

Everett Station Area Plan

Recommended Direction and Implementation

Background

Over the past ten years, the City of Everett has worked with various transportation agencies, such as Sound Transit, Everett Transit, AMTRAK, WSDOT, and Greyhound Bus Lines to develop a true multi-modal transportation center in the form of Everett Station. This has involved much more than merely developing a building to contain ticketing functions and waiting areas. The project has included acquiring property for parking, reconstructing roads, and building a new bridge over the railroad tracks. It has also involved finding tenants to provide educational and job services that can serve a regional workforce.

While commuter rail is still yet to become operational, it is evident that Everett Station is expanding many choices available to residents of the community and its surroundings. Many activities occur in Everett Station. Its top floor meeting room is constantly in demand for meetings and events.

Through its Comprehensive Plan and capital investments, the City has focused much attention and energy to the development of this transportation hub. This has been but a part of a larger set of policy directions that have encouraged re-investment in downtown and its nearby neighborhoods. Already, these actions have borne fruit, with development of new buildings on the Snohomish County campus, the Everett Events Center, streetscape enhancements on Hewitt and Colby, and new commercial and urban residential development in the vicinity. This long-term commitment has brought tangible results and the downtown area is being gradually transformed into an urban center that is stronger and more vibrant.

The properties surrounding Everett Station present a unique potential for economic development. Over time, new and rehabilitated buildings will house a range of businesses that are highly accessible, due to the proximity to the freeway and public transportation. Many existing businesses will remain in the area and are encouraged to remain. It is likely that some properties will be consolidated and provide space for entirely new businesses. A synergy between downtown and station area will emerge as major activities are booked into the Events Center and people realize that the station and its available parking will offer easy access. With additional people coming into downtown, restaurants, shops and services will flourish and hours of operation will be broadened into the evenings. Clearly, this presents the City with a chance to influence the location, timing, and quality of new development within the station area.

This plan lays out a framework for future development around the station and suggests regulatory mechanisms to achieve it. These tools will need to be part of a larger set of strategies that involve the use and disposition of public lands, further capital investments, incentives and marketing.

Recommended Plan

The Setting

The Everett Station area is in a location that is ideal for attracting new private investment. It is next to a downtown core that is becoming increasingly diverse. It is accessible to Interstate 5 from two directions. It is served by many modes of public transportation. It is close to residential neighborhoods that are mature and themselves seeing re-investment. And it is not far from a dynamic port that includes both a major, state-of-the-art Navy base and numerous marine-related businesses. The Port of Everett itself is pursuing aggressive plans for development.

While many businesses will continue to operate in the Everett Station Area, there will be increasing opportunities for infill development and adaptive re-use of structures to serve different types of companies. The area is similar in nature to other areas in the region and elsewhere in which enhanced transportation access has led to a gradual transformation of buildings and uses.

Market trends suggest a growing demand for space to start up and grow small businesses that support and provide parts and services to larger technology-based companies. The current downturn in the economy is not producing a market demand for space in any category. However, it is expected that, when the cycle begins to turn upward again, demand will be strong for new technology-oriented companies. But because of shifts in the economy and the changing nature of contemporary business, such space needs to be flexible and easily adapted to allow for varying amounts of administration, sales, production, and shipping. Developers who can deliver sites and buildings that provide access, visibility, proximity to amenities and services, and flexibility will be the most successful in attracting tenants. The Everett Station Area offers all of these attributes.

Housing will be allowed in existing buildings in live work units and by projects implemented through the Planning Development Overlay zoning process.

Overall Vision

The near to middle term vision for the Station Area involves its evolution and enhancement as an employment center. This vision anticipates a variety of businesses involving combinations of technology, research and development, fabrication, sales, storage and distribution. Many companies within the region are looking for locations that provide easy access to transportation

but also allow for many different functions to occur within individual buildings. This is sometimes called “flex tech” to reflect the changing nature of such businesses.

It is also expected that the ground floors of buildings will include restaurants and business services to support the employment and operations. Since the type and nature of businesses will vary widely, the type of building form will vary as well, some structures may be much like office buildings, and others may seem more warehouse-like. The live work units are intended to fit into this industrial/office setting and new housing units would be designed to fit into the industrial character of the area creating a district which is unique in Everett.

Because there will be many more people using the area on foot during the day and at night and weekends for events, the streets and sidewalks will be improved over time to be considerably more attractive, well-lighted, and landscaped. Over time, it is expected that large parking and outside storage areas will be replaced by buildings

It is expected that most commercial and industrial buildings will be 1-3 stories but there may be an occasional new building containing 4-5 stories. Transit oriented mixed use buildings containing multiple family residential uses on the upper floors may be higher than 5 stories. Views of Everett Station should be preserved from Broadway down the 32nd Street corridor.

A longer term vision will be considered when the City prepares a subarea plan for the expanded Metropolitan Center. The City must consider more significant building heights if it is to accommodate the population and job growth expectations of the Vision 2040 Regional growth Strategy.

Planning and Urban Design Principles

The following consists of the main principles that can govern the nature of development and redevelopment. They provide an underpinning for regulation and design standards.

1. Build upon and strengthen key assets within the vicinity, including the Everett Events Center and existing businesses that are compatible with the long-term vision.

The City of Everett along with Sound Transit, Snohomish County and other State and Federal Funding Sources have invested and are continuing to invest over \$300 million into the Everett Station Area and the Everett Downtown. These investments are being accomplished to improve the economy of Everett, transportation choices and entertainment opportunities. The Everett

Station Area must complement the Everett Event Center and other downtown and station area investments. Ideas and opportunities for making the area successful are:

- ◆ Manage traffic access and parking during events within the Everett Station Area and Downtown.
- ◆ Create safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian connections.
- ◆ Use shared use parking during events through the use of existing parking facilities and potentially satellite locations as needs arises.
- ◆ Redevelop parking lots over time with structured parking and other uses over time. This is a long-term solution.

Existing businesses within the Everett Station Area are very important to the economy. They provide jobs and tax revenues that make a vital contribution to the local economy. The success of these businesses is partly attributable to the excellent location near Interstate 5 and SR 2 and local arterials. It is important that the new rail and bus service and facilities not negatively affect the vibrant commercial and industrial uses. Ideas for working with and protecting existing business include:

- ◆ Preserve “people-intensive” employers and retail businesses in the Everett Station area.
- ◆ Provide good pedestrian and bicycle connections to Everett Station.
- ◆ Work with businesses to see what their needs are including: expansion requirements, access issues during events at Everett Station and the Everett Event Center, and long term goals. This could include a program for actively assisting the expansion and/or relocation needs (to relocate in Everett) of existing businesses.
- ◆ Minimize the impact of new rail activities and transit-supportive development on local business access.
- ◆ The City of Everett along with other groups should actively work with property owners to market and provide incentives to encourage development within the Everett Station area.

2. Improve the visual appearance of the area thereby contributing positively to the image of Everett and its downtown.

Over time the Everett Station Area is seen as an area, which will transform into a multimodal transportation center, it will be a gateway into Downtown Everett and the Port of Everett for commuters and visitors. It is critical that the aesthetics of the area be improved as one way for the City of Everett to provide a positive image. Ideas for improvements include:

- ◆ Build upon the current streetscape improvements with additional landscaping and pedestrian amenities on Smith Avenue and Wall Street (to the Everett Event Center), on Smith Street south, Pacific Ave., and Broadway Ave.
- ◆ Encourage the redevelopment of unsightly parcels that are currently used for outdoor storage.
- ◆ Incorporate into redevelopment small parks and/or plazas that include plants and landscaping.

3. Develop clear and attractive connections between Everett Station, surrounding development, and downtown, for both pedestrians and bicycle users.

Smith Avenue overtime will become a more important north/south vehicle/pedestrian link between the downtown, 41st Street interchange and the Simpson Riverfront redevelopment area.

Support direct HOV access for the Everett Station Area off of Interstate 5 at 41st Street and Broadway Avenue.

Pedestrian linkages could be enhanced by widening sidewalks, and by adding street trees, covered walkways, and other pedestrian amenities such as benches, public art, information kiosks, and trash receptacles.

New development should be encouraged that promotes street level interest through ground floor uses that front the street, window displays, and outdoor seating for restaurants.

At 36th Street when the at grade vehicle access is removed, an at grade or grade separated pedestrian connection should be built to connect the Simpson Riverfront with the Everett Station area. There needs to be a connection between the existing and planned pedestrian bike trail along the Snohomish River.

At 36th Street, besides the pedestrian connection to the Riverfront area, consider and study the potential for vehicle access between Everett Station and the Riverfront redevelopment area.

When and if the City of Everett property east of the railroad tracks is redeveloped, provide access east/west through the site for pedestrians and vehicles from the new pedestrian railroad overpass by Everett Station to the hotel on the east. This should be done at approximately 32nd Street and 33rd Street.

Enhance pedestrian and bicycle connections to/from the area to other planned trails and the Everett Event Center and Everett Downtown.

Bicycle and pedestrian system improvements should be incorporated throughout the planning area, which greater emphasis on connections mentioned above.

Continue and improve the connection to downtown activities, transit connections, and parking via the bus circulator.

In key pedestrian activity areas, focus improvements on slowing through traffic using special paving or pavement markings and “bulbs” at selected intersections and mid-block crossings to narrow the pedestrian crossing distances.

4. Encourage transit-supportive development.

The area surrounding the Everett Station can evolve or time into a dense compact district that is friendly to pedestrians and bicyclists, is supportive of business. Some specific objectives are:

- ◆ Make multiple use of existing and new parking resources.
- ◆ Utilize vacant land for more intensive employee based business.
- ◆ Encourage in the areas north and west of the Everett Station area that currently allow residential uses to develop high-density residential development to compliment Everett Station and the businesses immediately surrounding the station area.
- ◆ Encourage uses within the station area, which have high visitor/employee densities.
- ◆ Discourage new uses within the station area that are auto-oriented uses and uses with low employee densities such as vehicle storage and warehousing.

- ◆ Encourage a variety of scale in new development, ranging from two to five stories for industrial and commercial uses, and taller for mixed-use buildings containing multiple family residential uses on the upper floors.
- ◆ Encourage street-level activity and pedestrian orientation especially those areas between the station and downtown Everett.
- ◆ Minimize conflicts between Everett Event Center/commuter traffic and local traffic and pedestrian activities.
- ◆ Maximize on street parking opportunities.

5. Encourage development that reflects the quality of Everett Station and complements downtown.

The area surrounding the Everett Station multimodal transportation center should be allowed to evolve into one of Everett's key activity nodes which compliments the downtown and other surrounding areas. Appropriate uses include:

Uses which provide a permanent daytime presence to complement nighttime activities in Everett Station, Everett Event Center, Everett Performing Arts, and the Everett Historic Theater.

Office tenants wanting lower rents than downtown, I-5 visibility, transit access, and large building footprints.

Light industrial uses: flex space with showrooms, manufacturing.

Convenience/specialty retail and restaurants to serve commuters, Everett Station visitors and workers.

Entertainment, nightlife, and tourists attractions.

6. Create a district that has a strong sense of place, with a distinct character and quality that will appeal to investors, Employees, and visitors.

The goal is that the Everett Station area become more than just a transportation center. The Everett Station and the area around the Station is starting to create an identity which is very positive for Everett. The public spaces within and around the Station building are a source of pride for the community and region. These defining public spaces provide a sense of community for commuters, visitors, workers and residents. These spaces and additional spaces over time could take on a

variety of forms including viewpoints, bicycle/walking paths, and even small places to rest such as public benches. The largest public spaces/parking lots also provide a place for special events.

7. Improve public safety with adequate sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting, and traffic controls.

The Everett Police Department has been involved with the design and planning for Everett Station. Homelessness has been an issue in the area, because of the location of facilities serving the homeless. If there is a perception that crime is likely this would be a detriment to the potential for the area. Potential customers and commuters would shy away from the area due to concerns for public safety. The Everett Police Department, Everett Transit, and local businesses have done a good job to work together on public safety. Ideas for how public safety could be enhanced include:

- ◆ Forge a close working relationship between Everett Transit, Everett police and local business and communicate on a regular basis.
- ◆ Proactively work with social service agencies on the homelessness issues in the area.
- ◆ Increase activity in the area, which would create more eyes on the street.
- ◆ Design public improvements, development, and open space areas to promote public safety (e.g. good lighting, minimal hidden areas, adequate sidewalks, etc.)
- ◆ Provide good wayfaring and directional signage to help people find their way around the community.

8. Encourage the Reuse of Existing Buildings Without Adequate Parking

Reuse of existing buildings in the Everett Station Area is hindered by lack of adequate on-site parking. Alternatives for providing additional parking for specific buildings include:

- Revising the zoning code to allow adjacent improved diagonal and perpendicular on-street parking spaces to count towards on-site parking requirements.
- Construction of new shared parking lots by the City of Everett to serve the area. The building owner(s) would pay a fee for each required parking stall.

9. Recommended Development Scenario

The scenario builds upon the current situation in which this area of the city provides a variety of goods and services as well as jobs. It suggests infill development and redevelopment can provide space for more and different types of business and thereby increase the amount of employment within the area. Current and future employees, employers, and residents would find the enhanced transit service appealing, as it would reduce the need to depend upon the automobile for commuting. It also reinforces the momentum established by tenants within Everett Station, which are oriented to job training, education, and employment. Housing would initially be developed in live/work housing units by people who want to live in their work environment. This could be artists, software engineers, web site developers, and people who are first starting a business and keeping expenses low. Housing could also be built as a part of a master plan / planned development overlay process where housing is designed and integrated into a development which has an industrial feel to its design.

Over the next 15-20 years, the Station Area could accommodate approximately 500,000 square feet of “flex-tech” space in both new and retrofitted buildings. Most of this space would likely be found in low-rise buildings, but there may be a few mid-rise structures as well.

Initially, due to lower land values, parking would be accommodated on surface lots. But because of the proximity to transit, parking ratios could be considerably lower than other locations in the region, thus saving land and development costs. Eventually, as land values rise and infill takes place, some or all of the surface parking would be replaced by parking structures.

To the extent that additional job growth within the area stimulates new housing, there are additional locations west of the Station Area across Broadway, or in and around downtown, which will be developed for market rate housing.

The scenario, therefore, suggests that by emphasizing employment within the Station Area, other nearby areas may benefit from increased demand for other types of development.





Environmental Impacts and Mitigation

An addendum to previous environmental impact statements was prepared to discover expected impacts resulting from this scenario and any mitigation that might be necessary. The Station Area Plan was also addressed in the Supplement EIS for the 2005 Comprehensive Plan update.

Summary of Conclusions:

The uses proposed for the station area are the same general types as, and compatible with land uses currently within the station area. Impacts, if any, would depend more on building location, site planning and design, than on inherent incompatibility of uses. Proposed implementing regulations would ensure that site planning, building location, lighting and other design features are sensitive to adjacent uses. Housing is to be designed to fit into this industrial/office area.

The station area plan would also be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's "growth center" designation

Some currently permitted uses would be prohibited, however, because they are not compatible with development objectives of the Station Area. Prohibited uses include those involving outdoor storage, drive through businesses, and adult entertainment uses. Currently, the station area does contain a number of land uses involving outdoor storage and these would become nonconforming. These uses are encouraged to remain in the area, though the zoning code requirements for nonconforming uses include standards/process requirements related to their ability to expand or rebuild in the event of damage.

The recommended plan for the Everett Station Area would not in itself generate direct impacts to land uses. But it would lead to changes to land use designations, zoning and capital improvement programs applicable to the sub-area, resulting in changes to land use over a 10-20 year period.

Some existing uses would be displaced by redevelopment projects. Some might locate in new facilities within the station area. More intensive industrial and commercial uses requiring large sites, however, would likely be displaced to other locations within or outside the city. The area would take on more of a low/medium density urban office character (including surface parking lots). Existing industrial and heavy commercial uses would remain in the near future but likely diminish over a longer period of time.

Indirectly, adoption of a sub-area plan and implementing measures, and initial redevelopment projects, could lead to increased pressure for more extensive land use change in and around the Station Area. Over time, land values could increase as demand for the types of uses included in new redevelopment projects takes hold.

With respect to transportation, the recently improved street network has added capacity to accommodate the new trips generated by developments in the proposed plan. However, as the area around the station redevelops, the city will need to upgrade the streets in the study area beyond those improvements already planned as the part of the Everett Station development. For example, a sidewalk will need to be completed on the West Side of Smith Avenue and sidewalks will be needed on both sides of Smith Avenue south of 35th Street. Since Smith Avenue is a designated trail, designated bicycle lanes will also need to be added.

The east-west pedestrian facility over the railroad tracks that will link the West Side of the station with the East Side will be very important. The Overpass/pedestrian Bridge will connect at 33rd St.

In general, the mitigation measures have been identified in previous plans and environmental documents. No new capacity improvements would be required as a result of the station area plan. Recommended mitigation relates to access management, and pedestrian and streetscape improvements.

Development Standards and Design Guidelines

See the Zoning Code for standards and design guidelines in the Everett Station Area.