach on Portland Avenue from the south.



Figure 74. Portland Avenue Reservoir embankment landscape character.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND ELEMENTS

The site is planted with grass that is left to grow wild. It mixes with native shrubs and plants on the reservoir embankment. A range of tree species grow in neighboring residential yards, especially along the Portland Avenue edge. The trees act as screens and provide shade in warmer months. Much of the area between East Fairbanks Street and 38th street is influenced by the First Creek watershed. Some areas are protected wetlands, and the foliage is naturally dense with deciduous trees and underbrush. Many property owners have chosen to maintain the natural landscape even where the watershed is not protected.



Figure 75. Light fixture locations. Source: City of Tacoma.

LIGHTING & SECURITY

Street lighting is limited to the site's eastern edge. Security is also limited and little public activity occurs in the area. Cars use Portland Avenue throughout the day and night, but do not have the same observational benefits as people walking, sitting and gathering. Neighborhood safety is enhanced by the presence of community members throughout the day.

DAYLIGHT ACCESS

The site has direct access to daylight year-round due to the low buildings in the area. As zoning density increases, new 35-foot tall buildings will not greatly diminish the light. The existing deciduous trees provide limited shade in the summer months, and full sun in the winter. However, additional shading will be needed to control heat gain in the warmer months. The reservoir embankment to the west will shade much of the low-angle summer evening light.

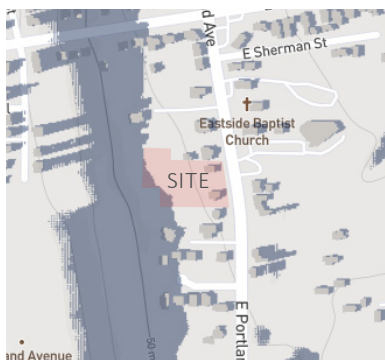


Figure 76. Site shading on the spring/autumn equinox at 5:00 p.m. Source: ShadeMap.

ANALYSIS

SITE SYNOPSIS

The site is most strongly connected to the public at its eastern edge. Portland Avenue is an active roadway with cars passing by at all times of day. It is loud and vehicle centric. To the east, beyond the street are single family homes and a small church. Greenery from the First Creek watershed is interspersed between buildings.

Single family homes also border the site to the north and south. The homes are modest in size and have large yards. These edges can provide privacy for adjacent homes while maximizing access to daylight for library users. Placing the library on the northern half of the site allows for maximum solar access and minimum obstructions. Its northern edge can prioritize screening and daylighting from above. The southern half of the site is then best used for parking. The area can include landscape that provides shade as well as privacy for neighboring homes.



Figure 77. Site synopsis diagram.

To the west is the quietest area of the site. The Portland Avenue Reservoir embankment is dense with vegetation and feels wild in comparison to the east edge. It is quiet and protected. The west portion of the site provides opportunities for views, indoor-outdoor connections, tranquility, and innovative programming.

MASSING

The site's available building area encompasses the majority of the two parcels. The buildings are required to be set back from the front edge by 20 feet. The Tacoma Municipal code requires libraries in residential zones to have a 20-foot side yard set back as well. A 12,000-14,000 square foot library fits into the area with enough space for the required off-street parking. For this study the library is shown as a simple rectangular mass. It is positioned at the northeast corner of the site to take advantage of the public connection at Portland Avenue. The massing diagrams are preliminary.

PROGRAMMATIC OPPORTUNITIES

Several program opportunities for the site include:

- New node in the Eastside neighborhood
- Connection to physical activities in Portland Avenue Park to the north of the site
- Dance and performance
- Food programming including: teaching garden and/or kitchen, seed library
- Non-profit connections: Zoning supports space for another organization on a second level
- Art: Makerspace, murals, etc.

FEASIBILITY CONCLUSIONS

The site east of the Portland Avenue Reservoir is feasible; however, it cannot easily fulfill the community vision outlined in the *TPL Feasibility Report*.

The location of the site is not prominent and it is surrounded by single-family homes. These characteristics make it more difficult to reach TPL and community goals including: ease of access, innovative programming (evening events, sound-based art), and growth of local businesses.

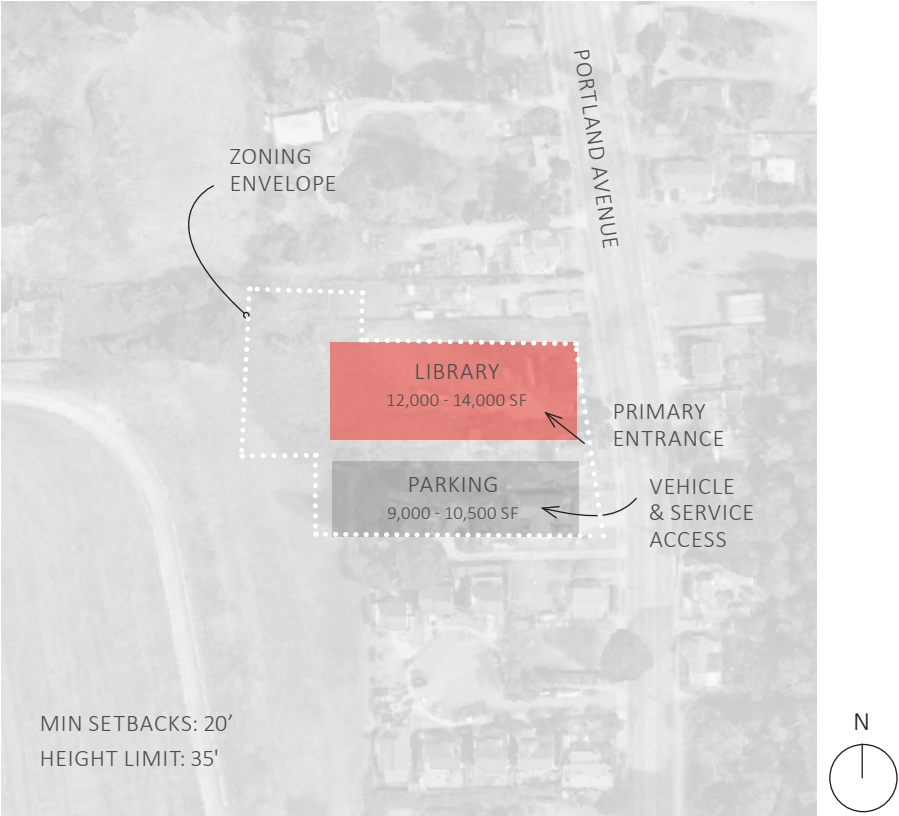


Figure 78. Massing site plan.



Figure 79. Massing diagram of building envelope.

The site was selected to examine the implications of building the Eastside library on privately-owned parcels. While dozens of private parcels exist along Portland Avenue, most are actively used as single-family homes or churches. A library on these parcels would not displace residents or remove affordable housing. If other private parcels are studied, the sites should have prominent locations, and support the stability of existing residents.

The following points contribute to the feasibility of the site:

- Purchasing land from gives TPL freedom in design and operation
- A library with parking can be accommodated on the site
- The location serves an area that cannot easily access other TPL locations
- Proximity to Puyallup Tribal services as well as Salishan
- Zoning considers a library a “conditional use,” but zoning will be updated in the near future to allow more flexibility in use
- Minimal displacement of existing homes or community spaces
- Adjacency to Portland Avenue Reservoir provides a quiet, green space and a connection to nature
- No critical areas exist on the site
- Access to daylight year round

Challenges include:

- Site is not in a prominent location
- Approach is obscured from the north along Portland Avenue
- The public use in contrast to the surrounding low-density residential area
- Close proximity to single-family homes on the north and south edges
- Transit options are greatly limited
- Portland Avenue produces constant traffic noise
- Limited buffers exist along Portland Avenue to protect pedestrians from traffic
- Few dedicated crosswalks exist in the area
- Little public activity throughout the day in the surrounding area

HILLTOP NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

LOCATION

The Hilltop neighborhood is adjacent to Downtown Tacoma, bordered by the North Slope Historic District to the north, the I-5 freeway to the south, and the Central Tacoma neighborhood to the west. It is characterized by single-family and multi-family homes, small businesses, and two hospital campuses.

NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY

Hilltop's history is more complex than can be covered in this report. A brief historical overview is included here for context, and TPL's Northwest Room can be contacted for additional resources and research.



Figure 80. Hilltop neighborhood within the City of Tacoma.

EARLY TACOMA

In 1869, George Putnam Riley, along with fourteen other Portland, Oregon, residents—eleven African American men, two African American women, and one white man—formed the Workingmen’s Joint Stock Association (WJSA). The members pooled funds to purchase real estate that was divided proportionately. The names of the original members of the company were: George Luviney, John Huntington, John Donaldson, Charles Howard, Annie Rooney, William Brown, George Thomas, George P. Riley, Edwards Simon, Mary H. Carry, Mary A. Given, James Given, Charles Gilbert, George Washington, and Philip Francis.

As President of the WJSA, Riley went to search for property in the Washington Territory. The Association purchased land in Seattle (named “Riley’s Addition to South Seattle” in the present day Beacon Hill neighborhood) and in Tacoma (the “Alliance Addition” in the present day Hilltop neighborhood). The Alliance Addition was described as all of the southwest quarter of section five, township twenty north, range three east WM. This land was platted into lots, blocks, and streets and named the Alliance Addition in 1903. Today the Alliance Addition is located roughly between Earnest S Brazill St. And 9th St. (to the North and South), South Sprague and Sheridan Avenue Ave (to the East and West). Riley lived in Tacoma until his death in 1905.

BLACK HISTORY

In the 1930s, the practice of redlining was common in Tacoma, and Black families had limited choices for where they could buy homes. Hilltop was one of few areas where they could purchase real estate, and the neighborhood became home for much of Tacoma’s Black population.

From the 1930s to today, Hilltop has been a hub for Black culture, art, business, food, and activism in Tacoma. The neighborhood was home to figures such as Nettie Craig Asberry, a music teacher and civil rights activist in the early 1900s. The Asberry House, where she lived and taught music lessons, still stands at the corner of 13th and South M Street. The building reflects a life of art and activism which can be traced throughout the neighborhood’s history.

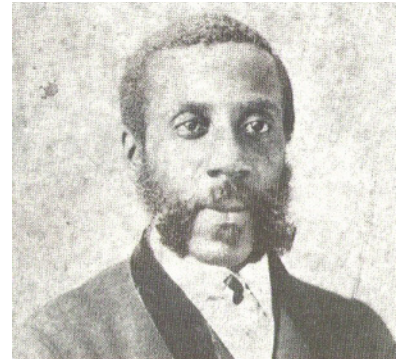


Figure 81. George Putnam Riley. Source: public domain image.



Figure 82. Just east of the Alliance Addition, Kay Street Theater on what is now MLK Jr. Way, 1928. Source: Northwest Room at The Tacoma Public Library, Marvin D. Boland Collection BOLAND-B18753.



Figure 83. Nettie Asberry outside of her Hilltop home. Source: Historic Tacoma, photo courtesy of Martha C. Broussard.



Figure 84. Normanna Hall.



Figure 85. Quickie Too, Vegan Cafe.



Figure 86. Typical Hilltop residential street.



Figure 87. Commercial center.



Figure 88. Hilltop church.



Figure 89. Commercial center.

GENTRIFICATION

Beginning in the 2000s, the Hilltop community began experiencing gentrification. Developers began buying affordable properties and home and rent prices increased. Between 2010 and 2015, the historically Black neighborhood saw 35% of its Black population relocate. Several neighborhood advocates and organizations remain and are currently working to protect and celebrate Hilltop's Black history and culture.

EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

Bright murals reflect Hilltop's local culture and history, while developers build mixed-use structures for new residents and retail. Hilltop's main commercial and social center is located at 11th and MLK Jr. Way. The neighborhood is characterized by older single family homes, small businesses, and two hospital campuses. Although the neighborhood is close to Wright Park, green space - parks, gardens, tree canopy - is limited, but several streets offer views of Commencement Bay, the Cascade mountain range, and downtown Tacoma.

FUTURE CHARACTERISTICS

Future planning is outlined in the *One Tacoma Plan*. It shows the majority of growth in the Hilltop neighborhood occurring around 11th and MLK Jr. Way, as well as increased housing density along its major thoroughfares.

The light rail extension is planned to be completed in 2023, and will increase accessibility along MLK Jr. Way. Several mixed-use housing developments are under construction and will offer hundreds of new homes, some affordable and some market-rate, as well as retail at the ground floor.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. WAY

MLK Jr. Way is the main commercial street in the Hilltop neighborhood. It prioritizes commercial activities, public transit, pedestrian access, and vehicle travel, and parking. The light rail extension planned to open in 2023 runs along MLK Jr. Way and will further improve its transit options. MLK Jr. Way is fully contained within Hilltop and connects Division Avenue to South 28th Street.

The *Hilltop Subarea Plan* outlines MLK Jr. Way to remain as a commercial street with multi-modal access. The plan includes goals to improve sidewalks, public transit, bike lanes, lighting, and utilities along MLK Jr. Way.

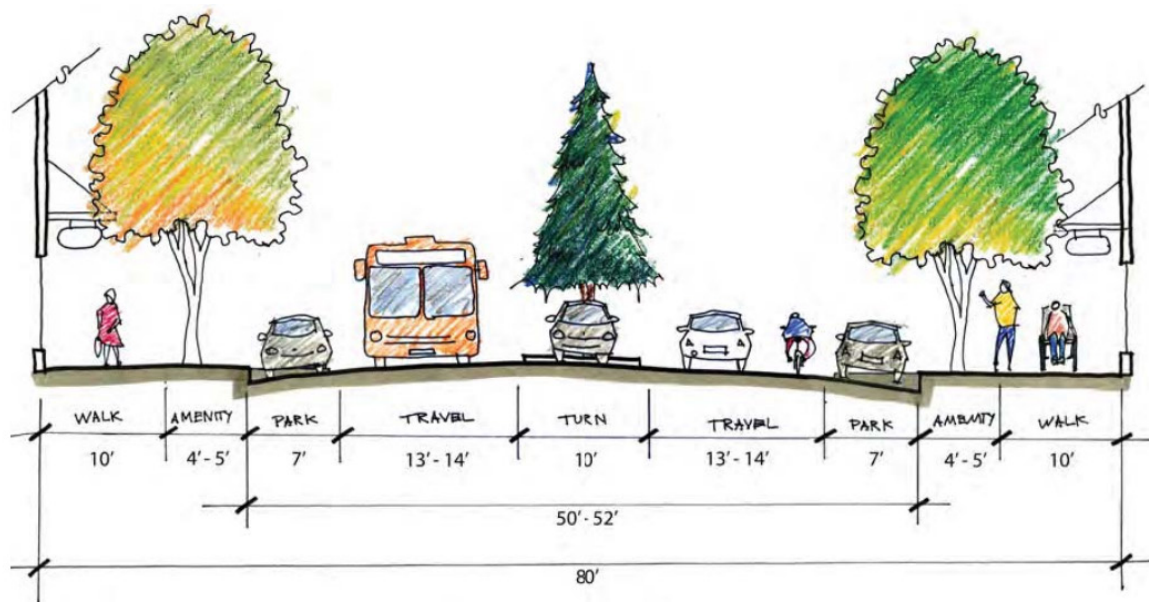


Figure 90. Hilltop Subarea Plan depiction of street characteristics for MLK Jr. Way.

VICINITY BUILDINGS

LIBRARIES

Vicinity libraries include TPL's Main branch, which is located 0.3 miles to the east of Site C and 0.8 miles to the northeast of Site D. While this is relatively close, South 11th Street is steep. The slope creates a barrier for convenient access to the Main Branch by Hilltop Residents. Furthermore, locals agree the areas are characteristically distinct: to the west of I Street is Hilltop and to the east is distinctly downtown.

SCHOOLS

Vicinity schools include five public schools, two private programs, the University of Washington Tacoma campus, and the Bates Technical College campus within one mile. The Safe Routes Partnership suggests that kindergarteners can walk a half mile and older elementary students can walk up to one mile. High schoolers can walk one and a half miles.



Figure 92. TPL Main Library. Source: TPL.



Figure 93. McCarver Elementary School. Source: TPS



Figure 91. Map of the Hilltop neighborhood and vicinity libraries.

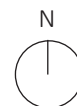




Figure 94. Community Health Center.

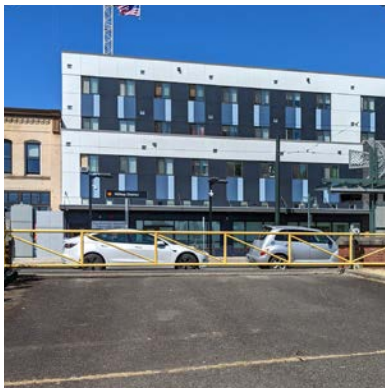


Figure 95. New Look Senior Apartments.

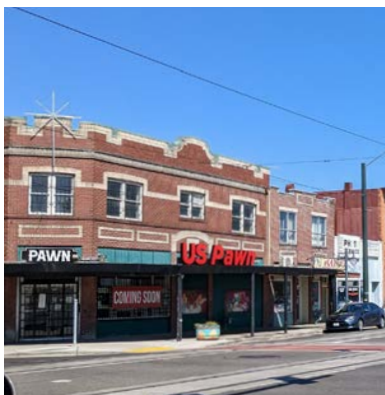


Figure 96. Commercial area at 11th and MLK Jr. Way.

PUBLIC SERVICES

Public services in the area are generally concentrated around MLK Jr. Way and South 11th Street. The site is within a five minute walk of Tacoma Community House, Community Health Center, Mi Centro, and others. People's Center is an important community space with a swimming pool, gym, and meeting rooms. While services exist in the area, the community is underserved and would benefit from expanding and strengthening the hub with a library.

HOMES

The majority of homes adjacent to Site C are located in small apartment buildings. Three large multi-family projects are currently being constructed within two blocks of the site. One project is owned by Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) and will offer affordable housing.

Along MLK Jr. Way to the south, homes are primarily single-family houses, many of which were built before 1900. The houses are generally under 1000 square feet and are arranged on narrow lots. Homes have front and back yards, trees, and gardens. Future zoning per the Home in Tacoma Project will allow for higher density housing in the area including duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, and multifamily housing.

BUSINESSES

Surrounding businesses are concentrated along South 11th Street and MLK Jr. Way. Businesses include restaurants, cafes, a post office, art spaces, and a bicycle shop. Also close by are a small Safeway, several churches and a gas station. Three new housing developments will likely include retail on the ground floor, bringing additional commercial activity to the area.

Businesses continue south along MLK Jr. Way, but are more sparse. Near People's Center spaces include the St Joseph Medical Center's campus, Planned Parenthood, a convenience mart, a Tacoma Police substation, and two fraternal halls.



Figure 97. Vicinity schools and neighborhood hubs.



Figure 98. Wright Park.

VICINITY GREEN SPACE

Green Space in the Hilltop neighborhood is concentrated in neighborhood parks and residential yards. Parks are limited, however both sites are relatively close to People's Park at MLK Jr. Way and South 9th Street. Wright Park, a prominent landmark in Tacoma, is a 15-30 minute walk to the northeast. Street trees are sporadic, especially along MLK Jr. Way. Green space is generally lacking in the neighborhood. It is important for future buildings to provide green space for shade, connections to nature, and climate resilience.

VICINITY ARTS AND CULTURE

Arts and cultural spaces are concentrated at MLK Jr. Way and South 11th Street. The majority of art works in the vicinity are public murals painted



Figure 99. Vicinity green spaces.

on buildings, planters, and other parts of the built environment. The murals are bright and represent the community and local artists. The majority of structures are colorful and display local art.

Performing Arts events take place at the Tacoma Armory at South 11th Street and Yakima Ave. Tacoma Urban Performing Arts Center (T.U.P.A.C) is currently based in the former Rite Aid building and offers youth dance classes.

A few art galleries in the neighborhood display sculptures, paintings, and mixed media works. Spaces to make art are limited. The most well known is the glass studio, Hilltop Artists, offering youth glass making classes and workshops.

Local restaurants represent the diverse community of Hilltop, and the area has several popular dining spots. These include vegan, Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese, seafood, pub food, BBQ, pizza, and cafe options. The Hilltop Street Fair takes place in August each year, and brings additional food, arts, music, and cultural celebrations to the neighborhood.



Figure 100. Tacoma Urban Performing Arts center (T.U.P.A.C.). Source: T.U.P.A.C.



Figure 101. Mural painted on south exterior wall of People's Center.

HILLTOP NEIGHBORHOOD

SITE STUDIES

Two sites in the Hilltop Neighborhood were identified as potential library sites. Both are located along MLK Jr. Way and were identified by the *TPL Feasibility Study*. Site A is located at the former Rite Aid site at South 11th Street and Site B is located at the existing People's Center site between South 16th and 17th Street.



Figure 102. Site study locations and existing TPL branch libraries.



Figure 103. View of the former Rite Aid site from the northwest corner.

HILLTOP SITE C: FORMER RITE AID

SITE CONTEXT

LOCATION

The former Rite Aid site is located in the commercial center of the Hilltop Neighborhood. It is bounded by South 11th Street to the north, South J Street to the east, Earnest S. Brazill Street to the south, and MLK Jr. Way to the west. The Rite Aid site is owned and managed by Forterra, a non-profit land conservancy organization.

SITE CHARACTERISTICS

SITE HISTORY

The site is located on what used to be K Street (now MLK Jr. Way), and was an early commercial center on Hilltop. Bakeries, food stores, and the K Street Theater lined the block.

In 1999 Rite Aid purchased the site, demolished the existing buildings and constructed a new store and parking lot. The store closed in 2013 and sat vacant for six years. In 2019 the site was acquired by Forterra intending to develop affordable housing, but the project was put on hold for several years. Currently, Forterra is leasing the former Rite Aid space to local non profit organizations including Tacoma Urban Performing Arts Center (T.U.P.A.C).

EXISTING SITE AMENITIES

The site consists of three parcels and a vacated alley that combine to be 1.93 acres or 84,000 square feet. It is divided into east and west lots based on the funding model used to purchase the land. The former Rite Aid building sitting on the west half of the site is 16,863 square feet and in good condition. A smaller building lies on the north border of the site. The parking lot contains 76 spaces and has three access points from MLK Jr. Way, South 11th Street and Earnest S. Brazill Street. A 10,500 square foot alley runs between the east and west lots, and has been vacated by the City of Tacoma.

FUTURE PLANNING

Forterra is in the process of determining the future plans for the site. It will likely be sold to another affordable housing developer who will plan, design, and construct the project. The type of housing may take various forms: rental units, townhomes, work-live spaces, and ownership options. Each of these will include a commercial requirement that can be fulfilled with a library.



Figure 104. K Street neon advertising sign and the Federal Bakery, 1950. Source: Northwest Room at The Tacoma Public Library, Richards Studio D74110-A.



Figure 105. Exterior of the existing Rite Aid building.

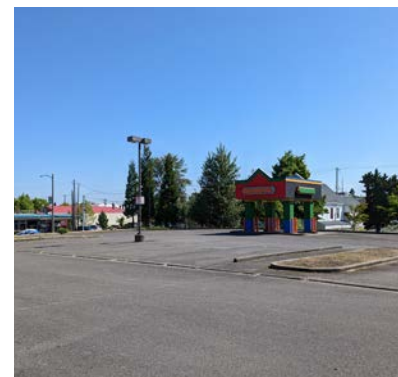


Figure 106. Existing parking lot.

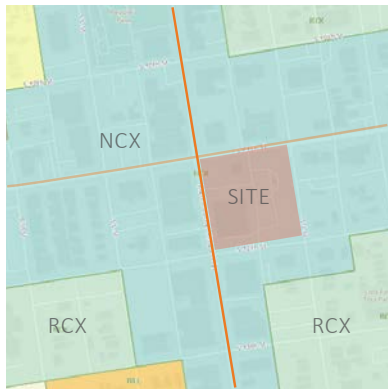


Figure 107. Current City of Tacoma zoning.



Figure 108. Planned City of Tacoma zoning.

ZONING

EXISTING ZONING

The site is located in a Neighborhood Commercial Mixed-Use (NCX) zone. Surrounding the site, the extents of the commercial center are also designated NCX. Buildings in this zone must be located close to the sidewalk to contribute to the pedestrian experience and can be up to 45 feet tall. Beyond this zone are residential districts with a range of low, medium, and high densities. The Residential Commercial Mixed-Use (RCX) zone, for example, allows multi-family buildings up to 60 feet tall, while the One Family Dwelling Special Review (R-2SRD) zone allows duplexes up to 35 feet tall. Libraries are a permitted use.

PLANNED ZONING

Under the *Home in Tacoma* project, the South 11th Street and MLK Jr. Way area will allow for increased density. The zoning will support mixed-use buildings up to 60 feet tall.



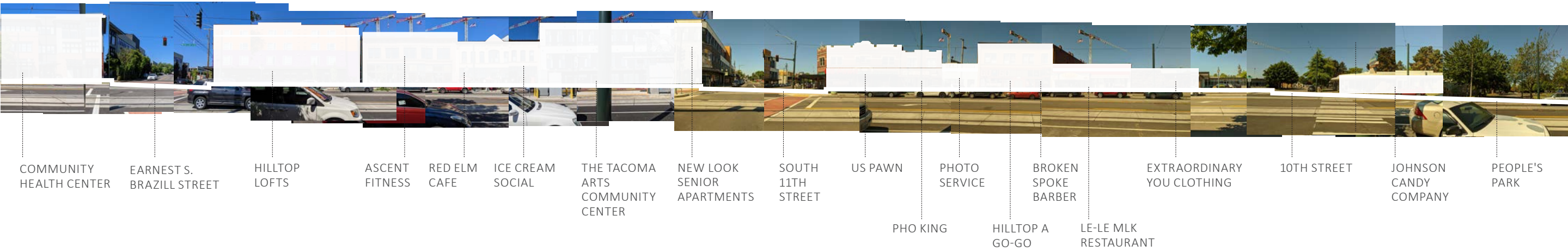
ZONING SCALE

MLK JR. WAY: LOOKING EAST

The east side of MLK Jr. Way currently has a variety of building shapes, sizes, and ages. The density is concentrated around South 11th Street and tapers off to the north and south. A 6-story mixed use building is being constructed on the northeast corner of South 11th Street and MLK Jr. Way, which will affect the scale of the area. Future zoning will allow for increased height and density on the surrounding parcels.

Figure 109. Street elevation of MLK Jr. Way looking east. Existing conditions are detailed above. Planned conditions are detailed below and envision the future building density and height.

EXISTING CONDITIONS



PLANNED CONDITIONS



ZONING SCALE

MLK JR. WAY: LOOKING WEST

The west side of MLK Jr. Way also has a variety of building shapes, sizes, and ages. The density is concentrated around South 11th Street and tapers off to the north and south. Future zoning will allow for increased height and density for the surrounding parcels on MLK Jr. Way that are not protected as historic properties.

Figure 110. Street elevation of MLK Jr. Way looking west. Existing conditions are detailed above. Planned conditions are detailed below and envision the future building density and height.



Figure 111. Site topography at 2' intervals. Source: City of Tacoma.

TOPOGRAPHY & CRITICAL AREAS

The former Rite Aid site is located at the top of a steep hill overlooking Downtown Tacoma to the east. The site is relatively flat. The surrounding topography drops approximately 10 feet to the east.

The Hilltop neighborhood is in a non-wetland/non-stream area. This designation is determined by the City of Tacoma's Planning and Development Services department after conducting field investigations. The site currently does not have any critical zones identified by the city or county.

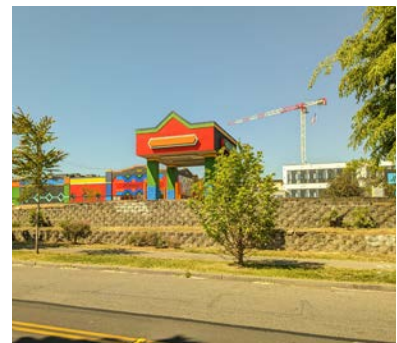


Figure 112. Topography at west edge.

EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

Existing utilities adjacent to the site include sewer and stormwater lines. The sewer lines run north to south along the vacated alley. The nearest stormwater lines run east to west along South 11th Street and Earnest S. Brazill Streets.



Figure 113. Tacoma utility networks. Source: City of Tacoma.

ACCESS

The Hilltop neighborhood is well connected by transit. Several bus lines run through the area and the light rail system is scheduled to begin service along MLK Jr. Way in 2023. The neighborhood is relatively flat and walkable to the west of MLK. However, there are limited pedestrian amenities on surrounding routes. Concerns about equitable access to and from the library were voiced often in the community surveys performed for the *TPL Feasibility Report*. Efforts should be taken to further improve transit, pedestrian, and cycling routes in the site's vicinity.

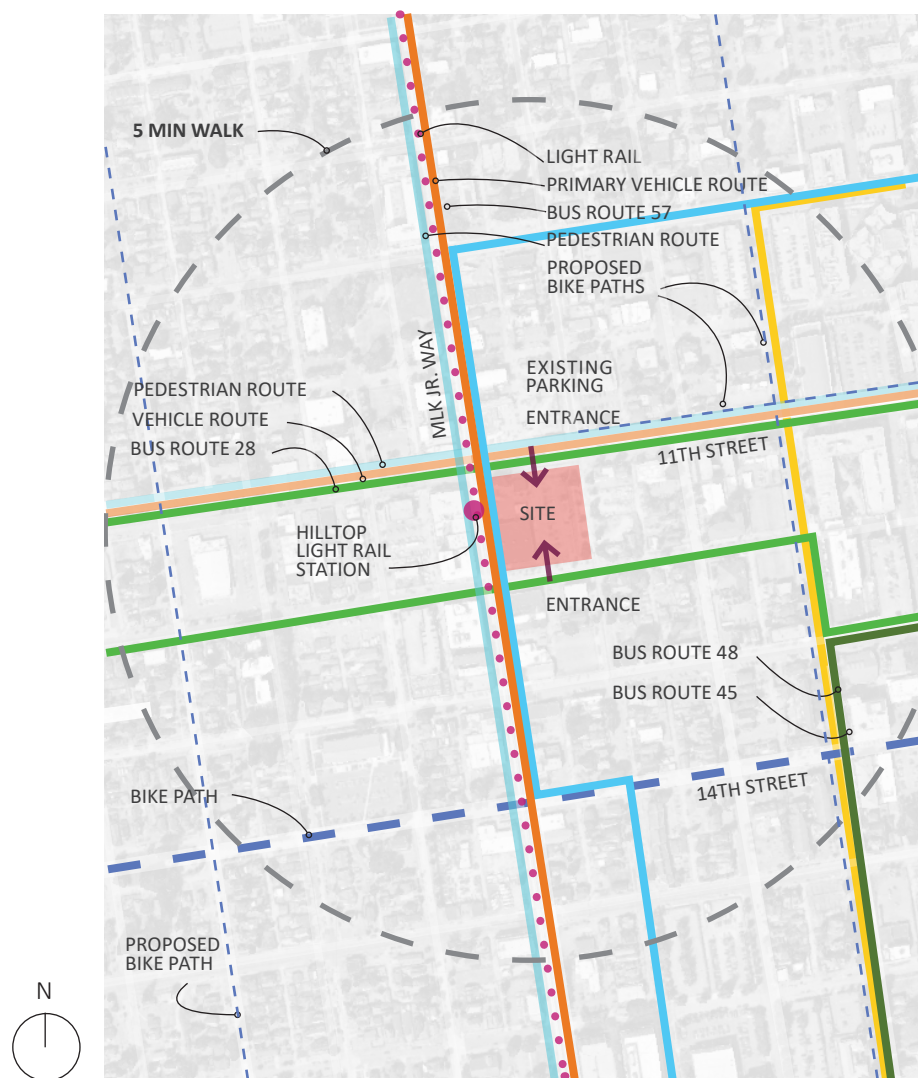
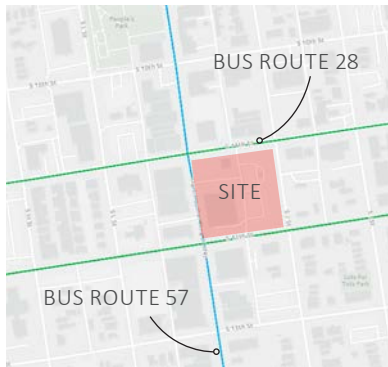
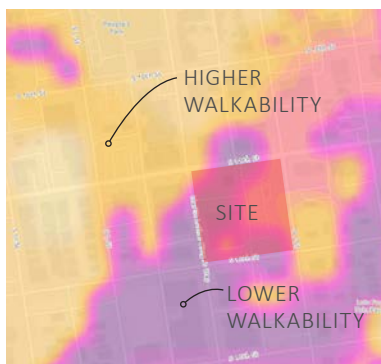


Figure 114. Composite access diagram.



PUBLIC TRANSIT

Public transit options for the site include bus service and future light rail service. The closest bus routes are the 28 and 57, both of which stop within a two-minute walk of the site. The closest light rail stop is the above-ground Hilltop District station, and is directly to the east of the site on MLK Jr. Way.



PEDESTRIAN ACCESS

MLK Jr. Way is lined with sidewalks. They are in good condition and are somewhat protected from the roadway by street parking and trees. Crosswalks are located at the corner of each block as well as at light rail station platforms. Curb cuts for mobility also exist at each corner, however cracks in the sidewalk can make it difficult to maneuver with a wheelchair, stroller, or any kind of mobility impairment.



BICYCLE ACCESS

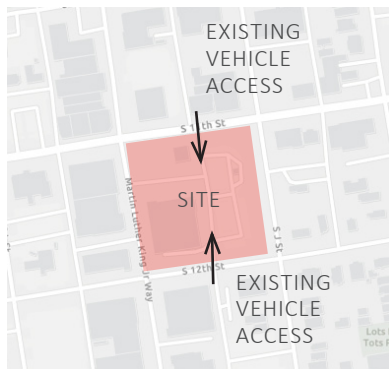
No dedicated bike lanes exist along MLK Jr. Way. The closest bike lane runs east to west along South 14th Street. It connects to downtown along a steep hill and ends at the northeast corner of the site. The city has a planned bike lane that ends at the corner of South 11th Street and South J Street, but the timing of construction is unknown.



VEHICLE ACCESS

MLK Jr. Way is easily accessible to vehicles. It is connected to several cross streets, the largest of which are South 11th Street to the north of the site and South 19th Street to the south. Stop lights, stop signs, and crosswalks slow traffic in the area and the speed limit is 25 mph. The site's other adjacent streets are also accessible to vehicles. These roadways are well maintained, lined with trees, and are large enough to accommodate library traffic.

HILLTOP SITE C: FORMER RITE AID



SERVICE ACCESS

The site currently has two access points for service vehicles. One is from South 11th Street and the other is off of Ernest S. Brazill Street. Since this is a high-traffic area, and will soon have additional light rail activity, it is not the ideal location for service vehicles, garbage enclosures, etc. Site improvements could relocate the service access to one of the quieter streets adjacent to the site.



PARKING

The surrounding area has on-street parking along MLK Jr. Way as well as the adjacent neighborhood streets. The site currently has a dedicated parking lot with 76 spaces. However, structured parking will be needed to accommodate all uses on the site. The change in grade from MLK Jr. Way to South J Street would allow for one level of parking that is only partially underground. Parking requirements may be reduced by the city based on the amount of public transit in the area.

Figure 115. Individual access diagrams for public transit, pedestrian access, bicycle access, service access, and parking. Base map source: City of Tacoma.

SITE EXPERIENCE

SENSORY EXPERIENCE

While site descriptions often focus on visual elements, a person's full experience includes all the senses; memory is strongest through smell, and wayfinding is enhanced through textural changes. A layered examination of sensory elements offers a richer "view" of the site.

SOUND

The site is surrounded by noise and activity. MLK Jr. Way and South 11th Street are vehicle routes with steady traffic. The roads commonly produce 60 decibels of sound, which is similar to the hum of a refrigerator. The sidewalks are usually occupied with people talking, texting, singing, and calling to one another. The new light rail line will soon add more noise to the area. The west side of the site is on a quieter street of around 35 decibels. Conversations, TVs, cooking, church hymns, doors opening and closing, cars and sounds of play float through the area.



SMELL

The smells of the site include concrete, asphalt, cars, exhaust, and construction. Neighboring restaurants add a range of aromas. When the wind is blowing, scents are carried on the wind to the site's location at the top of a hill: sea water, industry, and forest.



TOUCH & TEXTURE

The site is covered mostly in hard surfaces: asphalt and concrete blocks of the former Rite Aid. Overlaid on the hard textures is art: murals, colors, and words. Additional textures include leaves, wind, and sun.



STREETSCAPE

The experience along MLK Jr. Way changes gradually from the north of the site to the south. The roadway remains consistent with two moving lanes of traffic and one central turn lane. The light rail will travel in the same lanes as the vehicles. Sidewalks range in size and comfortably fit two people walking side by side at their narrowest portions. On-street parking spaces are available on both sides of the road between the moving traffic and the sidewalks. To the north, the street is lined with commercial buildings, People's Park, and residential buildings past 9th Street. Moving south, the density of commercial buildings tapers down gradually and the amount of activity declines.

HILLTOP SITE C: FORMER RITE AID

Figure 116. Street sections along MLK Jr. Way looking north. Distances are approximate.

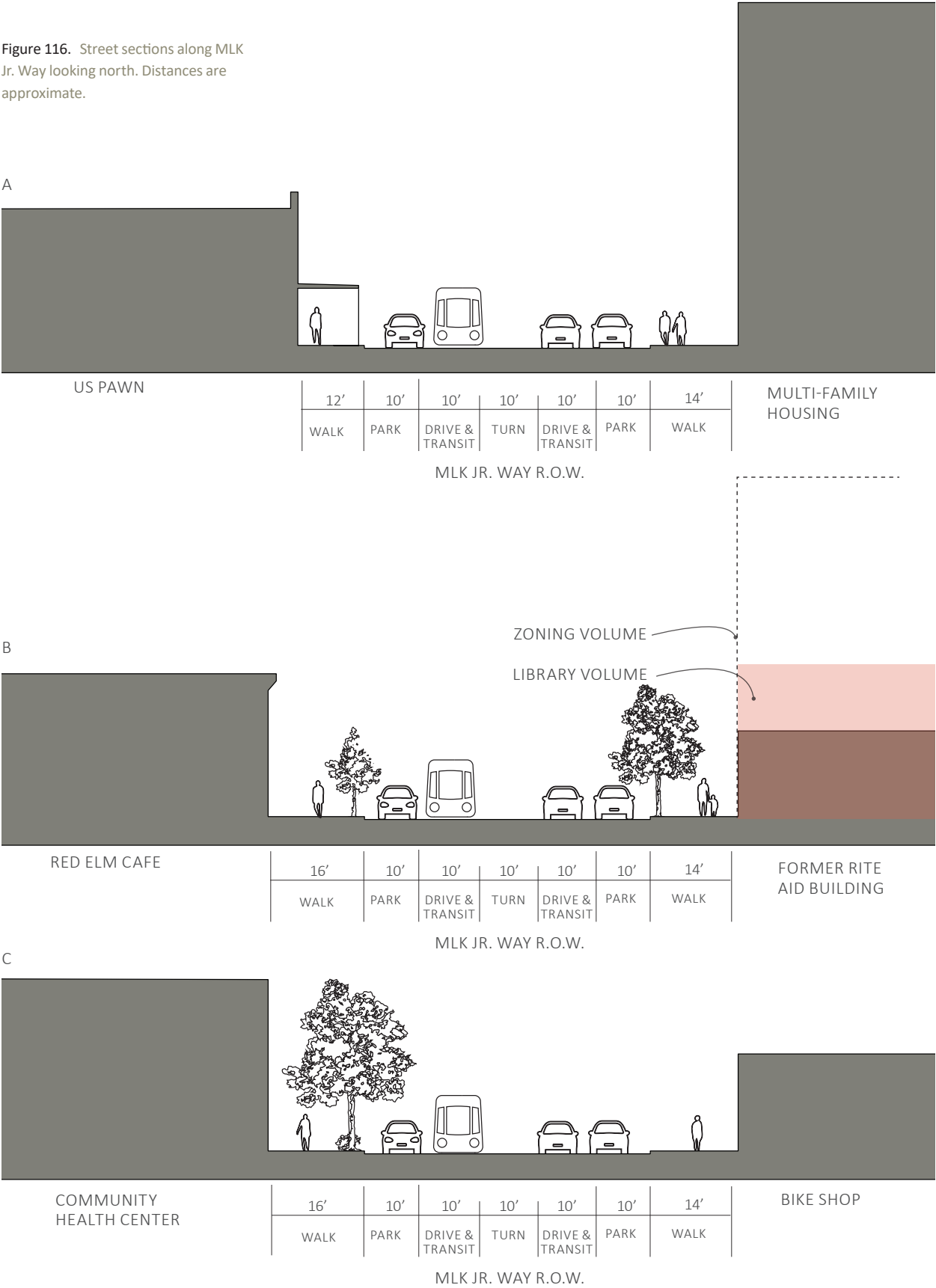




Figure 117. Street section locations.

APPROACH AND VIEWS

The site is in a prominent location and can be approached from multiple directions. With the completion of the light rail, it will be approached primarily from the north or south along MLK Jr. Way. This west edge is also the primary commercial street in the area. Neighboring businesses front onto MLK Jr. Way. Visitors also approach the site from the east and west along South 11th Street, a secondary commercial street catering more to vehicles than pedestrians. The corner at MLK Jr. Way and 11th will be important for welcoming visitors as it faces both of the main approaches.

From within the site, views to the west are characterized by activity along MLK Jr. Way. The future Hilltop District light rail station is adjacent to the site, and the tracks run parallel to its west edge. People walk and gather on the sidewalks on both sides of the streets. Cars park adjacent to the sidewalk, and travel by on the roadway.



Figure 118. Approach on MLK Jr. Way from the north



Figure 119. Approach on MLK Jr. Way from the south.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND ELEMENTS

The site is bordered with sporadic street trees on all sides. The trees are deciduous and relatively small. The largest of the site's trees are at the northwest corner. They shade a square patch of grass that is partially used as an informal garden. Shrubs and grasses are planted in various locations throughout the site including parking medians, along sidewalks, and at the base of the former Rite Aid.

Colorful, hand-painted planters are located throughout the area near South 11th Street and MLK Jr. Way. They contain flowers and annuals, and provide functional public art pieces for the neighborhood.



Figure 120. Bright planters found around the Hilltop neighborhood.



Figure 121. Former Rite Aid landscape character along MLK Jr. Way.

LIGHTING & SECURITY

The site is bordered with existing street lighting on all sides. Within the site itself, limited fixtures illuminate the parking lot and building entrance. Activity around the site occurs mostly during daylight hours. However, the restaurants in the area attract some activity in the evening. Neighborhood safety is enhanced by the presence of community members throughout the day. This can be achieved through the use of pedestrian walkways, gathering at outdoor seating, etc. The area would benefit from additional evening activities.



Figure 122. Street light locations. Source: City of Tacoma.

DAYLIGHT ACCESS

The site has access to daylight year-round. Low buildings of 15-25 feet allow direct sunlight from the south and east, and indirect light from the north. Western light is rarely blocked in the winter by the adjacent 4-story building on the opposite side of MLK Jr. Way. As zoning density increases, new 60-foot buildings will likely block some daylight to the south. The block to the west contains buildings that are either new or have historic character, and are not likely to change in the near future.

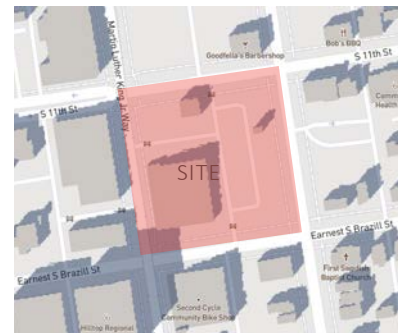


Figure 123. Site shading on the winter solstice at 3:00 p.m. Source: ShadeMap.

ANALYSIS

SITE SYNOPSIS

The site is strongly connected to public activity at its west edge along MLK Jr. Way. The main vehicle thoroughfare and future light rail service are located directly to the west. Neighboring businesses enfront MLK Jr. Way and pedestrians have direct access to the site. The library envelope should prioritize public connections at this edge.

South 11th Street to the north is also a main thoroughfare. While it has a similar amount of vehicular traffic as MLK Jr. Way, it is not the main commercial street. Some businesses front onto South 11th Street, especially within 1-2 blocks of MLK Jr. Way, but taper off beyond that. The intersection where the two streets meet is a hive of activity. This is the most prominent area on the site, and presents an opportunity for the library to create a new neighborhood node at the corner.

The south and east edges are adjacent to quieter streets, churches, and small apartment buildings, and limited single-family homes. The eastern edge



Figure 124. Site synopsis diagram.

especially feels calm in comparison to the busy road and tall buildings to the west. These edges allow the site to meet neighborhood scale, to provide exterior green space, and to access parking from a low-traffic street.

MASSING

The site's available building area encompasses the entire block. A 25,000-30,000 square foot library fits into the area with enough room to build an affordable housing development and parking for both. For this study the library is shown as a simple rectangular mass. Three massing options include:

OPTION 1

TPL purchases the northwest corner of the west parcel and develops it independently. The library is positioned to take advantage of the public connection at South 11th Street and MLK Jr. Way. The footprint is approximately 15,000 square feet, making it necessary for the library to occupy 2 levels. Parking can be self contained or shared with the adjacent affordable housing development.

OPTION 2

Forterra divides the site into east and west parcels, and each is developed by a separate affordable housing developer. The library occupies 25,000-30,000 square feet of the ground floor of the west parcel. The housing meets the sidewalk at the southwest corner then wraps up and over the library. Below-grade parking is shared between the library and housing development.

OPTION 3

The entire site is developed by a single affordable housing developer. The library occupies 25,000-30,000 square feet of the ground floor for the length of MLK Jr. Way to maximize its public connection. Below-grade parking is shared between the library and housing development.

PROGRAMMATIC OPPORTUNITIES

The following uses for library programming were collected from community members through the *TPL Feasibility Report*. These reflect Hilltop-specific visions and desires:

- Programming, collections and art that celebrates and serves the Black community
- Space to make and display art and connect with local artists
- Space for creative writing
- Connections to other nonprofits and services on Hilltop

HILLTOP SITE C: FORMER RITE AID

OPTION 1



Figure 125. Option 1: Massing site plan.



Figure 126. Option 1: Massing diagram of building

OPTION 2

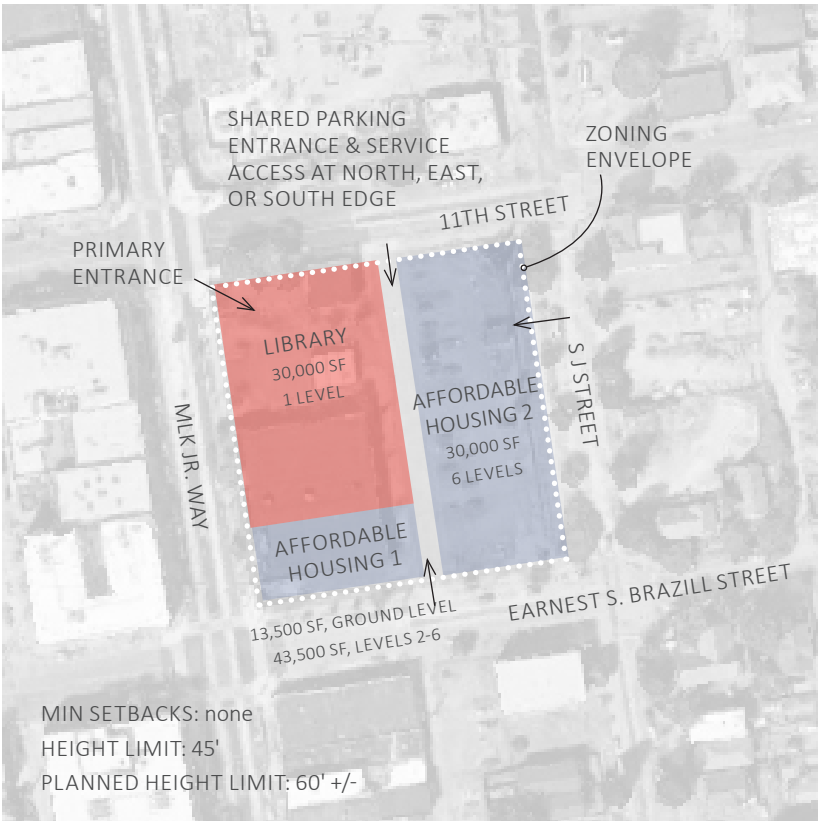


Figure 127. Option 2: Massing site plan.



Figure 128. Option 2: Massing diagram of building.

HILLTOP SITE C: FORMER RITE AID

OPTION 3



Figure 129. Option 3: Massing site plan.



Figure 130. Option 3: Massing diagram of building

- Space to celebrate and host events
- A cafe space
- Classrooms and meeting spaces
- Play area for children
- Youth space
- A place to listen to audiobooks
- Public restrooms

FEASIBILITY CONCLUSIONS

The former Rite Aid site is ideal for building a 21st century library in the Hilltop neighborhood. Initial talks with Forterra began in early 2022, and both parties have expressed interest in collaborating to bring a library to the site. The location at South 11th Street and MLK Jr. Way is centrally located and close to several transit options. It is large enough to accommodate a library at ground level, affordable housing units, and parking for both. The existing community would be strengthened by bringing a library and its services to such a central site.

The following points contribute to the feasibility of the site:

- The prominent location is ideal for a library
- Strong community support for a library at this location
- Civic commitment to the neighborhood would be reinforced by a public library
- Public meeting spaces within the library could strengthen community and street life while providing space lacking in the city as a whole
- Nearby schools would benefit from access to a library
- Forterra is interested in including a library on the site
- Accessible via multiple modes of transportation
- Zoning permits a library
- Parking can be shared with the housing development

Challenges include:

- Land acquisition may be complex
- Partnership or a condominium agreement will limit TPL's freedom in the design and programming. Option 1 to purchase the northwest corner of the site is the preferred option.
- Greenspace is limited in the area



Figure 131. View of People's Center from the Southeast corner.

HILLTOP SITE D: PEOPLE'S CENTER

SITE CONTEXT

LOCATION

This site study examines the feasibility of accommodating a community center and library on the current People's Center site. People's Center is located in the middle of the Hilltop Neighborhood, six blocks south of the core business area. It is bounded by S 16th Street to the north, Martin Luther King Jr. Way (MLK Jr. Way) to the east, S 17th Street to the south, and S L Street to the west. The building is situated in the southwest corner of the block, and the Miles Memorial Church is in the northwest corner. The existing People's Center parking lot and main entrance can be accessed from both L Street and 16th Street.

SITE CHARACTERISTICS

SITE HISTORY

In 1967 the Hilltop Youth Activities Center, later named Malcolm X Center, was opened on the site. It offered space primarily for Black youth to gather and recreate. In 1979 the facility was rebuilt to accommodate a swimming pool, and was renamed as People's Center. In recent history, People's Center has been a popular space for all ages to swim, play sports, and host community gatherings.

The south face of the building features the "Malcolm X Center Mural." The artwork was created in 2016 by a team of artists led by Christopher Paul Jordan. It celebrates Tacoma's Black community and highlights Black figures who have impacted the local and regional area.

EXISTING SITE AMENITIES

People's Center is on a 1.6 acre parcel that is owned by the City of Tacoma and operated by MPT. The building was built in 1977 and renovated in 2016 to upgrade its swimming pool. The facility is 32,000 square feet and includes a swimming pool, indoor sports courts, a gym, community meeting rooms, and a parking lot with 44 spaces. Large trees provide shade at the perimeter.

The northwest corner of the block is a separate 11,300 square foot parcel occupied by the Miles Memorial Methodist Christian Church.

FUTURE PLANNING

People's Center is actively used as a community center. However, much of the building is in need of renovations. While there are no plans to upgrade the center, MPT is aware that improvements will be needed soon. A shared facility between People's Center and TPL would allow the city to combine fundraising efforts and ensure that both organizations can grow their facilities.



Figure 132. Teens dancing at the Hilltop Youth Activities Center, 1967. Source: Northwest Room at The Tacoma Public Library, Richards Studio D153201-9.



Figure 133. People's Center main visitor entrance.

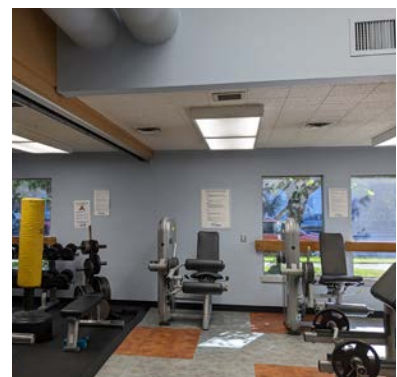


Figure 134. People's Center gym space.

HILLTOP SITE D: PEOPLE'S CENTER

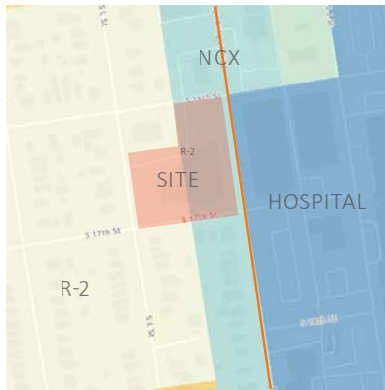


Figure 135. Current City of Tacoma zoning.

EXISTING ZONING

People's Center is located on a parcel that straddles two zones: Single Family Dwelling (R-2) and Neighborhood Commercial Mixed-Use (NCX). The adjacent parcels to the west are also zoned for low density residential use and have a height limit of 35 feet. Along MLK Jr. Way is a continuation of the NCX zone. Buildings are required to be located close to the sidewalk to build a positive pedestrian experience, and can be 45 feet tall. To the east is a hospital use district that allows for large buildings up to 150 feet tall, and commercial uses such as cafes, retail, office space, and parking garages.

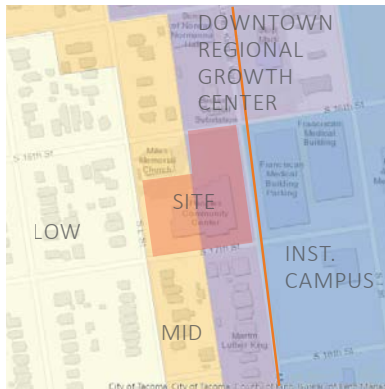


Figure 136. Planned City of Tacoma zoning.

PLANNED ZONING

Under the *Home in Tacoma* project, density will increase in the area to include duplexes, townhomes, and small multi-family homes. Along MLK Jr, Way building can be up to 60 feet tall. Additional uses such as retail, food, and cultural spaces will have more flexibility in where they are allowed.

EXISTING CONDITIONS



PLANNED CONDITIONS

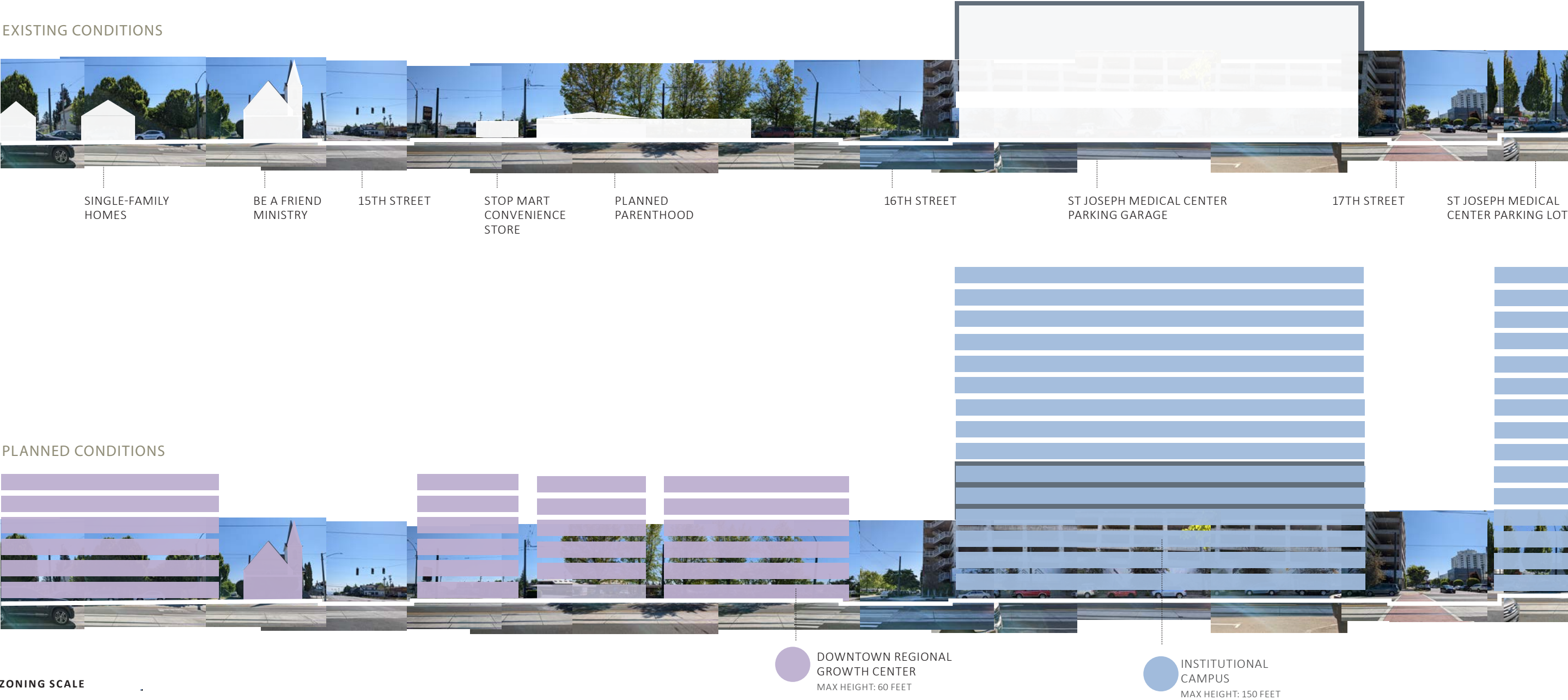


ZONING SCALE

MLK JR. WAY: LOOKING WEST

On the west side of MLK Jr. Way buildings currently range from 1-2 stories and are modest in size. They are spaced apart from each other and some, including People's Center, are not oriented towards the action on MLK Jr. Way. Similar to the east side of MLK Jr. Way, future zoning will allow for increased height, density, and pedestrian experience.

Figure 137. Street elevation of MLK Jr. Way looking west. Existing conditions are detailed above. Planned conditions are detailed below and envision the future building density and height.



ZONING SCALE

MLK JR. WAY: LOOKING EAST

On the east side of MLK Jr. Way, hospital zoning allows for structures up to 150 feet tall, or approximately 15 stories. The adjacent parking garage is six levels. While this creates a large scale difference from the surrounding buildings, future zoning will allow other buildings along MLK Jr. Way to be 60 feet. In addition to the increased height and density, the pedestrian experience will be prioritized.

Figure 138. Street elevation of MLK Jr. Way looking east. Existing conditions are detailed above. Planned conditions are detailed below and envision the future building density and height.

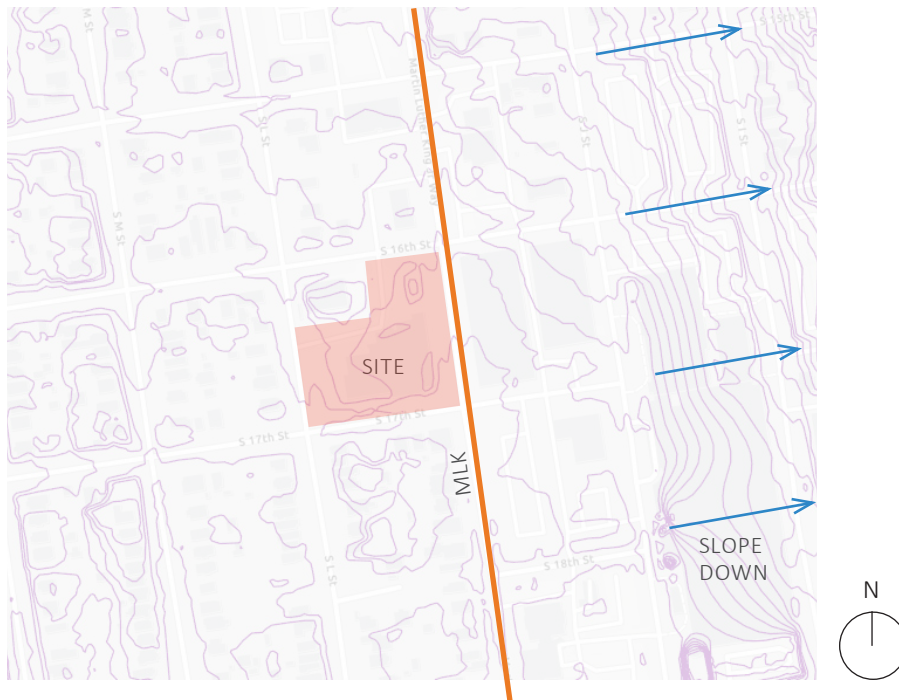


Figure 139. Site topography at 2' intervals. Source: City of Tacoma.

TOPOGRAPHY & CRITICAL AREAS

People's Center is located near the top of a steep hill overlooking Downtown Tacoma to the east. The site and its general surroundings are relatively flat. At its northeast corner a three-foot depression that is used for storm water retention. The largest topographic feature on the site is the swimming pool in the southwest corner, eight feet below grade.

The Hilltop neighborhood is in a non wetland/non stream area. This designation is determined by the City of Tacoma's Planning and Development Services department after conducting field investigations. The site currently does not have any critical zones identified by the city or county.

EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

Existing utilities adjacent to the site include sewer and stormwater lines. The sewer lines run north to south along South L Street and through the center of the site. The nearest stormwater lines run east to west along South 16th and 17th Streets, and feed into the parking lot and south edge of the community center.



Figure 141. Storm water retention.



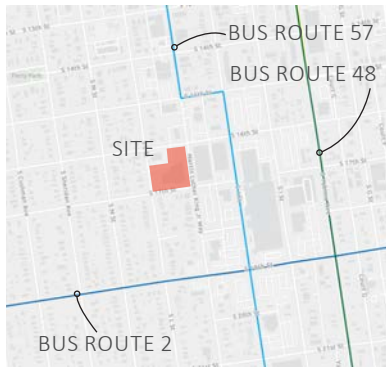
Figure 140. Tacoma utility networks. Source: City of Tacoma.

ACCESS

The Hilltop neighborhood is well connected to transit options. Several bus lines run through the area and the light rail system is scheduled to begin running along MLK Jr. Way in 2023. The neighborhood is relatively flat and walkable, however there are limited pedestrian amenities on surrounding routes. Concerns about equitable access to and from the library were voiced often in the community surveys performed for the *TPL Feasibility Report*. Efforts should be taken to further improve transit, pedestrian, and cycling routes in the site's vicinity.

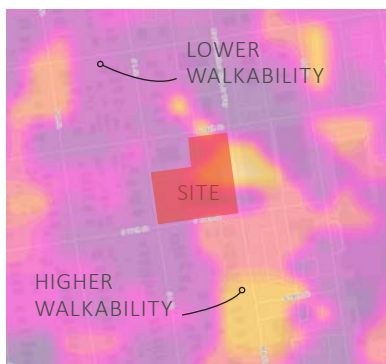


Figure 155. Composite access diagram.



PUBLIC TRANSIT

Public transit options for People's Center include bus service and future light rail service. The closest bus routes are the 2, 48, and 57, all of which stop within a 5-minute walk of the site. Route 28 is slightly further to the north, and is within a 10-minute walk. The closest light rail stop is the above-ground St. Joseph station, and is a half block south of People's Center. The light rail service is scheduled to open in 2023.



PEDESTRIAN ACCESS

MLK Jr. Way is lined with sidewalks on both sides. They are in good condition, and are somewhat protected from the roadway by street parking and trees. Crosswalks are located at the corner of each block as well as at light rail stations. Curb cuts for mobility also exist at each corner, however cracks in the sidewalk can make it difficult to maneuver with a wheelchair, stroller, or injury.



BICYCLE ACCESS

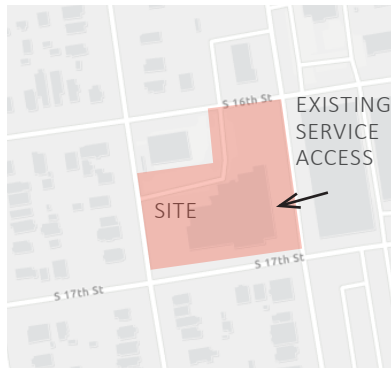
No dedicated bike lanes exist along MLK Jr. Way. The closest bike lane runs east to west along South 15th Street. It connects to a planned bicycle boulevard on South Sheridan Avenue to the west, and a planned protected bike lane on Yakima Avenue to the west. When these bike paths would be constructed is unknown.



VEHICLE ACCESS

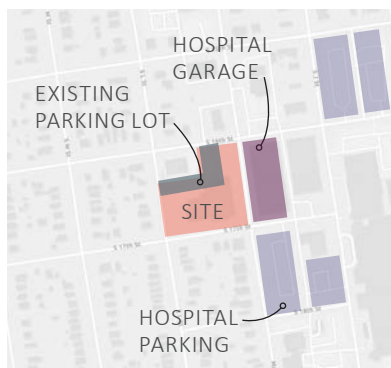
MLK Jr. Way is easily accessible for vehicles. It is connected to several cross streets, the largest of which are South 11th Street to the north of the site and South 19th Street to the south. Stop lights, stop signs, and crosswalks slow traffic in the area and the speed limit is 25 mph. The site's other adjacent streets are also accessible for vehicles, and are currently used to access the site. These roadways are well maintained, lined with trees, and feel large enough to accommodate library traffic.

HILLTOP SITE D: PEOPLE'S CENTER



SERVICE ACCESS

The site's current access point for service vehicles is from MLK Jr. Way. Since this is a high-traffic area and will soon have additional light rail activity, it is not the ideal location for service vehicles, garbage enclosures, etc. Site improvements could relocate the service access to one of the quieter streets adjacent to the site.



PARKING

The surrounding area has on-street parking along MLK Jr. Way as well as the adjacent neighborhood streets. Approximately 50% of the surrounding single family homes have driveways and garages, and the on-street parking is mostly available during the day. The community center has a dedicated parking lot with 44 spaces and the church has a smaller lot with 8 spaces. The parking garage across MLK Jr. Way is owned by St. Joseph's Medical Center, and is well used throughout the day. Further outreach could determine if the hospital has interest in opening up spaces in the garage or its other close-by lots to library users. Parking requirements may be reduced by the city based on the amount of public transit in the area.

Figure 156. Individual access diagrams for public transit, pedestrian access, bicycle access, service access, and parking. Base map source: City of Tacoma.

SITE EXPERIENCE

SENSORY EXPERIENCE

While site descriptions often focus on visual elements, a person's full experience includes all the senses; memory is strongest through smell, and wayfinding is enhanced through textural changes. A layered examination of sensory elements offers a richer "view" of the site.

SOUND

MLK Jr. Way is a vehicle route with steady road noise. The road produces 45 decibels, which is similar to the hum of a refrigerator. It has two lanes of moving traffic, and deciduous trees acting as a sound barrier. The west side of the site is quieter at 35 decibels because it is blocked from the busy street by the existing community center building. Towards the single family homes the sounds of birds, trees, and wind can be heard. Conversations, TVs, cooking, doors opening and closing, cars and sounds of play float through the neighborhood.



SMELL

Chlorine from the swimming pool is the dominant smell within People's Center. It also lingers just outside the visitor entrance, where it mixes with the smell of grass and asphalt. When it rains, the site smells of wet dirt and rain on pavement.



TOUCH & TEXTURE

Textures include leaves, grass, sun, wind, tree bark, water, metal gym equipment, basketballs, asphalt, concrete, and shade.



STREESCAPE

The experience along MLK Jr. Way changes gradually from the north side of the site to the south. The roadway remains consistent with two moving lanes of traffic and one central turn lane. The light rail will travel in the same lanes as the vehicles. Sidewalks on either side range in size and comfortably fit two people walking side by side at their narrowest portions. On-street parking spaces are available on both sides of the road between the moving traffic and the sidewalks. To the north, the street is lined with commercial buildings and is more active. Moving south, the density tapers down and the buildings are spaced further apart.

HILLTOP SITE D: PEOPLE’S CENTER

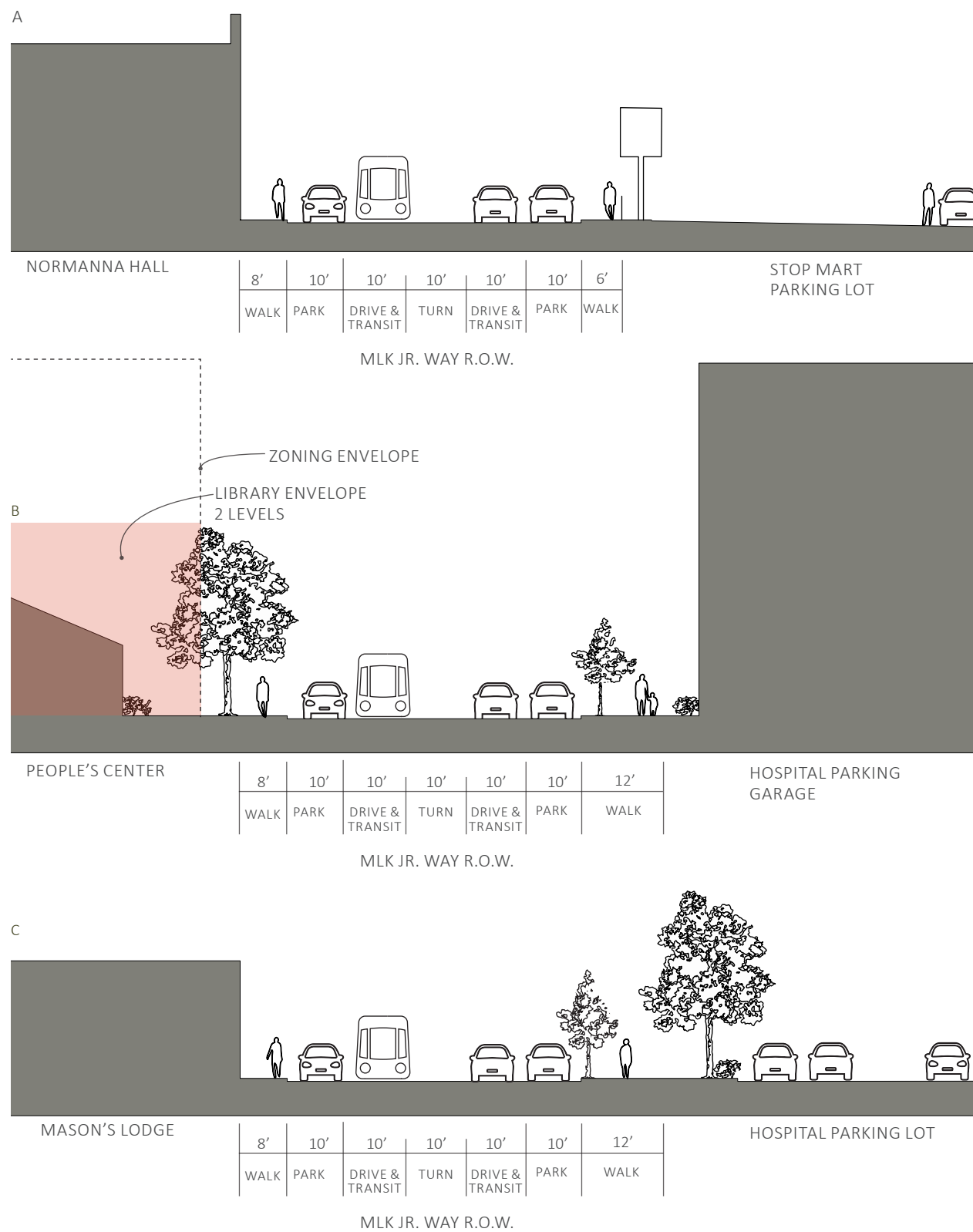


Figure 158. Street sections along MLK Jr. Way looking north. Distances are approximate.



Figure 161. Street section locations.

APPROACH AND VIEWS

The site is approached primarily from the north or south along MLK Way to the east. The east edge will be important for welcoming visitors as it is adjacent to the side walk, the future light rail track, and vehicle traffic. The northeast corner faces in the direction of Hilltop's main hub at 11th and MLK, although it is several blocks away. The southeast corner faces towards the future St. Joseph light rail station just half a block away. The east edge, especially at its corners, can act to orient drivers and visitors arriving by bus, bike, and foot.

From within the site, views to the east provide glimpses of activity along MLK. The existing street trees have low-hanging branches at the sidewalk that block continuous sightlines. Beyond the trees, the six-story parking garage across the street is a dominant feature, and some buildings can be seen to the north and south on MLK. The buildings include a police station, parts of the hospital campus, and a bright blue Masonic Temple. To the north, south, and west the views contain single family homes, yards, and trees along the roadways. The homes will benefit from screening, privacy, and additional plantings.

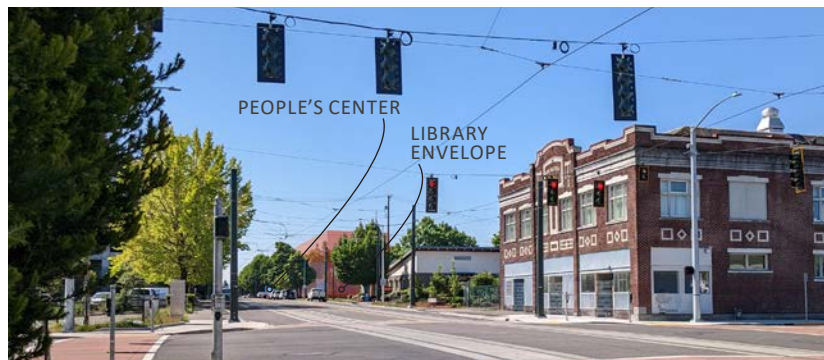


Figure 160. Approach on MLK Jr. Way from the north.



Figure 159. Approach on MLK Jr. Way from the south.



Figure 167. L Street Rain Garden signage.



Figure 168. Trees along MLK Jr. Way.



Figure 169. Native plantings along L street.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND ELEMENTS

The site is bordered by trees on all sides, the majority of which are deciduous. They represent a range of species, sizes, and ages. The sidewalks at the perimeter of the site and the existing parking lot benefit from the shade provided. Additional plantings are concentrated at the south and west edges of the building's swimming pool addition. The native species thrive in the Pacific Northwest climate, and support the "L Street Rain Garden Project" that runs to the west of the site. The remainder of the site is planted with grass that is regularly maintained.

LIGHTING & SECURITY

The site is bordered with existing street lighting on all sides. Within the site itself, limited fixtures illuminate the parking lot and building entrance. Activity around the site occurs mostly during daylight hours. Neighborhood safety is enhanced when the presence of community members can be felt

throughout the day. This can be achieved through the use of pedestrian walkways, visiting sidewalk cafes, gathering at outdoor seating, etc. The area would benefit from additional community evening activities. The police substation located adjacent to the northeast corner of the site is not staffed full time. No data exists to show if the police presence adds to the safety of the site.

DAYLIGHT ACCESS

The site has access to daylight year-round. Low buildings of 15-25 feet and street-level parking lots allow direct sunlight from the south and west, and indirect light from the north. Eastern light is blocked by the adjacent 6-story parking garage. The existing deciduous trees provide shade in the summer months, and full sun in the winter. However, additional shading will be needed to control heat gain in the warmer months. As zoning density increases, new 60-foot buildings will likely block some daylight to the south. To the west, the neighborhood scale will remain, as will the existing access to daylight.

ANALYSIS

SITE SYNOPSIS

The site is connected to public activity at its east edge at MLK Jr. Way. The main thoroughfare, future light rail service, and local business are all located along this street. Pedestrians have direct access to the site from the east edge, and will generally approach from the commercial hub to the north, and the St. Joseph light rail station to the south. Both the northeast and southeast corners of the site have the potential to welcome visitors in.

Directly east is a 6-story parking garage that acts as a block-long concrete wall along the sidewalk. The presence of the parking garage is a challenge for the site because it diminishes the pedestrian experience, blocks views, and limits eastern daylight.

The south, west, and north edges are encompassed by single family homes and quiet neighborhood streets. The western edge especially feels calm in comparison to the busy road and towering parking garage to the east. These edges present an opportunity for the site to meet a neighborhood scale which could include parking, landscaping, and public art.

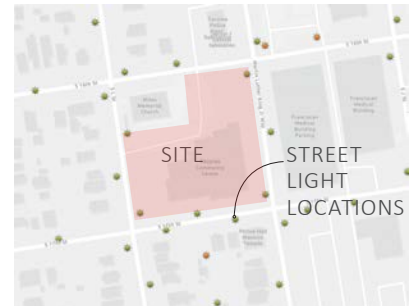


Figure 170. Street light locations. Source: City of Tacoma.

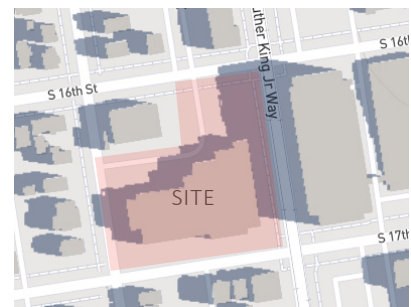


Figure 171. Site shading on the spring/autumn equinox at 8:00 a.m. Source: ShadeMap.

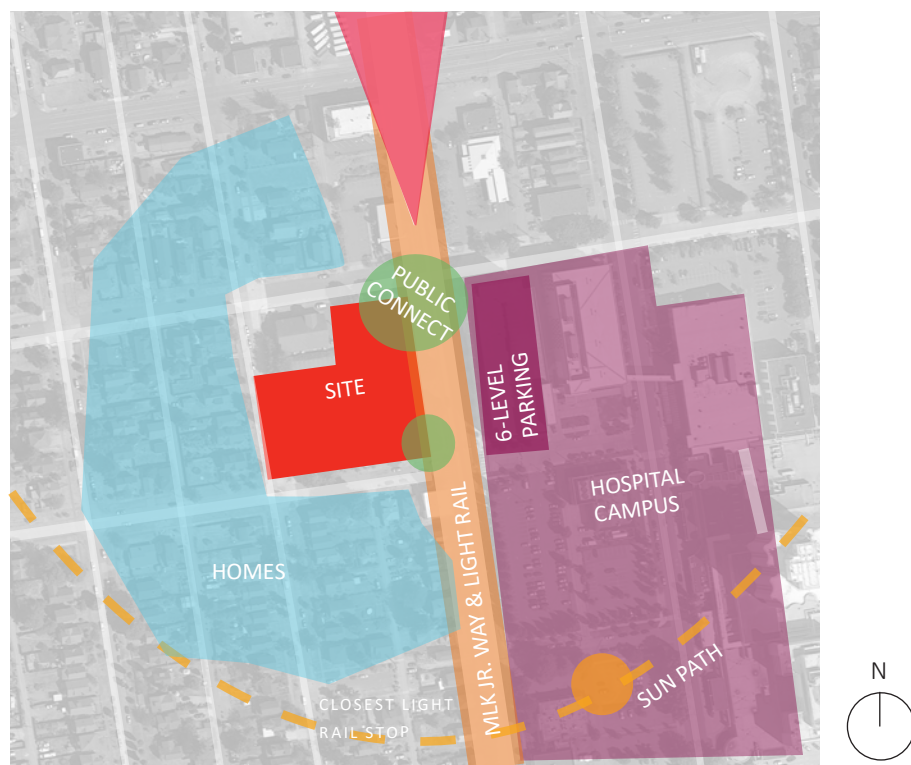


Figure 172. Site synopsis diagram.

PROGRAMMATIC OPPORTUNITIES

The following ideas for library programming were collected from community members through the *TPL Feasibility Report*. These reflect Hilltop-specific visions and desires:

- Programming, collections and art that celebrates and serves the Black community
- Space to make and display art and connect with local artists
- Space for creative writing
- Connections to other nonprofits and services on Hilltop
- Space to celebrate and host events
- A cafe space
- Classrooms and meeting spaces
- Play area for children
- Youth space
- A place to listen to audiobooks
- Public restrooms

MASSING

The site's available building area encompasses the existing community center structure and parking lot. This study assumes that a portion of

the community center will be remodeled or rebuilt as part of the project. The Miles Memorial Church at the northwest corner of the block is also included in the buildable area; the site cannot accommodate the library and community center without acquiring the church parcel. The property owners are aware that TPL is in the processes of studying the site as a potential library location.

In the massing diagram below, the library is shown as a simple rectangular mass, representing a two-story, 30,000 square-foot building. It is shown taller

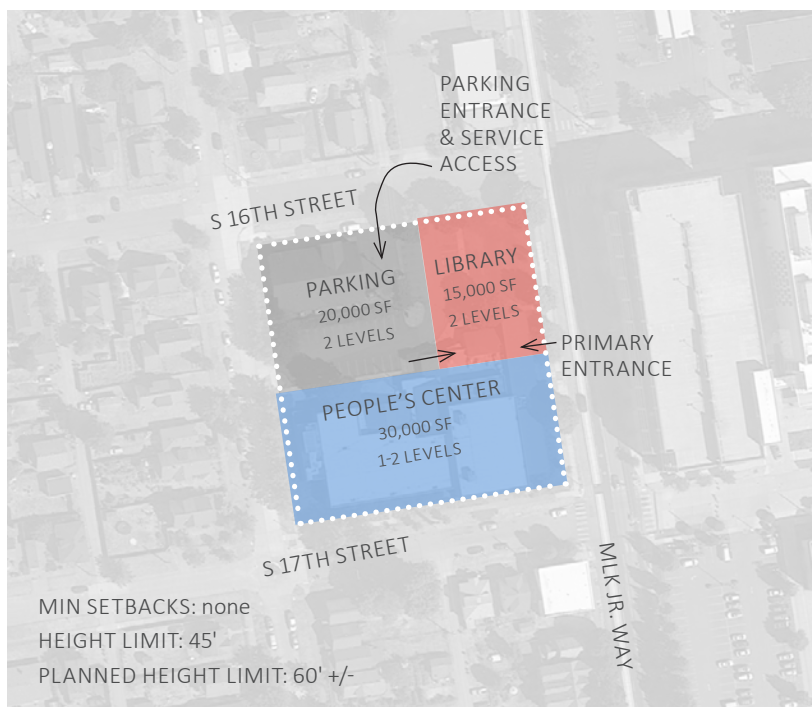


Figure 173. Massing site plan.



Figure 174. Massing diagram of building envelope.

than the community center to gain additional opportunities for daylighting. The siting allows for the community center to retain portions of the existing building, including the swimming pool. Both buildings have direct access to the parking lot and a public connection at MLK Jr. Way.

FEASIBILITY CONCLUSIONS

The site at People's Center is challenging for the co-location of a library and community center. The demands of both facilities on the site would require demolition of the church and significant alteration or demolition of the community center.

The site cannot currently accommodate separate structures for the library and community center as well as parking for all. Adding onto the existing People's Center structure is not feasible. Much of the building is in need of renovation and would be unable to support additional levels in its current condition. Additionally, the existing swimming pool limits uses on the ground floor, and a library needs most, if not all, of its services located at ground level. Structured parking is an option for meeting parking requirements, but is costly.

The following points contribute to the feasibility of the site:

- The location is accessible via several forms of transportation
- People's Center is an existing public space that attracts visitors. The combined uses will maximize the services provided.
- The land is owned by the City of Tacoma, greatly reducing project costs
- The zoning permits libraries
- The existing trees and landscape are mature and healthy

Challenges include:

- The location is just outside of Hilltop's current social/commercial center
- The existing buildings on the block will need to be demolished or substantially altered
- The adjacent parking garage blocks daylight and detracts from the pedestrian experience

PRECEDENTS

It is widely recognized that libraries are more than spaces for books. Recent developments in library design and programming reveal the benefits of libraries as social spaces. In “Palaces for the People,” Eric Klinenberg describes libraries as important parts of the “social infrastructure” – physical places that create and foster relationships. A robust social infrastructure helps form resilient, safe, and economically strong communities. Klinenberg explains:

Social infrastructure is crucially important, because local, face-to-face interactions – at the school, the playground, and the corner diner – are the building blocks of all public life. People forge bonds in places that have healthy social infrastructures – not because they set out to build community, but because when people engage in sustained, recurrent interaction, particularly while doing things they enjoy, relationships inevitably grow.

Contemporary libraries recognize the value of their space and are shifting programming to provide more options and opportunities for interaction. The following precedents represent the wide range of ways libraries are adding to the social infrastructure through unique site relationships, community connections, and innovative programming.



PRECEDENTS

NORTHTOWN LIBRARY AND APARTMENTS

CHICAGO, IL

16,000 FT² LIBRARY, 49,000 FT² HOUSING



ARCHITECT | PERKINS + WILL

2019



PARK

CORNER LOT

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

PUBLIC PARTNERSHIP

INTERGENERATIONAL

PUBLIC ART

OVERVIEW

Northtown Library is a collaboration between Chicago Public Library and Chicago Housing Authority. It combines a neighborhood branch library on the ground floor with affordable senior housing above.

SITE RELATIONSHIPS

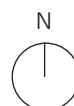
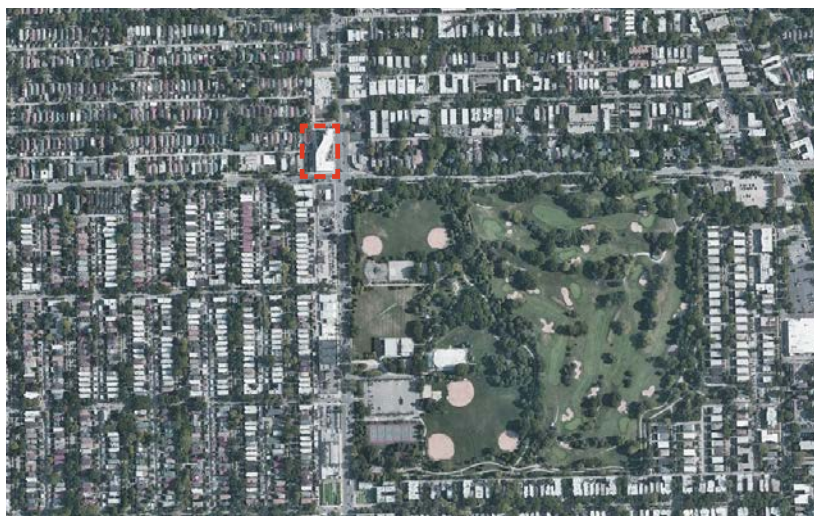
Northtown Library is located in Chicago's diverse West Ridge neighborhood. Several ethnicities, languages, and cultures are represented in the community. The library is situated along a commercial corridor with a mix of amenities including local restaurants, churches, convenience marts, and car dealerships. The surrounding area is dominated by single family homes and small apartment buildings. The library is on a prominent corner diagonally across from a park with sports fields and a golf course.

PUBLIC CONNECTION

The library sits at ground level with large windows highlighting the activity within. Users can enter at either end of the library, both of which offer public gathering spaces that are open after library hours. At the primary entrance, a two-story tall mural by a local artist welcomes visitors and can be seen through the windows by passersby. The envelope of the library is bright and open, with a beacon-like volume facing the busiest corner of the block.

SPACE FOR INNOVATION

Each of the two public gathering spaces are geared towards a unique set of activities. At one end the YouMedia Lab connects teens with technology. The other end features spaces that support community interaction with local artists. A community room and lobby support gatherings, performances, and an artist-in-residence.



PRECEDENTS

SANTA CRUZ DOWNTOWN LIBRARY MIXED-USE

SANTA CRUZ, CA

41,200 FT²



ARCHITECT | JAYSON ARCHITECTURE

2026



CO-LOCATION
AFFORDABLE HOUSING
STREET PRESENCE
URBAN/RESIDENTIAL
COMMUNITY GARDEN

OVERVIEW

The Santa Cruz Downtown Library is in development and is planned to be co-located with affordable housing.

SITE RELATIONSHIPS

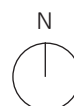
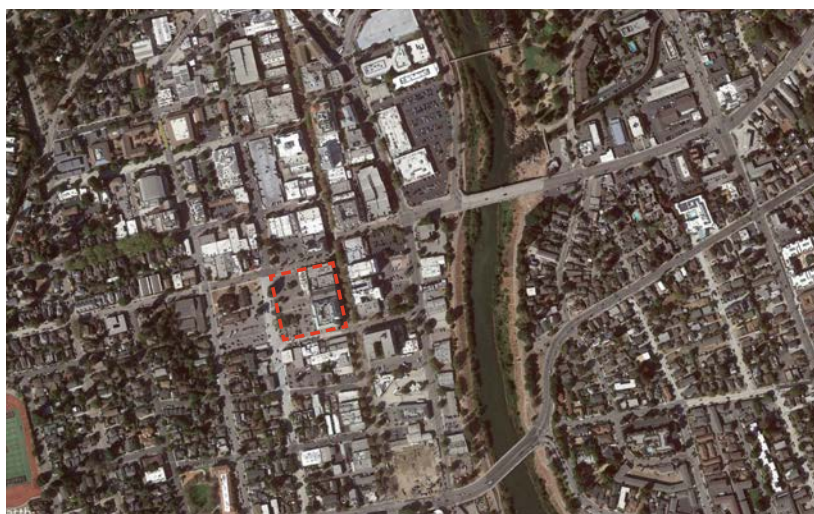
The project is in the heart of downtown Santa Cruz with easy pedestrian access from neighborhoods nearby. Several restaurants, shops, and cultural buildings are in a close vicinity to the site, and the library will add public space to an existing social hub.

PUBLIC CONNECTION

The library is located on the most prominent corner of the site. It has a direct connection with the sidewalk, while the housing rises above. The design aims to create a strong connection between the interior of the library and the street. The envelope is mostly glass and runs along the length of the sidewalk

SPACE FOR INNOVATION

The site is owned by the City of Santa Cruz and will provide space for the library and an affordable housing development led by Eden Housing and For the Future Housing. The co-location will concentrate valuable resources for community members. The project will also include space for a farmers market and community garden.



PRECEDENTS

FRANCIS A. GREGORY LIBRARY

WASHINGTON, D.C.

23,000 FT²



ARCHITECT | ADJAYE ASSOCIATES

2012



SOCIAL SPACE

RESIDENTIAL

INDOOR-OUTDOOR CONNECTION

INTERGENERATIONAL

SUSTAINABILITY

OVERVIEW

The Francis A. Gregory Library is an eye-catching public space on the edge of a densely-wooded park.

SITE RELATIONSHIPS

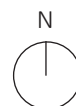
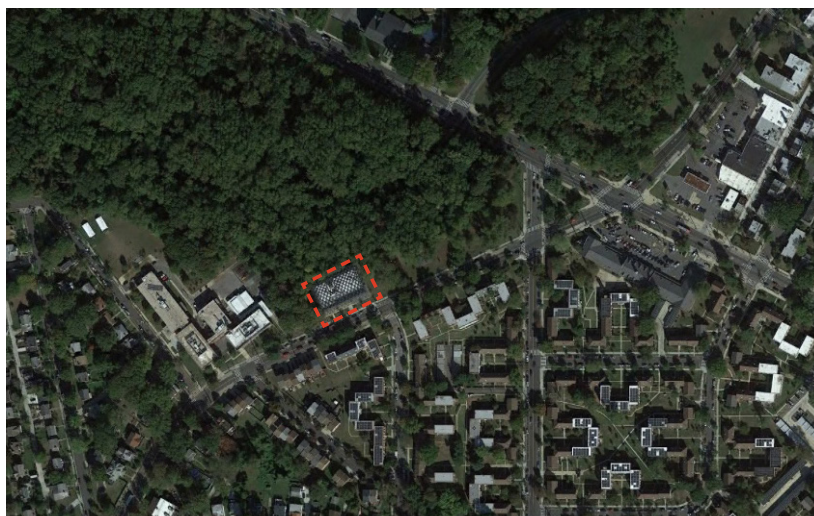
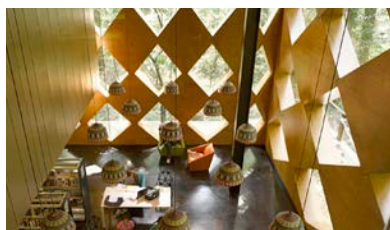
The library is located in Fairfax Village, Washington, D.C. This is a small neighborhood with several parks and consisting of mostly single-family homes. The library is directly adjacent to an elementary school. Both are located at the edge of a large green space that has a public hike-bike path. The remainder of the surrounding area is dominated by homes.

PUBLIC CONNECTION

The library's unique design attracts the attention of people travelling by foot, car, and public transit. A large canopy extends out from the building to welcome visitors. The interior of the library is designed to reinforce connections between learning, nature, and community. The transparency of the glass creates a bright interior space that links patrons to the green space and activity outside.

SPACE FOR INNOVATION

The Library contains a public meeting room and smaller conference rooms for gatherings of various sizes. It places learning centers for children, teens, and adults in open areas to create intergenerational connections. Quiet spaces include deep-set window boxes where visitors can experience unique views of the forest. The building also achieves LEED silver, deliberately placing windows to maximize winter sun while blocking summer sun with the large canopy.



PRECEDENTS

LAKE CITY BRANCH, SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

SEATTLE, WA

15,300 FT²



1965 ARCHITECT | JOHN MORSE

2004 ADDITION | ARC ARCHITECTS

2019 RENOVATION | SHKS ARCHITECTS



DIVERSE COMMUNITY

BUSY ROADWAY

FLEXIBILITY

HISTORIC BUILDING

SIGHTLINES

OVERVIEW

The Lake City Branch of the Seattle Public Library is an essential community space in one of Seattle's most diverse neighborhoods.

SITE RELATIONSHIPS

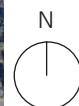
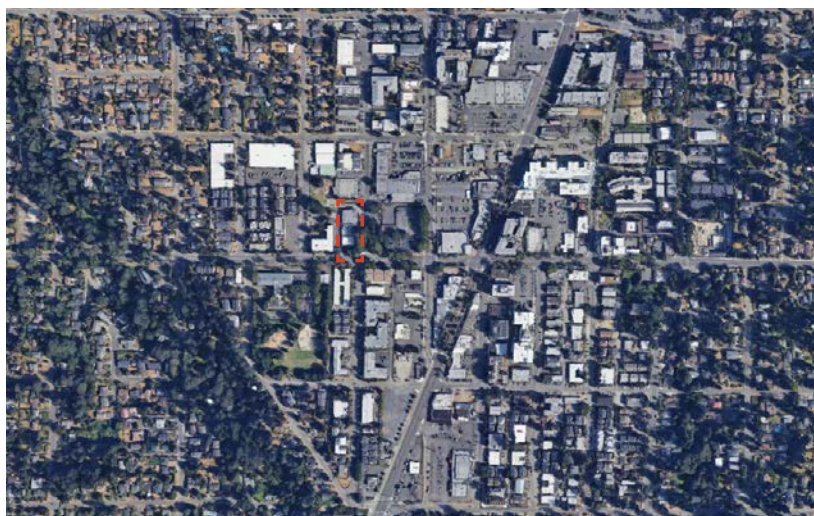
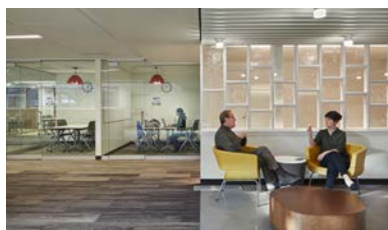
Lake City is home to a diverse population with many races, age groups, and languages represented. The library sits on the corner of a large arterial street. The surrounding area has several amenities including community centers, gyms, and restaurants.

PUBLIC CONNECTION

Designed by John Morse, the Lake City Branch Library was celebrated for its design at local and national levels when completed in 1965. The library became a City of Seattle landmark in 2001 and was modified in 2004 as part of an addition. The library is now among the most heavily used in the SPL system, serving one of the city's most diverse communities. Creative and thoughtful design choices were made to harmonize the three periods of construction while making space for new programs, changing technologies, and expanded uses.

SPACE FOR INNOVATION

Inside, a central welcoming space connects patrons with library staff, new books, holds, and information. Lower shelves allow for sightlines throughout the library, promoting safety. A diverse, flexible arrangement of spaces promotes social interaction and privacy while accommodating a range of meeting types.



PRECEDENTS

NORTHGATE LIBRARY AND NORTHGATE COMMUNITY CENTER

SEATTLE, WA

30,000 FT²



ARCHITECT | MILLER HULL

2006



COMBINED PUBLIC USE
CAMPUS
COMMERCIAL/RESIDENTIAL
PUBLIC TRANSIT
GREEN SPACE

OVERVIEW

The Northgate Library and Northgate Community Center connect a range of services throughout an easily accessible campus.

SITE RELATIONSHIPS

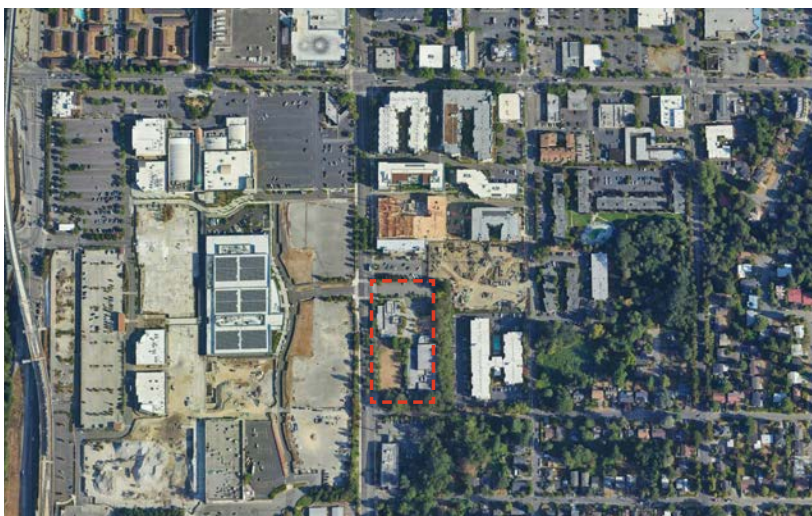
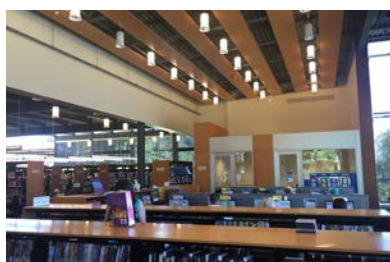
The library and community center are located between the Northgate Mall and a residential area to the east. The site acts as a connection between the two areas. Visitors can easily access the campus on public transportation; several bus lines stop directly in front of the library and a light rail station is within a short walk.

PUBLIC CONNECTION

Multiple entrances allow visitors to enter the site and the building from a range of directions. Pathways are lined with trees, and a large portion of the lot is maintained as an open green space. The natural elements create a welcoming entry within the surrounding hardscape of the mall. The library's main windows face the street and create a connection between the interior and exterior community spaces.

SPACE FOR INNOVATION

The campus atmosphere is activated by the open lawn, a shared plaza between the community center and library, and a playground. Visitors can take advantage of multiple resources in a single trip.



PRECEDENTS

WILLIAM O. LOCKRIDGE / BELLEVUE LIBRARY

WASHINGTON, D.C.

22,500 FT²



ARCHITECT | ADJAYE ASSOCIATES

2012



NEIGHBORHOOD SCALE

NEW PUBLIC HUB

SLOPED SITE

OUTDOOR GATHERING

ALL-AGES

OVERVIEW

The William O. Lockridge Library meets the scale of a residential neighborhood while providing a variety of spaces and resources.

SITE RELATIONSHIPS

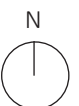
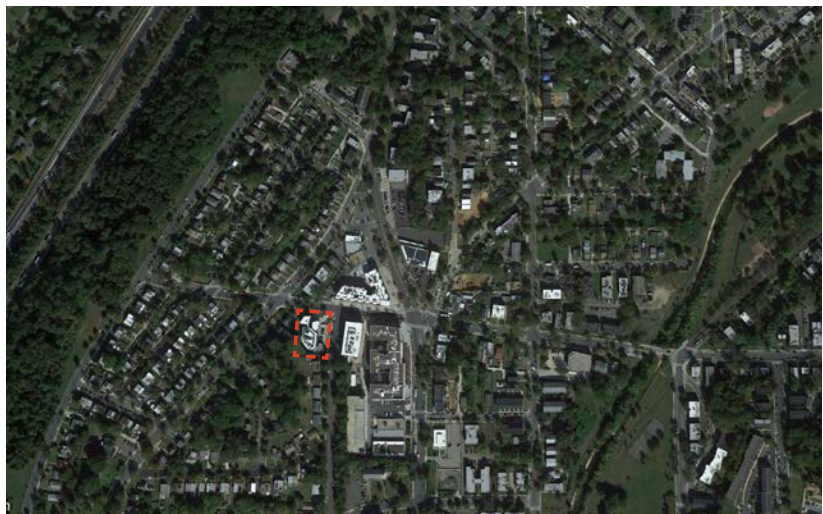
The library is in a largely residential area southeast of downtown Washington, D.C. The neighborhood contains several churches, parks, and schools, but there are few civic spaces in the immediate area. The library fits into the residential context by splitting its mass into four smaller volumes. The scale of each volume is more responsive to the surrounding homes than a monolithic mass would be.

PUBLIC CONNECTION

The public connection begins at ground level where the library's entrance is tucked under the floating volumes. The space also serves as outdoor portico for community gathering. The upper volumes protect the entry while highlighting views out into the neighborhood. The large frame-like windows act as beacons for passersby.

SPACE FOR INNOVATION

The library's four volumes create four distinct programmatic spaces. The main structure contains the central stacks, while areas for kids, teens, and adults are separated into the elevated blocks. The outdoor portico is used for informal events and gatherings.



PRECEDENTS

SEDRO-WOOLLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY

SEDRO-WOOLLEY, WA

12,000 FT²



ARCHITECT | SHKS ARCHITECTS

2021



COMMUNITY INPUT
LIFE-LONG LEARNING
FLEXIBILITY
SUSTAINABILITY
CULTURAL ATTRACTION

OVERVIEW

The Central Skagit Sedro-Woolley Library is a beacon for learning in an area with few public spaces. It was developed in collaboration with community members, city personnel, and library staff.

SITE RELATIONSHIPS

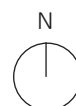
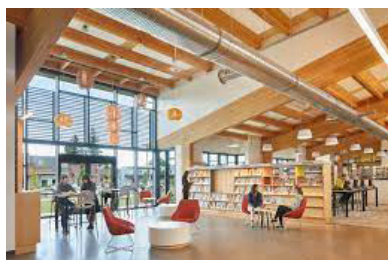
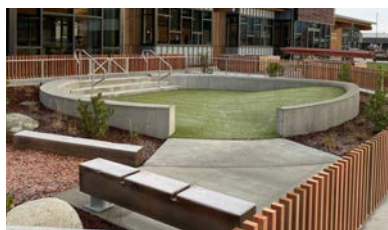
The building's siting, with its extensive frontage to the west of the downtown core, makes it a visible landmark for residents and visitors as they enter the city. Its presence as an iconic educational reference point makes it a cultural attraction. It draws people from Main Street to the library's front plaza and its open gathering spaces.

PUBLIC CONNECTION

The design of the library draws inspiration directly from the community. It reflects the residents' tradition of manufacturing, and responds to the town's desire to expand activity throughout the downtown area. The new building connects the community's past, present, and future and creates opportunities for all age groups to engage in life-long learning.

SPACE FOR INNOVATION

The library combines emerging and traditional library programs in a flexible building. Multi-use space for STE(A)M group activities, teens/tweens areas, enhanced Early Learning Through Play, and 50+ Senior Space for lifelong learning complement the expanded collections and quiet reading spaces. Conference rooms and a central gathering space provide areas for community-building, and co-working spaces allow for collaboration.



PRECEDENTS

BALLARD BRANCH, SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

SEATTLE, WA

18,600 FT²



ARCHITECT | BOHLIN CYWINSKI JAKSON

2001



SERVICE CENTER

CO-LOCATION

SUSTAINABILITY

URBAN/RESIDENTAL

PARK

OVERVIEW

The Ballard Branch of the Seattle Public Library is co-located with a City of Seattle Customer Service Center. The partnership maximizes the amount of resources provided in a single public building.

SITE RELATIONSHIPS

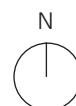
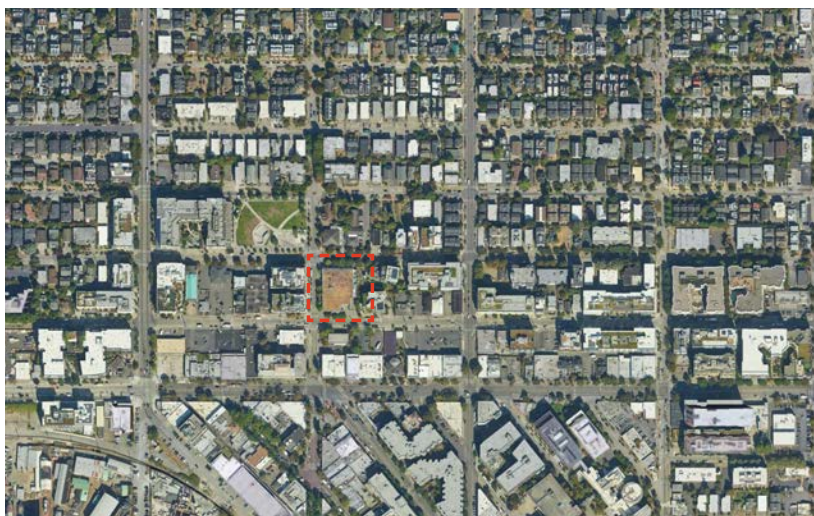
The library is located in the heart of the Ballard neighborhood just one block north of the main commercial strip. It is close to businesses, restaurants, multi-family housing, and the Ballard Commons Park. The building's scale fits both the urban and residential contexts of the area.

PUBLIC CONNECTION

The entrance to the library is sheltered by a large, curved roof. It is a gathering space for library users and passersby. Visitors enter the building into a vestibule which offers access to public restrooms. The public space then continues into the main reading room, collections, and the City of Seattle Customer Service Center. The north and east edges are adjacent to busy pedestrian walkways and are predominantly glazed to allow for views in and out.

SPACE FOR INNOVATION

The Customer Service Center is located inside the Ballard Library and is one of several satellite locations that provide access to city resources. It is operated by the City of Seattle who considers the spaces to be "little city halls." Residents can pay bills, apply for a passport, get legal advice, and use a computer.



PRECEDENTS

SKYWAY LIBRARY

SEATTLE, WA

8,000 FT²



ARCHITECT | BUILDINGWORK, WEINSTEIN A+U

2016



UNDERSERVED COMMUNITY

NEW PUBLIC HUB

BEACON

INDOOR-OUTDOOR CONNECTION

GATHERING

OVERVIEW

The Skyway Library represents a major civic investment in an underserved community.

SITE RELATIONSHIPS

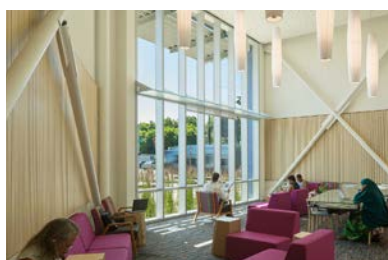
Skyway is a low-income community with few public spaces. The library provides needed resources for gathering, learning, and connecting to nature. It is located on a corner lot along a commercial corridor with auto shops, restaurants, salons, religious centers, and other amenities. There is little green space on the adjacent properties, and limited pedestrian walkways.

PUBLIC CONNECTION

The library stands out as a prominent building in Skyway. It celebrates the community through bold colors and a welcoming entrance. A public plaza provides a gathering space with seating and hosts a weekly farmers market, voter registration drives, and other community events. The shades of blue on the façade mirror the sky at dusk and dawn, bringing nature into the structure, and landscaped areas outside add needed green space to the neighborhood.

SPACE FOR INNOVATION

The “living room” is the library’s main gathering space. The area features a communal study table, allowing people to focus on work while being in a community space. The children’s area is decorated with children’s art, and a sliding glass wall is used to create a larger space used for after-school programs. A swath of large windows on the southeast edge provides a view of Mount Rainier.



PRECEDENTS

VALLILA LIBRARY AND DAYCARE CENTER

HELSINKI, FINLAND

18,000 FT²



ARCHITECT | HELANDER LEIVISKÄ ARCHITECTS

1991



QUIET
PROTECTED
MIXED-USE
URBAN
DAYCARE

OVERVIEW

This neighborhood library shares a site with a daycare. Together they create a quiet courtyard that benefits both programs.

SITE RELATIONSHIPS

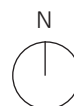
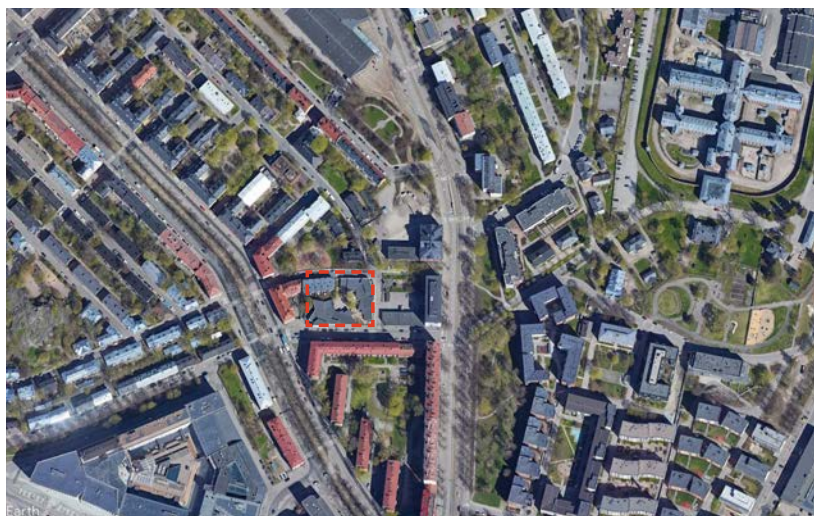
The library is located in a residential neighborhood north of Helsinki. A busy four-lane road is to the west of the site. The design is focused around a courtyard at the center of the site, sheltering visitors from the roadway.

PUBLIC CONNECTION

The space has an inward, sanctuary-like feel. There is limited glazing towards the street; the lone windows on this side mark the entrance. The majority of the library's windows line the courtyard space and create a welcoming public space at the interior of the block.

SPACE FOR INNOVATION

The library is screened from the street, giving visitors a distraction-free space to read, study, and learn. The protected space is also ideal for the daycare. The shared courtyard provides a calm, sunny area for both reading, chatting, and playing.



PRECEDENTS

FAYETTEVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

FAYETTEVILLE, ARKANSAS

169,641 FT²



ARCHITECT | MSR DESIGN

2021 EXPANSION



TEACHING KITCHEN

RECORDING STUDIO

LANDSCAPING

INTERACTIVE

BIKE PATH

OVERVIEW

The Fayetteville Public Library Expansion is dedicated to innovative programming, arts, and community.

SITE RELATIONSHIPS

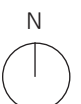
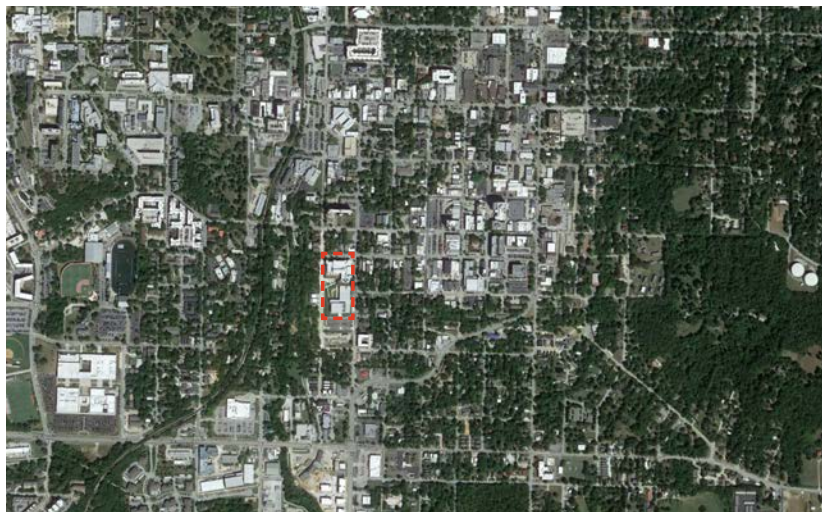
The library lies on the periphery of the Fayetteville town center. The area has a mix of eateries, shops, churches, and municipal buildings as well as single family homes. A portion of the Frisco Trail is just across the street from the library. This pedestrian and bike path is surrounded by green space and links the library to much of Fayetteville.

PUBLIC CONNECTION

Exterior public spaces line the library at its edges. Lawns and seating areas invite people to gather and are adjacent to the most transparent parts of the building. Activity both inside and out is seen through the large windows. The library is easily accessible via car, bus, and bike. Bike parking is highlighted at the main entrance for those coming off the Frisco Trail.

SPACE FOR INNOVATION

The library expansion provides space for innovative programming including studios for recording, video, photography, virtual reality and editing, a yoga studio, a lounge and gaming center oriented towards teens, and a teaching kitchen. Spaces for making and displaying art weave throughout the building.



PRECEDENTS

BILLINGS PUBLIC LIBRARY

BILLINGS, MONTANA

66,725 FT²



ARCHITECT | WILL BRUDER+PARTNERS

2015



BUSY ROADWAY
TRANSPARENCY
FLEXIBILITY
GATHERING SPACE
SUSTAINABILITY

OVERVIEW

The Billings Public Library responsiveness to the surrounding natural and built environment creates a clear welcoming and functional public space.

SITE RELATIONSHIPS

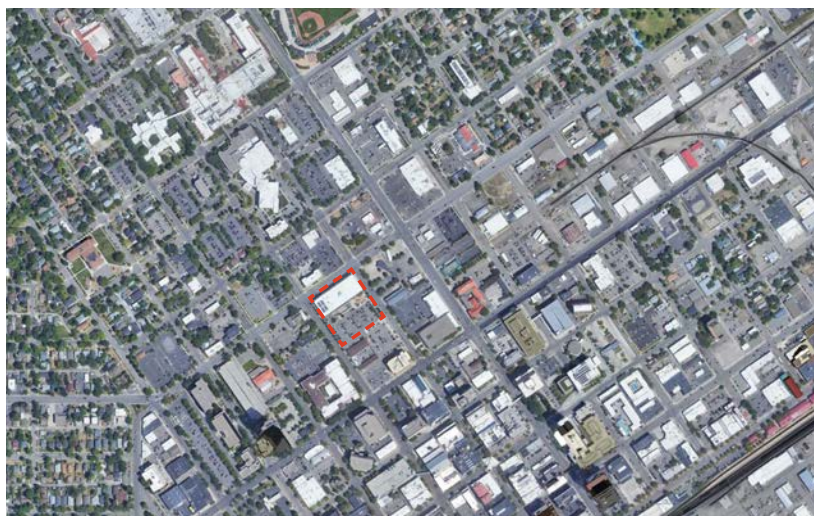
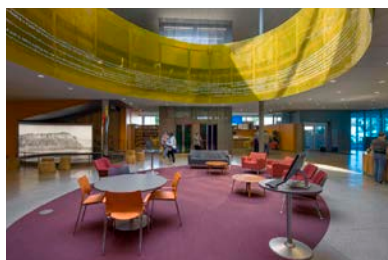
The library is located on the edge of Billings' urban center. It is close to restaurants, amenities, and the Yellowstone Art Museum, and the city's main residential area is only three blocks away. The northwest edge of the library runs along a busy four-lane road. In the distance are the natural Rimrocks formations that influences the design of the building.

PUBLIC CONNECTION

The southeast edge of the library is protected from the busy road and serves as the primary visitor entrance. It provides green pathways from the surrounding sidewalks and parking lot, as well as seating areas. Glazing wraps around the building creating visibility between the inside and outside. To the northwest translucent glass allows light in but blocks the view of the road. The colorful glass panels create interest while screening the vehicle traffic.

SPACE FOR INNOVATION

Much of the library is designed to be flexible, allowing for future growth and change. Activity-specific programming is concentrated to maximize the open spaces. This includes a digital studio oriented towards teens. They can create a range of projects with cameras, tablets, software, and instruments.



PRECEDENTS

DOKK1

AARHUS, DENMARK

188,000 (LIBRARY) FT², 650,000 (TOTAL) FT²



ARCHITECT | SCHMIDT HAMMER LASSEN ARCHITECTS AND KRISTINE JENSEN

2015



PLAYGROUND

URBAN

WATERFRONT

PERFORMANCE SPACE

TRANSPORATION CENTER

OVERVIEW

DOKK1 is a public building that includes library, government, arts, and business facilities. The library is celebrated for its innovative mix of programmatic space.

SITE RELATIONSHIPS

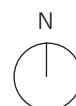
DOKK1 is located in a prominent location on the Aarhus waterfront. It is in the city center and is in close proximity to many theaters, museums, and other cultural institutions. The structure is surrounded by water on three sides, but is accessible by car, public transit, and pedestrian walkways. A light rail station occupies a portion of the building, and a ferry terminal is adjacent to the site. The library activates the first and second floors of the structure, incorporating theaters and dining areas throughout the more traditional reading spaces.

PUBLIC CONNECTION

DOKK1 is a dominant part of the Aarhus skyline. The large windows on the lower floors showcase the facilities inside, while the expansive outdoor patio space and steps invite passersby to rest and enjoy the waterfront view. There are large entrances adjacent to both the street and the ferry terminal, allowing for local and regional access. A public playground surrounds the building and invites visitors to interact with the colorful sculptures.

SPACE FOR INNOVATION

In addition to the collections, the library contains theaters, gathering halls, outdoor lounges, and spaces for children. It also has areas for specific functions, including project rooms, study cells, gaming areas, citizens' services, and a media lounge for teens. The library combines learning spaces with performance spaces to create a community hub, leaving all levels partially open to create a connected space.



REFERENCES

TACOMA MUNICIPAL CODE

<https://cms.cityoftacoma.org/cityclerk/files/municipalcode/title13-landuseregulatorycode.pdf>

ONE TACOMA PLAN

https://www.cityoftacoma.org/government/city_departments/planning_and_development_services/planning_services/one_tacoma__comprehensive_plan

HOME IN TACOMA PROJECT

<https://www.cityoftacoma.org/cms/one.aspx?pageId=180033>

HILLTOP SUBAREA PLAN

<https://www.cityoftacoma.org/cms/one.aspx?pageId=15729>

CITY OF TACOMA 2030 CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

<https://www.cityoftacoma.org/cms/one.aspx?pageId=193914>

FIRST CREEK ACTION PLAN

<https://www.cityoftacoma.org/cms/one.aspx?pageId=36492>