

Graham Street: A Community Driven Neighborhood Vision



Acknowledgments

This vision is brought to you by the hundreds of community stakeholders who shared their knowledge and time with us. The following individuals and organizations comprised the teams of people that made the visioning process work and who are committed to organizing together to make our vision a reality.

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Our work was made possible by grants from

King County's Communities of Opportunity

The Ford Foundation

The Kresge Foundation

The Seattle Foundation

“The heart
learns what the
hands do.”

Movement Generation
Justice and Ecology Project

Introduction

Our vision allows us to imagine the world we want to live in. It's not just about the challenges we face now or in the future. It's not the opposite of what's wrong, but the affirmative of what would be right. While we have to find solutions to immediate threats and looming challenges, we also have to know where we are going and why. Our vision will help guide us through the challenges and forces beyond our control that we will face in the next 10 years.

Our vision puts community stakeholders and people of color at the center of that future, not the margins. Our vision states that we who have built resilience and cohesion over past decades should lead in building that future. We are lifting up communities that usually are left out of planning and decision making.

Our vision is not set in stone. We see it as a living thing that will change and improve over time, as old and new hands shape it. We anticipate many new ideas, some conflicting, that will make it better.

We hope this vision can be used by our communities as a source of inspiration. We hope that policy makers use it to guide their decisions on who gets to benefit from public investment. We hope that our vision shapes the physical and social environment for the next generation. We hope that people who come to make money in our community from land-use it to understand how to do their role better.

In the following sections, you will find:

1 The story of who we are and why we did this.

2 What we learned from the process.

3 What we imagine for our future.

**PART I.
THE STORY OF WHO WE ARE
AND WHY WE DID THIS**

We are the Graham Street Neighborhood

We found ourselves here in many different ways. Some of us came a long time ago. Some of us came recently. Many of us grew up in Seattle. Many of us grew up across the globe. We are black, brown, and white. We are Filipino/a, Somali, Ethiopian, Vietnamese, Cham, African American, Latinx, American, and much more. We are Muslim, Buddhist, Christian, and more. We speak many languages, but share the same home.

We do many things in our community—raise our families, go to school, work, worship, celebrate, do business, shop, build, care-give, and hope for the future. We are youth, elders, and everyone in between. We are strong and resilient together.

Some of us no longer live here because rent became too expensive or we didn't own land. But we frequently return because our families, businesses, schools, cultural centers, and places of worship are still here. We have roots here.

For all of these reasons, and despite increasing economic pressure to make us leave, we intend to stay.

In 10 years, Sound Transit will build a new light rail station. That station will connect our neighborhood to opportunities across the region – including jobs, schools, goods, and services. Along with the new station will come a hub of new business space, new homes, and new infrastructure. We imagine our community benefiting from this invest-

ment, by building on what we already have and what makes us strong.

We know that new people will also want to move to be near the station, many of whom can afford higher priced homes. Just as we have seen with the other stations along the light rail, this could increase economic pressure to move far away where homes and business space is more affordable. We see that after huge public investments in things like light rail, new libraries, new community centers, new parks, and new schools, the people who have made a neighborhood home often don't benefit because rents and home prices rise as a result. We also have seen how a huge public construction project can close businesses too long for them to survive.

But we see a different outcome - a future Graham Street where both the existing community and new people can all benefit from the station and other public investment. We imagine a community where we aren't leaving it up to other people, whether the City or for-profit developers, to plan our future. We imagine owning land, overturning the dirt, constructing things, and building community power for local governance.

This is our vision to stay and prosper in the Graham Street neighborhood.



Filipino Community Center Youth plan for the scale of development and uses along MLK Jr. Way S.

WHO IS TELLING THIS STORY?

The Graham Street Community Action Team

The Community Action Team (CAT) comprises local leaders, businesses, and institutions that are deeply committed to preserving and growing our community. The CAT started meeting in early 2018 with a goal to develop a vision for the Graham Street neighborhood that placed existing stakeholders at the center of planning for a new station. As a group of local organizations, we hope to inspire our community to plan, own, and build our future neighborhood.

Cham Refugees Community



Cham Refugees Community first opened its doors to serve the ethnic Cham population from Vietnam and Cambodia more than 30 years ago. Today, it is a non-profit agency serving the local Muslim refugee and immigrant communities in Seattle and the surrounding areas by providing family and community-focused services. The organization continues to serve ethnic Cham populations, and newly arrived refugees from East Africa, Iraq and Burma (Rohingya). Annually, the organization sees more than 1600 individuals and families in Seattle and South King County, who utilizes our facility and services.

Filipino Community of Seattle



Filipino Community of Seattle is committed to promoting cultural diversity, ethnic pride, unity, and educational and socioeconomic empowerment among Filipino Americans in the Pacific Northwest. The organization leads youth programs, senior services and programming, and cultural and arts programs. FCS is one of the oldest community institutions in the neighborhood.

Co Lam Pagoda



Co Lam Pagoda is a Vietnamese serving Buddhist Temple. The temple opened in 2000 and serves more than 300 people each week through religious services and youth programs.

Somali Community Services of Seattle

Somali Community Services of Seattle works towards the success of refugees to undergo a smooth transitional process, and attain self-sustainable status in their new country.

Al Noor Islamic Center of WA



Al-Noor Islamic Center of Washington was established in 2004 and serves 600 community members each week through prayer and youth programming. They offer Islamic studies programs, family and youth counseling, mental health services, know your rights workshops, and community outreach programs.

Bethany UCC



Bethany United Church of Christ, better known by the people as Beloved Bethany Community for its ministry and vision in seeking faithfully to be God's Beloved Community, courageously opened its doors in the cold winter month of December 2000.

Tenants Union of WA

Tenants Union of WA works to create housing justice through empowerment-based education, outreach, leadership development, organizing, and advocacy. Founded in 1977, the TU carries on a proud legacy of work to create concrete improvements in tenants'

living conditions and challenge and transform unjust housing policies and practices. As a membership organization, the TU's work is grounded in the strong conviction that tenants must be the leaders of efforts to transform our housing conditions and communities.

Debre Mihret Kidus Michael Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church



Debre Medhin-Medici Michael Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church was established in November 2001 and serves Ethiopian and Amharic speaking populations in Seattle and the region.

Somali Health Board

The Somali Health Board works to reduce health disparities of Somali immigrants and refugees and to improve health outcomes within the communities by: advocating for and ensuring culturally/religiously appropriate and relevant policies and services within the health systems; developing and implementing meaningful partnership with the health systems; developing mutual education for providers and community leaders.

South Communities Organizing for Racial and Regional Equity

South CORE is a 20-member coalition of people of color-led organizations, from the International District to Rainier Beach,

formed to provide a collective voice for planning and development along the light rail. Our goal is to support community driven and inspired development in the greater Rainier Valley. Since 2013, South CORE has helped win a more equitable Comprehensive Plan for the City of Seattle, a groundbreaking assessment of displacement risk to guide City-wide planning, a new City program to fund community-driven equitable development projects, and equitable surplus property practices at the City and Sound Transit that favor community-led projects.

Puget Sound Sage

Puget Sound Sage has worked over the past 10 years to build a city where communities of color and low-income communities benefit directly from Seattle's economic growth. We work to ensure that the families who power the city's growth aren't pushed out due to rising costs. We fundamentally believe that development without displacement is possible when communities of color and low-income communities are able to directly benefit from growth and direct major decisions about how development occurs. Sage helped found and facilitates South CORE. Puget Sound Sage is the recipient of foundation and King County COO funding to resource both South CORE, the CAT, and all of the visioning activities led by the CAT.





Vietnamese stakeholders desires for the future of the neighborhood.

Our Community Process

We set out to plan differently. Traditional planning processes, often led by government, planning consultants, or private developers, emphasize community input on physical improvements to a neighborhood, like open space, lighting, public art and facades. While relevant, we believe this limited kind of planning fails to address fundamental issues of ownership and control. Planning that does not help low-income communities and communities of color thrive in place or change systems required for development without displacement will fail those involved. We have modeled the Graham Street planning process as a community driven and community led planning process to ensure that we're both addressing the physical improvements to the neighborhood AND building the power to address the underlying structural and systemic barriers, resulting in a better plan with stronger implementation.

Our strategy for Graham Street visioning starts with the Community Action Team (CAT). The CAT represents organizations with large, diverse memberships and well-connected community leaders. Collectively, the CAT brings not only expertise about residents, businesses, and cultural institutions, but also can reach their own members in culturally relevant contexts. The key to a truly participatory process is harnessing the power of organizations to engage their own way with their constituents.

In January 2018, South CORE and Puget Sound

Sage engaged with a dozen local organizations and leaders, resulting in eight initial members forming the CAT. Through King County's Communities of Opportunity program, we were able to provide funding for each to compensate for staff time and organizational resources throughout the year. Sage provided a community organizer and community planner to facilitate the process.

Early in the year, the CAT, Puget Sound Sage, and South CORE helped shape the agenda for the vision process. We launched what became three efforts to get maximum community participation and direction:

1. Community-wide, multilingual planning sessions to identify existing assets we can build on and aspirations for around the new station.
2. Surveys of businesses, tenants, and homeowners.
3. Listening sessions with each CAT organizations' own members to get reflections on what we learned in the planning sessions.

Throughout the visioning process, over 2,000 people were reached and 500 directly participated.



PART II.

What We Learned From The Process

To know where we are going, we have to know where we are. While we all hold expertise and wisdom about our communities, we want to ground our vision in a shared understanding of the whole picture that will affect us in the future. We recognize that we have much to learn from each other and much to learn about physical landscape around us. To guide the visioning process we investigated the following conditions:

Who calls our neighborhood home?

What rules currently apply to how we use land
and who is planning to build?

What infrastructure supports our neighborhood?

How healthy is our environment, now
and in the face of climate change?

What is the scale and character of our
local business community?

How stable or unstable are current
residents in their homes?



Determining scale of development and uses.

Othello
Residential Urban Village

What We Learned

→ Who calls our neighborhood home?

Graham Street is a diverse neighborhood, and significantly more diverse than the City of Seattle as a whole.¹ Results from the 5-year 2016 American Community Survey (Figure 1), show that 42 percent of residents identified as Asian, 25 percent as Black, 24 percent as white, five percent identified as multi-racial, two percent as other, one percent as Native American, and one percent as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. To compare, citywide, nearly 70 percent of residents identify as white, 14 percent and Asian, and seven percent as Black. Finally, close to six percent of residents in the Graham Street neighborhood identify as Latinx, matching percentages citywide.

Relative to the City of Seattle, the Graham neighborhood has a higher percentage of young (under 20) and older (over 75) residents. Graham also has a much higher average family size of nearly four, while family size in the City of Seattle hovers just under 3 people.

More than 50 percent of residents reported speaking a language other than English. Citywide, only 20 percent of residents reported speaking a language other than English.

Of residents over the age of 25, nearly a quarter reported that they had finished high school, 25 percent had completed some college or an Associates Degree. Just over 20 percent of residents had a bachelor's degree and less than ten percent of residents had completed an advanced degree.

Excluding income from public benefits and

Figure 1. Residents by Race in Graham Street Neighborhood —2016 American Community Survey

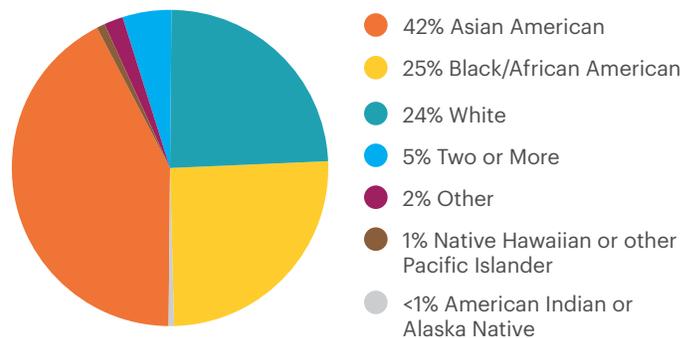
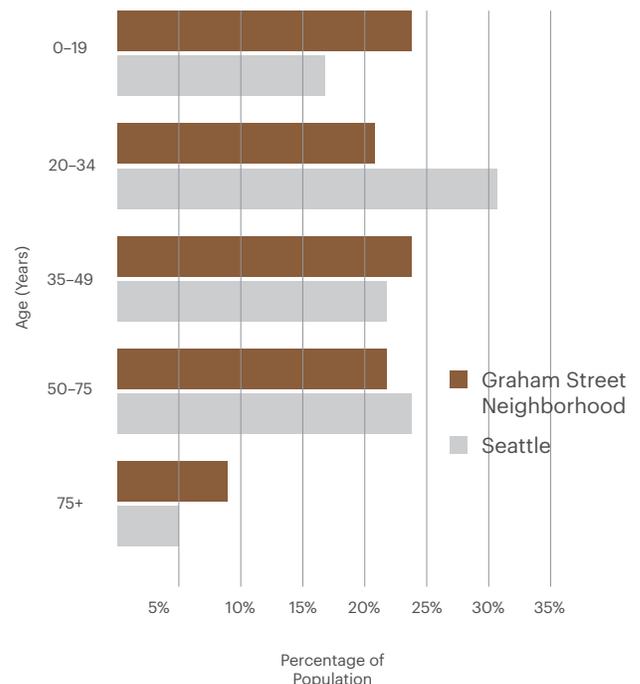


Figure 2. Residents by Age in Graham Street Neighborhood, compared to Seattle



subsidies, nearly 15 percent of households in the Graham Street neighborhood reported earning less than \$10,000 annually. This group includes households on a fixed income, such as seniors. Close to 30 percent of households earn less than \$35,000 per year. For scale, a full-time minimum wage job pays just above \$31,000 annually. More than 40 percent of all households in the neighborhood earn less than minimum wage. Residents of Graham Street are disproportionately low-income compared to fewer than 30 percent of households citywide earning less than minimum wage.

Renters of the Graham Street neighborhood feel the pressure from the housing and displacement crisis of the region. More than half of all renters in the neighborhood pay more than 1/3rd of their household income on housing costs.

→ City Rules and Land Ownership

Zoning and Land Use

The City creates and applies a set of rules, called zoning, across Seattle that specify how big buildings can be, what they can be used for, and how much can go in them. Generally speaking, the zoning code primarily applies to new construction or major renovations rather than buildings that have been in place for long time. Most of the properties to the East of MLK Way are zoned for single family homes. All of the properties that abut MLK Way are zoned for commercial use with an allowable height of 65 feet, ranging from four to five floors. Surrounding the intersection of MLK and Graham, several parcels are zoned Low-Rise 3, which allow smaller apartment buildings, town homes, and row houses. Most of the property in these commercial and low-rise areas have one to two-floor commercial spaces, such as retail strip centers, community centers, or offices, and small, auto-oriented facilities.

The City of Seattle has proposed rezoning Seattle's urban villages, including the Othello Urban village where the future Graham Street station is located. The purpose of the rezone is to increase development capacity in exchange for a requirement that new buildings have to include affordable housing or contribute to an affordable housing fund. The rezone at Othello will allow for taller, mixed-use buildings and more dense housing types close to the

existing station, including cottages, townhouses, duplexes, and apartment buildings. However, the City of Seattle has agreed to delay any major zoning changes around the future Graham Street Station so as to respect the community driven process to define a vision for the neighborhood. Instead, the City will make small height increases along MLK way and Graham Street so that the affordable housing requirement can be implemented.

Land Ownership

We studied over 85 properties to determine the scale of ownership by individuals and businesses. Ownership of multiple properties by one person or company that are clustered together can indicate plans for development. The 85 properties represent most of the privately-owned land within the urban village around the station. We found that the vast majority of the parcels in the neighborhood are owned by individuals or families rather than investment companies.

Plans for Vacant Land

There are a significant number of vacant properties and lots around the intersection of MLK Way and S. Graham St. According to the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections, several permits have already been approved to develop multi-family or single-family homes on these parcels.

Figure 3. Plots of Land along MLK Way S. and Graham St. that are to be developed.





→ Local Infrastructure

To learn about our infrastructure – the physical and public investments that enable activity – we focused on publicly subsidized housing and publicly funded transportation.

Affordable Housing

Multiple affordable housing developments are located in or planned for the Graham Station area.

King Way Apartments

This garden-style apartment community on seven acres offers large one, two, and three-bedroom units, as well as some town homes. Bellwether Housing owns and operates the building, which serves 164 households earning below 50% and 80% of area median income.

Katharine's Place

Katharine's Place provides 25 units of low-income family housing in Seattle's Rainier Valley, with some units set aside for families with special needs. Fifteen units are subsidized by Seattle Housing Authority and are designated as permanent housing units for homeless families with children.

Rainier Vista and New Holly

The Seattle Housing Authority owns and operates 385 units at Rainier Vista (several blocks north of Graham Street) and 620 units at New Holly of majority family-sized affordable housing units (beginning a few blocks south of Graham Street). Both Rainier Vista and New Holly are mixed income developments, with private market rate housing developments integrated with low-income units.

Filipino Village (Planned)

The Filipino Community Village of Seattle is a first of its kind project that will provide 68-units of affordable, low-income housing to seniors as well as an expanded science-technology-engineering-arts-math (STEAM) program to youth. The Village

will be an expansion of the current Filipino Community Center of Seattle (FCS) that has been providing health and social services since 1935.

Transportation

We walk, use public transit, and drive to get to the places we need to go. We learned about what facilitates our mobility, as well as how public infrastructure is serving us.

Existing Transit Service

There is currently only one bus that serves the immediate Graham Street neighborhood. The 106 bus runs along MLK Way from Downtown Seattle, through the International District, through the Rainier Valley, Skyway, and finally to the Renton Transit Center. In 2012, King County Metro severely reduced bus service along MLK, claiming redundant service after the opening of LINK light rail. Community groups in the Rainier Valley fought to have the route fully reinstated. Many in the neighborhood rely on the bus which stops more frequently along the corridor than the light rail, including at Graham Street, creating greater access for seniors, folks with disabilities, students, workers, etc. The 106-bus route replaced previous service along MLK. There is currently no East- West bus service that would give access to Beacon Hill or Rainier Ave.

Proposed New Transit Service

Community groups won the inclusion of an infill station at Graham Street in the Sound Transit 3 plan adopted by voters in 2016 as well as supplemental funding from the Move Seattle Levy. The King County Metro Long Range Plan alludes to the creation of a frequent East- West route along Graham Street to improve access to the planned light rail station. This new transit line has no planned date for implementation.

Walking

Walkability is measured in two ways. The first, as demonstrated by tools like Walk Score, count the number of destinations

within walking distance. Graham Street has a relatively high walk score due to the great number of stores, restaurants, community institutions, churches, etc. in the neighborhood. The second way to measure walkability measures how long it takes to walk to important places, like open space and transit, and show gaps in walkability for areas where it takes longer than 5-10 minutes. There are several walkability gaps in the neighborhood, where it takes longer than five minutes to get to a park and longer than ten minutes to reach transit.

Biking

The bicycle infrastructure network includes one Neighborhood Greenway near the station area, and also the multi-use trail (Chief-Sealth trail) but there are no major connections in the West-East direction for bicycles.

Impact of Transportation on Safety

Since December 2017, 50 vehicles were involved in 24 collisions in the Graham Street Neighborhood. Cars speeding down the steep hill from Beacon, paired with traffic congestion, and irregular traffic signals create a hazardous environment for drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians. Specifically, at the intersection of MLK and Graham over 14 collisions occurred, including a vehicle striking a pedestrian.²



→ Environmental Health and Resiliency

Our climate is changing and Seattle is not immune. According to a recent City of Seattle Climate preparedness report, by 2050 our annual summer temperatures will increase by 10 degree and the sea level is expected to rise 1.5 feet, our winters will be wetter with more extreme rain events, snow in the mountains will decrease by 25%.³ Increased risk of flooding, wildfires, and heat events exacerbate respiratory disease and increase other public health risks.⁴ We know that climate change is a “threat multiplier” and disproportionately impacts communities of color and low-income communities.⁵ Community-led and owned transit-oriented development at a new South Graham Street station in the Rainier Valley has the potential to combine climate mitigation and adaptation strategies that create true climate resiliency. We set out to identify the climate and environmental threats to the Graham Street Neighborhood, including:

Resiliency to Earthquakes

The Rainier Valley is a relatively safe place to be in the case of a strong earthquake. Most of the neighborhood is located on bedrock, which diminishes ground shaking compared to weaker soil types.⁶ The new station and its immediate surrounding area are in a zone that is less prone to earthquake damage.

Resiliency to Flooding

The immediate area around the future station is a ‘Peat Settlement Zone,’ and designated wetland with a water table near street level which may lead to flooding during intense rain events. Additionally, steep slopes to the West of the station may channel rainwater down to the basin of the valley and/or create risk for mudslides.⁷

Soil Contamination

Historic and current auto-related uses along MLK Way may have contributed to a pattern of soil contamination from fuel (gas and diesel) and cleaning solvents. This kind of contamination can harm vulnerable people, such as youth and elders, by leaking into water or being exposed to the air. For long-term environmental health, the contamination must be removed.

Figure 4. Environmental Risks in the Graham Street Neighborhood

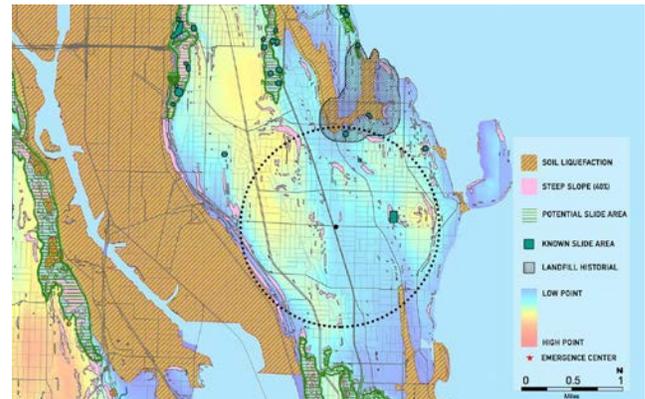
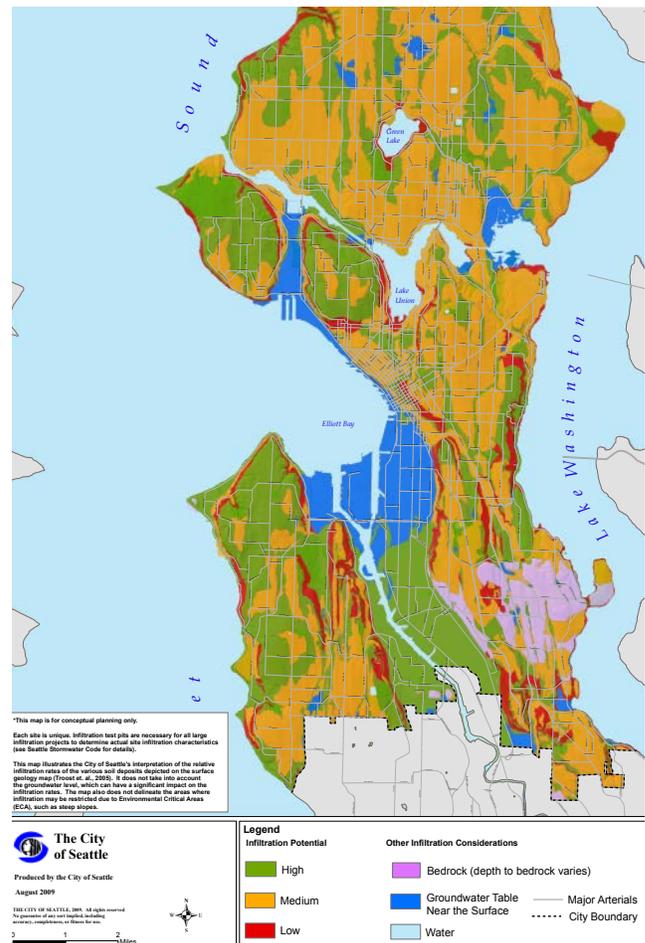


Figure 5: Geology of the Graham Street Neighborhood



→ Scale of Local Business Community

To learn about local businesses, we obtained data across the neighborhood and did a door-to-door survey to dig deeper.

Within a 1-mile radius of the future Graham Street Light Rail station, there are nearly 190 registered businesses. Almost all of the businesses, except for a few local franchises of national chains and public companies, are very small. More than half of the businesses report fewer than five employees and sales less than \$500,000.⁸

The businesses include and provide the following services (Figure 6).

We surveyed 15 small businesses for a deeper understanding of who businesses serve and the challenges they face. Most business respondents cater to a local market, such as families of students from Aki Kurose Middle School and nearby residents, but also rely on a regional customer base. All of the business respondents rely to some degree on other businesses in the area to succeed and a majority felt connected to the local business community. Several businesses identified rising costs as a barrier to operating in the neighborhood. Other challenges include the perception of safety and the inability for drivers to cross MLK to access their businesses. Most businesses felt that the new station would improve foot traffic, which would then improve sales, but most were concerned about potential drawbacks. Concerns with the arrival of the new station include:

- Small businesses we surveyed don't trust Sound Transit to protect them during the construction phase.
- Landlords will sell property without thinking about what will happen to the businesses.
- Fear that commercial rents will increase.
- Fear that they will see reduced sales during construction of the light rail station.
- Fear of losing important cultural institutions that they depend on for customer base.
- Residents and stakeholders depend on small businesses and want to make sure that businesses can stay and thrive in the neighborhood.

Figure 6. Businesses found in the Graham Street Neighborhood

Business Type	In the neighborhood
General Services	Beauty salons, cleaners, child care, janitor, locksmith, landscape, manicure, personal chef, kennel, pet services, photographer, interpretation, sewing machine repair
Medical Services	Chiropractor, dentist, herbalists, midwives, massage therapists, counseling, registered nurse, physical therapists, physicians, naturopath, social worker
Legal/Financial	Attorneys, insurance, money transfer, tax preparation
Auto-oriented	Gas stations, mechanic, auto glass, U-Haul
Manufacturing/ Wholesale	Food related
News	Vietnamese and Somali print media and language based radio.
Education Institutions	St Edwards, Jazz Night School Brighton, Dental Assisting School, Torah Day School, New Holly, MLK School, Aki Kurose
Restaurants	16 restaurants in the neighborhood provide affordable cultural foods
Retail	Convenience store, Halal butcher, jeweler, pawn, grocery
Housing	Non-profit, senior housing, for profit rental housing

→ Connection of Residents to the Community

Part of understanding how rooted, or unstable, people feel in the Graham Street neighborhood is how socially connected they feel and the quality of their housing conditions.

Single Family Resident Survey

Filipino Community of Seattle surveyed 23 residents in single-family homes around the future station. More than half of the respondents had lived in the neighborhood for more than five years with a majority having lived in the neighborhood for more than ten years. Of these long-time residents all but one owned their homes. Some of the major concerns and priorities were around public safety, affordable housing, and preserving/creating new small business opportunities.

Respondents who lived in the neighborhood for less than five years were more likely to be renters than owners. Many of the concerns and priorities were similar, but newer residents also prioritized the neighborhood experience- greenery, fencing, lighting- in addition to preserving and creating new opportunities for businesses.

FCS reported their experience collecting the surveys: "After 20 completed surveys, we started to see a really interesting trend. Folks who have been living in the area for under two years were more concerned with litter/greenery and wanted to see more small businesses. While folks who have been here for more than 5-10 years are more concerned with property taxes going up and wanting to see the continuation of people of color/ethnic business in the area. You can literally see the gentrification on these surveys."

Multi Family Tenant Survey

Puget Sound Sage and the Tenant's Union surveyed 45 tenant households in the neighborhood surrounding the new station to better understand the conditions in rental housing in the neighborhood. There are more than 10 privately owned multi-family building in the neighborhood. Through this survey we wanted to connect with tenants, learn more about their connection to the neighborhood, their concerns, and what would help them be able to stay in the community despite rising housing costs.

- A majority of residents have lived in their unit for less than three years, with over 40% of respondents for less than one year. Over 25% of respondents had lived in their unit for more than five years.
- Nearly 70% of respondents felt somewhat or very connected to the neighborhood and had a desire to stay.
- Three quarters of respondents identified as people of color.
- Nearly 25% of respondents identified as black, either specifically as an African immigrant or as African American/ Black.
- 20% of respondents had a Section 8 voucher.
- 80% of respondents worked (either paid or unpaid).
- Two thirds of respondents were worried about rent increases or being forced to move.



Planning for public and community space



Youth plan for active public space



PART III.

What We Imagine For Our Future

Over the course of 2018, we held many small and large conversations, shared our stories with each other, learned more about our neighborhood, and came to shared ideas about a future in which we thrive. We affirmed what we already knew - our communities have deep strength and resiliency that we can build on. Sometimes discussing the challenges our communities face created a feeling of powerless: that displacement is inevitable, that our voices will continue to go unheard, and that our future will be determined by forces beyond our control.

But we also realized that what we have already built in the Graham Street neighborhood can be a model for the future. And that we do not have to be afraid of change, if we are part of that change. Our challenges can be overcome by working collectively and building power across our communities. In this section of the vision, we lay out this story as we made it – starting with what we already have, identifying the threats to our stability, and then imagining a future together in which we are the agents of change.

What We Already Have

We began our conversation about our strengths by asking: what do we need to preserve to stay and thrive in our neighborhood?

→ Community institutions and local businesses provide vital support and connections

Community members voiced the importance of community centers, small businesses, and faith centers as the places they gather, receive important information, and sustain their cultures and language through youth education. These important cultural hubs provide a wide range of invaluable support to immigrants and refugees, including economic support, emergency food, finding and applying for housing, navigating public assistance programs, translation and interpretation, and finding and applying to jobs.

Small businesses serve as more than just places to buy culturally relevant goods and services – they provide income to owners and their employees, invest in and lend to community initiatives, and provide critical gathering spaces for young and old alike.

In short, these interdependent institutions are the heart and lifeblood of this neighborhood and without them the communities rooted here would not survive. Stabilizing and growing them will be key to our vision.

We have mapped, on page 24 and 25, the key businesses, cultural institutions, and faith centers that make up our web of support. (Please note that more businesses and places could be added as we grow this story.)

→ Resiliency strategies and cultural practices create stability

In addition to the critical places to preserve, participants named survival and resilience strategies central to their cultures as assets to build on.

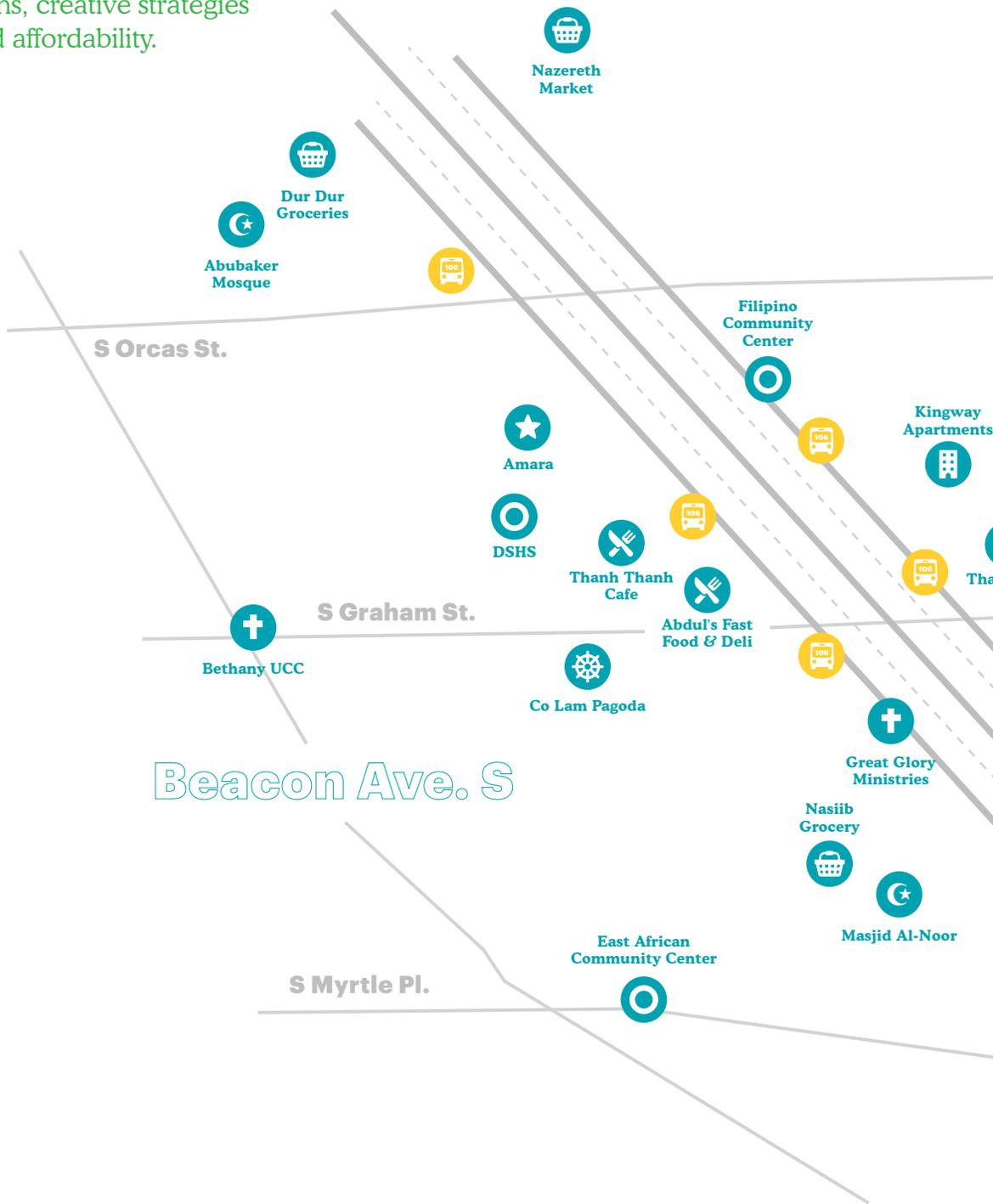
Community members identified intergenerational family structures as important to stability, which allow elders to take care of children and their own children to take care of them. These built-in mutual support systems address multiple challenges of access to and affordability of childcare, aging in place, and housing affordability generally.

Participants also spoke to their resourcefulness in growing food (both as a way to access cultural foods, but also to be able to eat healthfully on a budget), saving and reusing water, and creating their own fertilizer by composting. These practices help to reduce carbon emissions and minimize household costs.

Perhaps the most powerful strategy is the use of financial assets of the communities around Graham Street. Multiple community and cultural centers used community fundraising models to acquire land and build their facilities, including the Cham Community Center and Co Lam Temple. Furthermore, among Muslim residents of the neighborhood, fundraising/fund-sharing models have supported the purchase of land and homes without the use of traditional financing tools like mortgages or loans prohibited by Sharia. The Cham community alone has helped 1,000 members purchase homes, in the neighborhood and in South King County. Within these practices are embedded a key lesson—ownership and control of land, whether as individuals or together as a community—allows our cultural connections and strengths to flourish.

What should we preserve in the community?

Small businesses, religious and cultural institutions, creative strategies for resiliency, and affordability.





Rainier Playfield



Seward Park



Brighton Playfield



Cham Refuge Community



Chatime



Tony's Bakery



Pho Thao



Q Bakery Sandwiches



Aki Kurose Middle School



Vientiane Asian Grocery



Debre Mihret Ethiopian Orthodox Church



Boys & Girls Club

Rainier Ave. S



106



Olympic Pizza



King Plaza

S Othello St.

MLK Jr. Way S

What Threatens Our Stability

With a combination of information from our investigation into existing conditions and stories about what makes us strong, a number of external threats also emerged that could undermine our ability to stay and thrive in our neighborhood

- We already feel the pinch of rising land values. Housing costs for both renters and homeowners have increased substantially and commercial tenants are feeling pressure from both unfavorable leases and increases in rents.
- Over the last year we learned that investments in public infrastructure like transit, without adequate mitigation can lead to gentrification and displacement.
- We also learned more about the disproportionate impact that climate change will have on communities of color and low-income people.
- We talked about how changing global economies and climate change will increase population growth in cities like Seattle and that if we try to preserve our community exactly as it stands today, we won't be able to accommodate new climate refugees and other displaced peoples seeking a safe and healthy place to call home.



- Finally, we shared with each other the challenges of systemic racism that creates multiple barriers to thriving for our communities, especially related to displacement and climate change. Racism has an everyday impact as well as long-term consequences, and we need to center racial equity in addressing threats.

These threats and challenges have ripple effects at the neighborhood level. Some are beyond our control and feel impending. By clarifying together what we face, however, we can commit to support each other in overcoming them.

We recognize that finding solutions to these challenges must be part of our plans for the future. We also recognize that we don't have to be overwhelmed by challenges and can simultaneously hold in our hands both the problems we face and the future we want.

Threats	Concern
Displacement	<p>Renters and homeowners are already being pushed out due to rising housing costs and lack of tenant protections.</p> <p>Small businesses are under threat of displacement due to precarious lease terms and rising commercial rents.</p> <p>While many cultural institutions own land in the neighborhood, some do not and impending lease negotiations and rent increases may lead to displacement.</p> <p>Limited options for housing large, multi-generational families.</p> <p>High cost and insufficient childcare capacity drives up living costs for families in the neighborhood.</p>
Transportation And Mobility	<p>Transit service is not reliable and there is currently no service to take residents from East to West.</p> <p>Limited transit options for workers traveling late at night or early in the morning.</p> <p>Pedestrian environment is unsafe, especially at the intersection of MLK and Graham. High car speeds, reckless driving resulting from unreliable traffic lights and crosswalk timing, and poor lighting lead to a complete lack of safety for people walking in the area.</p> <p>Fear that the new station would squeeze already tight parking, with people driving and parking nearby to catch the train.</p>
Climate Change and Natural Disaster	<p>Lack of emergency response protocol in the case of a major earthquake or other natural disaster.</p> <p>Lack of infrastructure to manage flooding, extreme rain events, and extreme heat.</p> <p>Quality of local infrastructure—heating, cooling, water supply, food supply, communications, etc.</p>
Employment	<p>Few employment opportunities, including good paying jobs and jobs for youth.</p>
Community Activities	<p>Lack adequate cultural and language education centers.</p> <p>Lack spaces to gather socially, including spaces for seniors and space for youth.</p> <p>Perceived personal safety risks in the neighborhood limit active outside time for residents.</p>
Environment	<p>Not enough open green space in the neighborhood.</p> <p>Existing green space, street trees, gardens, and parks are poorly maintained and perceived as unsafe.</p>

Vision for the Future

Throughout our community planning meetings and listening sessions we built towards a collective vision for our community. What is our shared vision for a neighborhood where all communities thrive, dreaming beyond what is possible? How do we counter and mitigate the threats and challenges?

To ground our conversations in place, we focused on issues such as neighborhood scale, the future of MLK Way, community and public space, climate resiliency, affordability, and displacement. We drew on our creativity, lived experience, and expertise to develop this vision. Like any community process we did not all agree on everything all the time, but we had a consensus that we wanted to invest in our community to make it stronger, that we are not afraid of change as long as we see ourselves in it. Our biggest challenge may be to inspire our communities to believe that this vision is possible!

A Shared Definition of Community

A shared definition of 'community' across participants was foundational to developing a collective vision for the Graham Street neighborhood. We began our public meetings with a question: what does community mean to you?

- To see our communities flourishing in our neighborhood
- To practice solidarity and mutual respect across culture, language, and religious beliefs
- To support one another and make sure that nobody is left behind.
- To organize, advocate, and engage in activism to make us stronger
- To share a community identity
- To see community reflected in stories, new development, and general community visibility



Complete Community as Designed by Somali Participants

Our Graham Street neighborhood will be:



- A beautiful, supported, and stable neighborhood.
- A place to find jobs and economic opportunity.



- Community-centered mobility that gives safe and simple access to what we need.



→ An abundance of multi-generational and multi-cultural community spaces.

→ A healthy environment that helps us thrive.

Our Graham Street neighborhood will be:

→ A beautiful, supported, and stable neighborhood

- Community ownership and stewardship of land and property ensures places for us and future generations.
- Everyone has a home who wants to live here, including larger families, seniors, and people historically with barriers to housing.
- People who own buildings, but don't live in the neighborhood, are accountable to community standards for quality housing and commercial space.
- Housing costs, including rent, are stable and predictable.
- Businesses that serve unique cultural roles thrive from both local and regional customers and are secure in their locations.
- People and businesses in the neighborhood are building wealth for future generations.
- Parents and guardians have the local child care they need to work and go to school.
- Widespread public art reflects local culture and community.
- Community-centered health care is available to all who live in the neighborhood.
- Everyone feels safe and free to be themselves, especially youth and elders.



→ A place to find jobs and economic opportunity

- All people who want to work, especially young people, can get jobs.
- Residents can access good jobs both locally and throughout the region via light rail
- Local investment in renewable energy, health sciences, and education creates new job opportunities.

→ An abundance of multi-generational and multi-cultural community spaces

- We have many acres of shared open and recreation space that promotes community health and connectedness, especially for:
 - Senior activities (including mahjong, ping pong, and yoga)
 - Youth activities
 - Play for young children
- We can access dozens of places for our community to gather, where we connect across cultures and generations.
- Businesses and commercial spaces provide both culturally relevant services and places for the community to gather.
- Community spaces provide classes and

build skills including, like libraries, tutor centers, and education programs that instill cultural values and traditions and language training (both to English and languages of heritage).

- We center life around places for cultural celebrations and festivals.

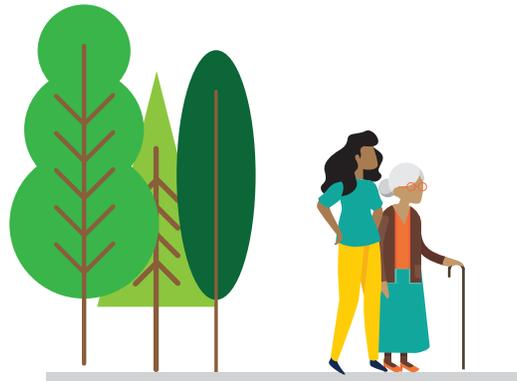
→ A healthy environment that helps us thrive

- We have access to healthy, culturally relevant foods through farmers markets, grocery stores, and by growing our own food.
- Green spaces and open spaces have been created along with new buildings.
- A green, verdant, and welcoming tree canopy provides shade and coolness on hot days to come.
- We have in place robust resiliency strategies for climate events that include:
 - Community and individual preparation for disasters.
 - Community and cultural centers that are built to serve as emergency hubs during a climate disaster.
 - A warning system for residents, businesses, and community institutions that reaches all people and in all languages.
 - Community-centered and owned water, power, and communications systems that mitigate climate events and can boost the local economy.



→ Community-centered mobility that gives safe and simple access to what we need

- Our neighborhood is a safe place to walk, play, and be active.
- Everyone can get around the neighborhood and outside the neighborhood, quickly, affordably, and safely.
- Residents and local stakeholders can walk and use transit along MLK without worrying about speeding vehicles.
- We have swift, efficient bus and train service, with timed signals and bus lanes.
- We have wide sidewalks that promote safe and healthy walking.
- We can quickly and easily access the new light rail station on routes designed to safely get us through the neighborhood.
- We have space for people from outside the neighborhood to visit our cultural and religious centers, either by transit or vehicles.
- We have access to personal vehicles when we need them, and places for them to park.



Making the Vision a Reality

We recognize that our vision will take hard work and struggle to achieve. It will take many years. It will take many public and private partners taking risks. It will require building community power to overcome barriers. By building on what we have already created, organizing, using our collective power to change policies, buying and controlling more land, and leading development, we can keep our businesses, centers of faith, and community institutions to thriving in place.

In the next two years, we hope to create a plan and set of strategies that will advance stabilization, community ownership, and community-driven development. To the right are priorities that will guide us.

1

First and foremost, we must stabilize key institutions, businesses, and residents which are at immediate risk of displacement.

2

We will seek knowledge about successful community-driven development efforts from across the country.

3

We will develop a collaborative strategy to determine key roles, capacity building, technical assistance, and partnerships with external agencies and institutions.

This will answer questions such as:

Who will buy and hold land?

How do we invite development partners to collaborate who will be accountable to the community?

What roles could cooperatives and community land trusts play?

5

We will identify long-term priorities for services and other community-ownership opportunities, including:

Community-centered mobility

Community-owned renewable energy

Community-owned social and educational services

Village commons, i.e., open space market areas

4

We will identify land acquisition priorities based on our overall plan and vision.

This includes: Determining the number of affordable housing units, square footage of culturally relevant businesses, acres of open space, community activities, and growth required to implement our vision.

Matching large-scale needs we've identified with current zoning and parcel sizes.

Working with public agencies and institutions with land banking capacity to purchase land that can be used for affordable housing and other equitable development.

6

We will continue to develop local leadership and coalition capacity for long-term, deep collaboration.

7

We will explore policy changes that we need within the City of Seattle, transit agencies, and possibly the State that will allow for true community ownership of development in the station area.

NOTES

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all data comes from the US Census Bureau's 2016 ACS 5-year estimates for the following census tracts: 103, 104.01, 110.01, 110.02, and 111.01. These census tracts cover a 1-mile radius from the intersection of MLK Jr. Way S and South Graham Street, and include residents of New Holly.

² Tim Ganter, Seattle Collisions (2018). Retrieved from: <http://seattlecollisions.timganter.io/collisions/sd/2017-12-10/ed/2018-12-10/m/1/nelat/47.549377209848316/nelng/-122.28357195854188/swlat/47.5425842642798/swlng/-122.29000926017763>.

³ City of Seattle, Carbon Neutral, Climate Ready: Preparing for Climate Change (2017). Retrieved from: https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Environment/ClimateChange/SEAClimatePreparedness_August2017.pdf.

⁴ Seattle & King County Public Health, Blueprint for Addressing Climate Change and Health (2018). Retrieved from: <https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/-/media/depts/health/environmental-health/documents/publications/blueprint-climate-change-and-health.ashx>.

⁵ Got Green and Puget Sound Sage, Our People, our Planet, our Power (2016). Retrieved from: http://gotgreenseattle.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/OurPeopleOurPlanetOurPower_GotGreen_Sage_Final1.pdf.

⁶ US Geological Survey, Soil Type and Shaking Hazard (2018). Retrieved from: <https://earthquake.usgs.gov/hazards/urban/sfbay/soiltype/>.

⁷ City of Seattle. Infiltration Potential Conceptual Level Planning Map (2009). Retrieved from: http://www.seattle.gov/util/cs/groups/public/@spu/@usm/documents/webcontent/spu01_006677.pdf

⁸ Seattle & King County Public Health, Blueprint for Addressing Climate Change and Health (2018). Retrieved from: <https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/-/media/depts/health/environmental-health/documents/publications/blueprint-climate-change-and-health.ashx>.

⁹ Infogroup, Inc. (2018). Puget Sound Sage analysis. Retrieved November 20th, 2018, from ReferenceUSA database.



Puget Sound Sage combines research, innovative public policy and organizing to ensure all people have an affordable place to live, a good job, a clean environment, and access to public transportation. For more information visit: pugetsoundsage.org