

EVERETT STATION

Creating a People-Oriented Place





Photo by Jeff Aken

OVERVIEW

Everett Transit is interested in developing housing around Everett Station, and the City of Everett is leading a Comprehensive Plan update process focused on the greater Everett Station area. In May 2013, Forterra hosted a community event to involve community members in this process with conversation and a walking tour of the neighborhood. Forterra is a regional conservation and community-building nonprofit organization with a goal of focusing new growth near transit and thus conserving the region's important natural landscapes like farms and forests.

At the event, Forterra staff led conversations about how the built environment contributes to healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods and led a community visioning session to hear what the community would like to see in the Everett Station area. Community members had a diverse range of opinions, and in general supported residential uses, new destinations and neighborhood amenities, safe pedestrian and bike connections, soft open spaces, and business opportunities.

Forterra staff at the event included Jeff Aken, Nick Cilluffo, Skye Schell, and Sabrina Bolieu. Christian Runge from Mithun attended as a guest presenter.

This project was funded by a grant from the Boeing Company to help build healthy communities in Snohomish County.



Photo by Jeff Aken

EVENT SUMMARY

The evening began with a presentation from Tom Hingson, Director of Everett Transit, who talked about the proposal to allow residential uses in the Everett Station area. Jeff Aken discussed Forterra's philosophy that healthy neighborhoods or "people-oriented places" are those in which people can live, work, and play, with walkable connections to healthy food, urban open space and other community amenities.

Nick Cilluffo then led a walking tour of the Everett Station area, during which participants highlighted many of the strengths and weaknesses of the neighborhood. Everyone returned to the meeting room, and Skye Schell facilitated a visioning session in which community members shared their ideas for the future of Everett Station.

After all of the attendees shared their ideas, Mithun Landscape Designer Christian Runge spoke about the Mariposa project, a redevelopment project in a Denver neighborhood with many similarities to Everett Station, and how Mithun enhanced health and safety with new residential uses in the area. Lastly, Tom Hingson, Jeff Aken, and Christian Runge answered questions and addressed concerns that community members presented.

Forty-eight people attended the event, representing a wide range of interests and roles including area residents, City staff, business owners, and community organizations.

WALKING TOUR

Participants walked a half-mile route on the west side of Everett Station with three stops along the way to discuss the pedestrian experience and connections to the core downtown area of the City.

The walk began in front of Everett Station and followed 32nd Street west to McDougall Avenue, turning north and making the first stop midblock on McDougall Avenue. Walkers identified strengths and weaknesses here:

Strengths

- Pedestrian friendly sidewalks along 32nd Street
- Street trees
- Safe crossing at 32nd Street and McDougall Avenue
- Pedestrian-oriented building on NW corner of 32nd Street and McDougall Avenue
- United Way location – investment in the area
- Proximity to core downtown and Comcast Arena

Weaknesses

- No sidewalk on east side of McDougall Avenue (north of 32nd Street)
- Some buildings setback with auto area immediately in front
- Some blank wall space
- Industrial environment on east side of McDougall Avenue



Photo by Skye Schell

Next, walkers went south to McDougall Avenue and 33rd Street for the second stop, providing another opportunity to highlight strengths and weaknesses of the block:

Strengths

- Restaurant on McDougall Avenue
- Wide, comfortable sidewalks along 33rd Street
- Street trees buffering pedestrians from traffic

Weaknesses

- Disconnected sidewalks along McDougall Avenue (parking interruptions)
- No sidewalk on west side of McDougall Avenue (south of 32nd Street)
- No destinations - lack of a “place to go”
- Blank wall space along McDougall Avenue (south of 33rd Street)
- Industrial environment

The group then walked east on 33rd Street and turned north at Smith Avenue, ending at the entrance to Everett Station on 32nd Street. This final stop provided a view looking westward of the station area and the City’s downtown just ½ mile in the background. Having a fresh look at the physical environment around Everett Station, and after identifying some of the strengths and weaknesses of the area, staff posed the question: “What is the vision for Everett Station?” and reconvened for the facilitated community visioning session.

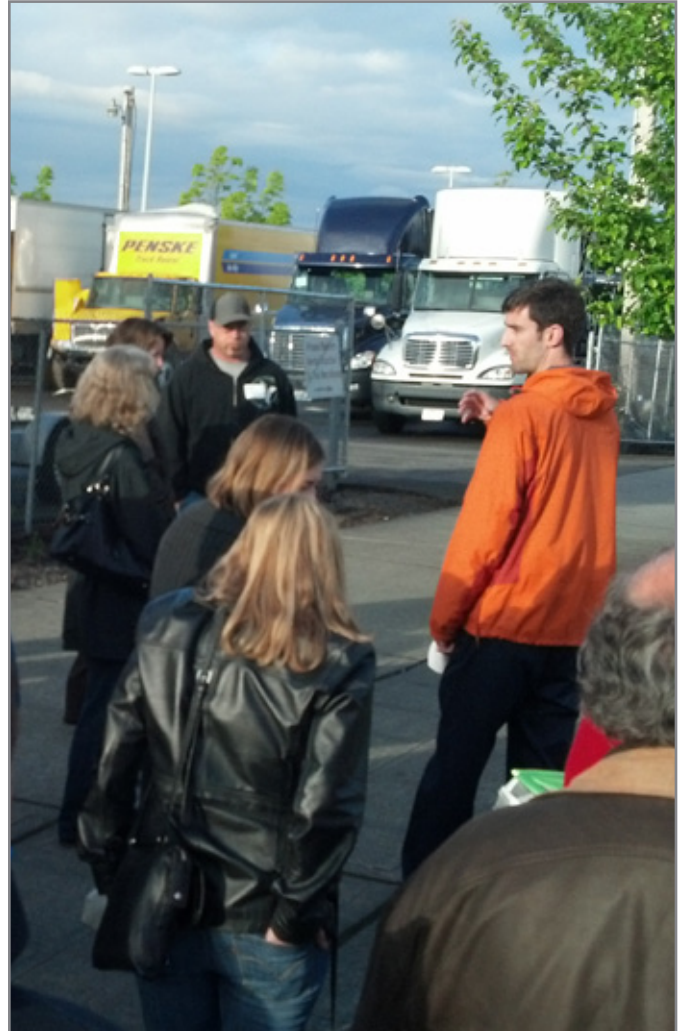


Photo by Skye Schell

COMMUNITY VISIONING SESSION

After returning from the walking tour, Skye Schell led a visioning session. Participants reflected on their long-term vision for Everett Station, and shared their ideas with neighbors and then with the larger group. Many community members “seconded” or echoed ideas from other speakers, and many agreed on the desire for residential uses, destinations and neighborhood amenities, safe pedestrian and bike connections, soft open spaces, and business opportunities. The following are highlights from the community:

Residential uses

New multi-family development would provide the residential units to support a vibrant station area. Ideas included condominium developments and other dense housing options. Considerations in residential development include the need for quality affordable housing mixed among market-rate housing. The station area could host a mix of housing options affordable to a full range of incomes and provide quality living space for all.

Destinations and neighborhood amenities

Community members identified the absence of a “place to go” in the station area. There are few areas where people can gather and simply enjoy the neighborhood. Art and cultural installations would create a sense of place and provide a welcoming feel to the area. Other amenities, like a public book exchange or farmer’s market, could activate the neighborhood and attract residents from within and outside the neighborhood.



Photo by Jeff Aken

Pedestrian and bike connections

Simply allowing residential uses will not create safe connections for pedestrians and bikers. Dedicated paths for bikers and walkers should be installed to provide circulation throughout the neighborhood. Additionally, clear connections to the downtown area and Comcast Arena would help tie the station area to the core of the city. Such connections would be enhanced by way-finding signs that assist people in navigating the neighborhood.

Soft open spaces

Participants expressed a clear need and desire to soften the station area by using trees, shrubs, and other green features. Pocket parks and small green spaces would provide respite from the hardscapes of the built environment and could also help buffer residential areas from the activity of the transit station.

Business opportunities

Allowing mixed-use development provides the opportunity for businesses to co-locate with residential use, allowing shops and restaurants to thrive. In addition to shops, restaurants, and markets, other businesses of appropriate scale would create job opportunities within the neighborhood. Having workplaces located near residential and transit access would help create a complete neighborhood.



Photo by Jeff Aken

CONCLUSION

At Forterra, we believe that creating dense, walkable and affordable communities near transit is one of the key strategies for ensuring our region's sustainability over time. Everett Station has an outstanding opportunity for redevelopment and enhancement of neighborhood quality-of-life for Everett's residents, employees, and commuters.

Forterra staff were impressed by the level of engagement and energy among community members and encourages participants to stay involved as the City of Everett hosts the public process for the Comprehensive Plan update.

Forterra would like to thank the City of Everett and Everett Transit for their efforts making this project a success, Christian Runge from Mithun for an excellent presentation, and the Boeing Company for funding the work.

Photo by Skye Schell



VISIONING SESSION NOTES

(AS RECORDED DURING EVENT)

- Ensure ped connectivity w/ upcoming river-front project
- Need a place to park to catch the bus-- need to remember the main role as place to catch the bus
- Residential-- condos with view of cascades
- Business owner: worried about eliminating jobs via redevelopment
- Residential condos
- New style small vehicles for transit (Fl. Keys) out of the box idea-- affordable/convenient
- Mixed-use
- Mini/pocket parks scattered throughout rather than concentrated green spaces
- Trees-- green it up, soften environment
- Mixed use + urban ag + solar energy
- Gathering place a la 3rd Place
- Lot access/parking needs-- long term
- Way-finding signs + connectivity
- Reasons to stay, not just come and go
- Clear core Pedestrian corridor between station and Comcast Arena (up Smith Street then into downtown)
- Light commercial
- Farmers market
- Unlimited density & height
- Shops, restaurant, entertainment
- 50% dedication to low/affordable housing (w/ dignity)-(working class families)
- Live/work spaces
- Creating proper buffer between trains and residential (sound buffer w/ view preservation)
- Neighborhood sized businesses
- Places for all ages
- Inviting gathering places, art, music
- Protected Bike paths
- Bike share
- Book exchange
- Mix of housing-- mixed income

Photo by Skye Schell



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Join the city's mailing list** to stay in the loop about the Comprehensive Plan update process by contacting Jim Hanson at (425) 257-7133 or email jhanson@everettwa.gov.
- **View Christian Runge's presentation** on healthy neighborhood design based on Mithun's Mariposa project in Denver: http://www.forterra.org/files/pdfs/Everett_Station_Mithun-Mariposa-presentation-20130521.pdf
- **Read Mithun's toolkit** for the Mariposa Healthy Living Initiative: http://mithun.com/projects/project_detail/mariposa_healthy_living_initiative/
- **Check out the map of walking distances** from Everett Station at the end of this report or in high resolution here: http://www.forterra.org/files/pdfs/EverettStationWalkability_11x17.pdf

Please contact Forterra if there are any questions about this report:

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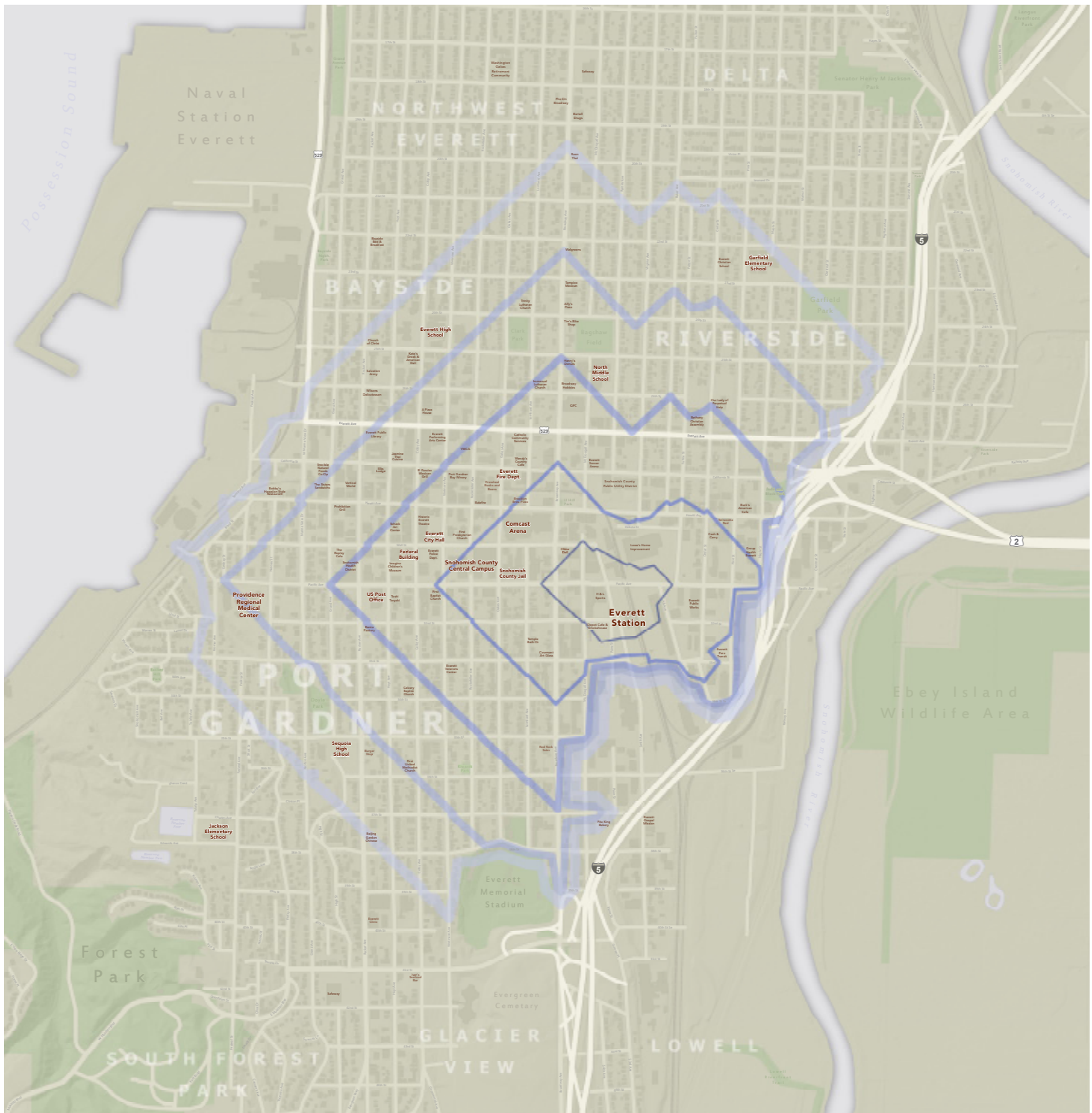
Photo by Jeff Aken



EVERETT STATION

Estimated Walking Distance Along Existing Sidewalks

Everett, Washington



Everett Station is located within walking distance of common services provided in the downtown core. The area immediately around the station and extending to the west is well connected for pedestrian access. Nearby services and amenities include Snohomish County administration, City of Everett administration, healthcare options, schools, and parks and recreation facilities.

These existing features of the area, along with housing options are essential components of a complete community. Additionally, Everett Station is an important connection for local and regional transportation. The station area is well-positioned to be a complete, compact, and connected community.

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