

Prepared by **THE OTAK TEAM**
For the **CITY OF MILL CREEK**

JUNE 2022



Mill Creek Boulevard

SUBAREA PLAN



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Mill Creek Boulevard Subarea Plan Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Mill Creek Boulevard Subarea Plan establishes a long-term vision to guide redevelopment over the next twenty years. In January of 2022, the Mill Creek City Council determined that the subarea plan should be considered as part of the City's 2024 Comprehensive Plan update process. The subarea is located directly south of Mill Creek Town Center, west of Bothell Everett Highway (SR 527), east of North Creek, and also includes the businesses on the south side of 164th Street SE (see map, next page).

The subarea plan includes recommendations related to land use and transportation and helps to frame options for improving the character and function of the Mill Creek Boulevard Corridor. Several capital improvements are proposed in this area, and the subarea plan provides a framework to support coordination and design of these improvements:

- » *Intersection improvements at 164th Street SE, 161st Street, Main and SR 527;*
- » *Repair of surface water aging infrastructure failures identified in a 2018 study;*
- » *Water quality treatment;*
- » *Pavement preservation; and*
- » *Potential improvements to enhance pedestrian and bicycle access to transit.*

While redevelopment of the parcels in the corridor is not imminent, the City made the decision to collaboratively engage with residents, business representatives, and affected property owners to identify potential land uses that could bring increased economic activity to the area and improve the aesthetics of this important gateway to the city and Town Center.

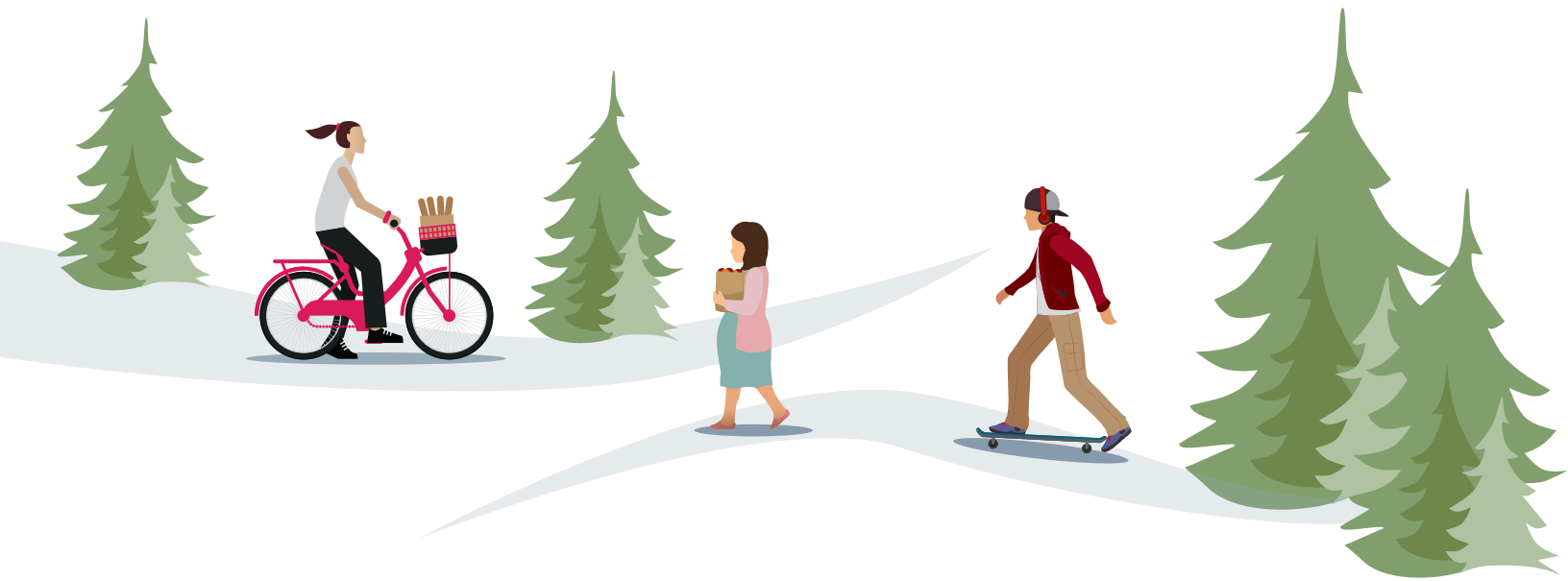
MILL CREEK BOULEVARD SUBAREA MAP AND VICINITY MAP



PURPOSE OF THE SUBAREA PLAN

The purpose of this plan is to identify ways to strengthen economic development and to evaluate potential changes in land use that would provide additional opportunities (business, economic development, transportation, housing, and public spaces) for the community. The plan also addresses how the subarea can be enhanced and improved as an important gateway to the city and Town Center.

The plan provides options for meeting established growth allocations (population, housing, and employment), focusing growth near services and transit, consistent with Washington State Growth Management Act and regional policies. The plan also frames options for improving the character and function of Mill Creek Boulevard to serve local business access, rather than serving as a cut-through route. The subarea is a busy hub of activity for Mill Creek, and the plan recommends ways to enhance and strengthen the identity, sense of place, and civic functions of this important place—the heart of the community.



PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Mill Creek City Council appointed a diverse group of property owners, business representatives, and residents to form a Project Advisory Committee (PAC). The PAC worked with the City's planning team (City staff and consultants) to evaluate land use, transportation, and economic development opportunities within the Mill Creek Boulevard Corridor Subarea. The City Council directed the PAC to evaluate three potential scenarios:

- » No changes to zoning in the subarea;
- » Potential intensified land uses (upzoning) in 30% of the subarea; and
- » Potential intensified land uses (upzoning) in 50% of the subarea.

The PAC met nine times throughout the planning process to review public input, analyze data, prepare and evaluate alternative planning scenarios for the subarea, and prepare recommendations on potential land uses and infrastructure (see page ES-6).



VISION AND GOALS FOR THE SUBAREA

To guide development of the recommendations in the subarea plan, the planning team and the PAC prepared a vision statement and key goals as guiding principles. The vision statement and key goals will be carried forward when the subarea plan is further considered as part of the City's 2024 Comprehensive Plan update process.



Visioning concept illustrations for the subarea

VISION STATEMENT

Serving as a gateway to Mill Creek and an extension of Town Center, the Mill Creek Boulevard Subarea will redevelop and change over time, extending the character and identity of Town Center south. The subarea will continue to function as a vibrant commercial and civic hub, with the addition of compatible mixed use buildings and residential uses to support local business, as well as to provide space for new businesses and services. The new buildings will be similar in character to the mixed use and multifamily buildings in and surrounding Town Center.

Public uses of the subarea will be enhanced and expanded through improved and new spaces for community uses, events, and festivals, better access to North Creek Trail, beautiful streetscapes, pedestrian corridors, and a welcoming civic campus where City Hall is located. Additional retail shops, restaurants, and other active uses will occur in a flexible framework of redevelopment that responds to the market. With implementation of the plan, the subarea will become an extension of Town Center and will enhance Mill Creek's desirability as a great place to live, work, shop, socialize, and spend time supporting our strong community.



GOALS

- » Strengthen the character and identity of the subarea to enhance its sense of place and its importance as a gateway to Mill Creek.
- » Address traffic congestion through multi-modal improvements and access to high capacity transit. Provide adequate parking for existing and future uses.
- » Allow for mixed use (commercial/residential/office) over a portion of the subarea, in alignment with the Project Advisory Committee recommendations to support the market demand for residential.
- » Support economic development, business vitality, and related employment opportunities in the subarea through land use and zoning changes.
- » Leverage the subarea as a suitable location to meet population, housing, and employment targets allocated to Mill Creek.
- » Make the subarea more pedestrian friendly—walkable and bikeable so that people will feel encouraged to walk and bicycle between places rather than to drive.
- » Design Mill Creek Boulevard to function as an attractive gateway to the community, as well as to serve local transportation and parking needs rather than as a cut-through between 164th and SR 527.
- » Consistent with Mill Creek's reputation as a safe community, ensure that the subarea continues to be a safe and secure place, leveraging the proximity of the Mill Creek Police Department in the subarea.
- » Enhance public open spaces and streetscapes to provide opportunities for everyone in the community and promote multigenerational activities, with a focus on creating:
 - ▶ An attractive multi-modal street network and a network of tree-lined streets, as well as connecting pedestrian and bicycle linkages (on-street and off-street);



Concept showing boardwalk and overlook at City pond

- ▶ Greenways with healthy trees and vegetation and trails for walking and bicycling that connect to the North Creek Trail corridor, Town Center, and surrounding neighborhoods;
- ▶ An enhanced and expanded North Creek Trail corridor through the subarea;
- ▶ A well-designed regional stormwater system that enhances water quality, controls flows to area creeks, and improves habitat for fish and wildlife;
- ▶ An active use area surrounding the City's pond that relates to surrounding redevelopment; and
- ▶ Festival street and public plaza spaces, creating the Mill Creek Commons.



PROJECT ADVISORY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE SUBAREA

HERE ARE THE PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE'S TEN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE SUBAREA:

1. *Engage stakeholders throughout the planning process.*
2. *Allow a mix of uses for redevelopment.*
3. *Allow additional building height.*
4. *Provide illustrative design and development standards.*
5. *Require public spaces and amenities with redevelopment.*
6. *Require that the streetscape in the subarea be designed to support the safe movement of pedestrians, bicyclists, and automobiles.*
7. *Change the function of Mill Creek Boulevard to serve the properties in the corridor; not to be a cut-through between SE 164th Street and State Route 527.*
8. *Seek public improvement partnerships to make strategic streetscape improvements while preparing to implement the plan—sooner rather than later.*
9. *Consider a regional strategy for stormwater management.*
10. *Evaluate the land uses desired in the corridor.*



The basis of the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) recommendations was review of economic data showing mixed use zoning that allows multifamily residential use is the most economically viable type of redevelopment. In their recommendations, the PAC determined that approximately 30% of the subarea, generally the properties along the west side of Mill Creek Boulevard, should be considered for this increased land use intensity, with North Creek providing an amenity and buffer to the redevelopment.

Conceptual illustrations in the subarea plan provide a sense of how redevelopment might look in this portion of the subarea. More residents in the subarea would provide more customers for existing businesses in the vicinity—including Town Center. Additionally, the redevelopment would generate significant revenues for the City. These revenues could provide a funding source for improving infrastructure, amenities, and services in the subarea, the aesthetics of the corridor as a gateway, public spaces along North Creek Trail, and water quality entering North Creek through the construction of upgraded stormwater facilities as a part of new development.



NEXT STEPS AND ACTION PLAN

LOOKING AHEAD

With completion of the subarea plan, the next step will be for the City to work with the Planning Commission and the City Council through the 2024 Mill Creek Comprehensive Plan update process to determine the future direction for the subarea. The Comprehensive Plan update process will begin in early 2023 and will be completed by the end of 2024. The public will be engaged during this process. Planning Commission and City Council meetings are open to the public, and decision-making will be transparent.

Through the Comprehensive Plan update process, there will be opportunities to consider the recommendations from the PAC and integrate the subarea plan into the Comprehensive Plan. The intent will be to guide future redevelopment in alignment with the vision and goals for the subarea. Changing the function of Mill Creek Boulevard to serve the adjacent land uses in the corridor rather than as a cut-through between 164th Street SE and SR 527 will be another important potential next step, which will require updating existing policies and strategies in the City's Comprehensive Plan.



In addition to the planning and zoning related steps above, the City may determine to move forward with specific improvements in the subarea, including upgrading Mill Creek Boulevard and completing intersection improvements at 164th Street, 161st Street, Main and SR 527. Improvements also may include repair of aging surface water management infrastructure facilities to address failures identified in a 2018 study, as well as water quality treatment as required under current Department of Ecology standards. The City may also implement pavement rehabilitation and improvement projects to enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety and connectivity to the *Swift* bus rapid transit lines.



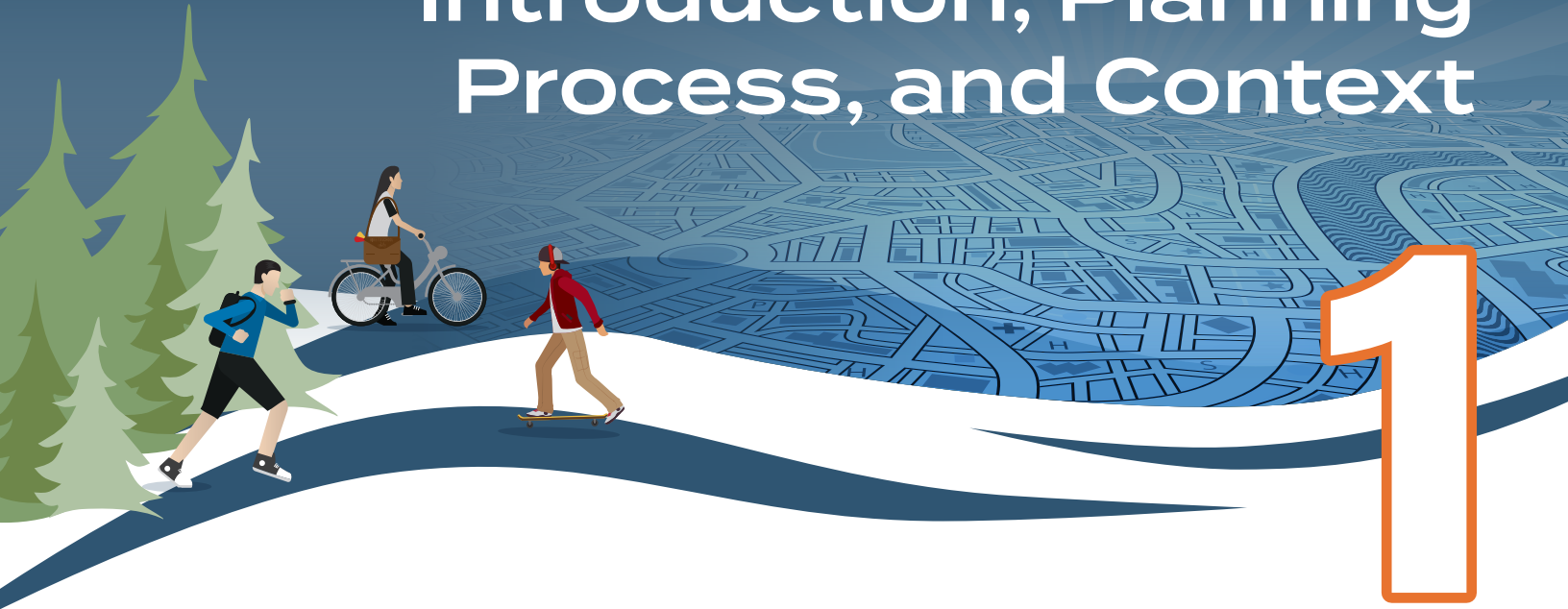
ACTION PLAN

Considering the recommended steps described on the previous page, the action plan prioritizes potential action items for the City over the course of the next few years to move this plan forward to implementation.

- A. Continue public involvement efforts as part of the actions listed below,** ensuring that the community is engaged in the process and is provided with meaningful opportunities to provide input and feedback.
- B. Consider revisions to land use designations and changes needed to the City's Comprehensive Plan** (including the plan's land use map), as well as policies and strategies that may need to be updated in the 2024 Comprehensive Plan to align with the Project Advisory Committee's recommendations. This would include making updates to the Transportation, Land Use, Housing, and other relevant elements of the Comprehensive Plan.
- C. Provide State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) compliance** as part of the Comprehensive Plan update process, which may include additional, more detailed analysis of environmental conditions to support potential changes.
- D. Complete Mill Creek Municipal Code amendments,** including zoning and code provisions to support the City's updated Comprehensive Plan (2024).
- E. Prepare illustrative design standards,** adopted by reference in the Municipal Code to support and guide subarea redevelopment so that it is consistent with the desired character and aesthetics for the subarea, and so that it enhances the overall character of Mill Creek and the subarea's function as a gateway to the community.
- F. Move forward with already programmed capital improvement projects in the subarea,** taking into consideration how improvements may relate to and support future redevelopment and enhancements recommended in the subarea plan.
- G. Develop a funding strategy for, and design and implement Mill Creek Boulevard corridor improvements,** which could be completed in phases: design development, preparation of construction documents, and construction.
- H. Develop a funding strategy for, and study, design, and implement surface water management improvements,** which could include regional or subregional facilities and water quality treatment to support future redevelopment. These actions would improve habitat and environmental conditions of North Creek, as well as the downstream waters of the Sammamish River and Lake Washington.
- I. Consider opportunities to enhance public and civic spaces in the subarea.** As an important and busy hub of the community, the City will continue to evaluate opportunities to enhance the public spaces and civic functions of the subarea. The community offered a variety of ideas during the planning process, such as: improving access to North Creek Trail; providing more public gathering spaces in the vicinity of City Hall and other public areas; adding more public art installations; enhancing streetscapes and creating shared/festival street areas; and creating a better public experience around the City pond.



Introduction, Planning Process, and Context



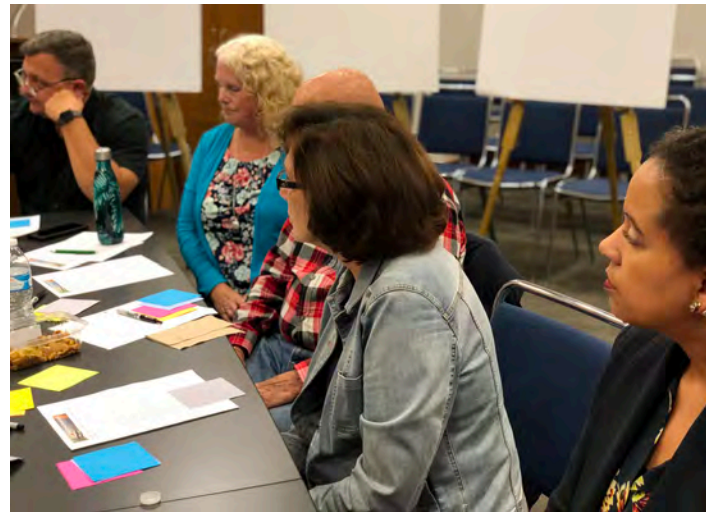
BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE SUBAREA PLAN

In April 2019, the City of Mill Creek initiated a subarea planning process to proactively identify and evaluate economic development and land use opportunities in the Mill Creek Corridor between the Mill Creek Town Center and just to the south of 164th Street SE (including businesses in Mill Creek Square and Village by the Creek). The subarea extends from the North Creek corridor on the west to Bothell Everett Highway (SR 527) on the east. See **Figure 1.1**—Subarea Planning Vicinity Map and **Figure 1.2**—Existing Context Map.

The planning process has resulted in creation of a vision and goals for future redevelopment in the subarea, taking into account existing conditions, market and economic trends, opportunities related to bus rapid transit access, and the need to create a more welcoming, attractive gateway to Mill Creek and Town Center. There has long been interest in updating this area as a southern entrance to Mill Creek, and through this planning process it was confirmed that the community is interested in carrying the “look and feel” of Main Street in Town Center south to 164th via the Mill Creek Boulevard corridor.

The subarea plan also provides a framework for potential redevelopment that can accommodate future population and employment growth, in line with the targets allocated to the City of Mill Creek. Focusing this growth in the city center rather than in existing neighborhoods is consistent with community interests and values. Locating growth near shops, services, and high capacity transit is consistent with regional growth policies. Planning to address growth targets will be further explored in the City’s 2024 Comprehensive Plan process.





Photographs of community engagement and Project Advisory Committee meetings

To assist in the subarea planning process, the City Council hired planning consultants Otak, Inc. and appointed members of the community to a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) to work with the planning team (see additional discussion later in this plan). The project was funded by a Washington State Department of Commerce grant from the Local and Community Projects Program, and the plan addresses the required scope of work elements, including:

- » Public engagement activities
- » Review and assessment of existing conditions, including a market study and economic development recommendations
- » Visioning and analysis of preliminary design concepts and land use alternatives
- » Finalizing the subarea plan and including a list of action items to be completed for implementation



PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Mill Creek City Council appointed a diverse group of interests to form the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). PAC members included local residents, property owners, business owners, a representative from Community Transit, representatives from City boards (including two members of the Design Review Board, one member of the Arts and Beautification Board, one member of the Parks Board, and three Planning Commissioners) and three City Council members. The PAC, supported by City staff, met at key milestones during the planning process to provide advisory-level guidance to the consultant team. Through the course of eight meetings, the PAC provided input on the vision for the subarea, potential changes to land use and zoning, and possible future improvements that could be made to enhance the area and support future redevelopment.

PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC) MEMBERS:

- » **Zachary Anderson**, Resident
- » **Jamie Barrett**, Art and Beautification Board
- » **Benjamin Briles**, City Council—Councilmember
- » **Dave Hambelton**, Planning Commissioner and Design Review Board Member
- » **Tina Hastings**, Design Review Board Member
- » **Brian Holtzclaw**, City Council—Mayor
- » **Peter Lalic**, Resident
- » **Matthew Nolan**, Planning Commissioner
- » **Steve Knox**, Resident
- » **Artemios Panos**, Property Owner
- » **Christopher Silveira**, Community Transit
- » **Stephanie Vignal**, City Council—Mayor Pro Tem
- » **Jason Wingert**, Business Representative

The PAC meetings focused on a variety of topics, and the planning team gathered input from the PAC on the following key questions:

1. What do you like about the subarea and what could be improved?
2. What physical challenges should occur as public improvements or capital investments with redevelopment in portions of the subarea?
3. Should the existing land uses remain unchanged, or are there other uses that may also be appropriate?
4. What land uses are feasible in the area from a market perspective?
5. What height and form of redevelopment is feasible from a market perspective and considering the community context?
6. Where should redevelopment occur (throughout the subarea or in specific areas)?
7. What steps are needed for implementation (zoning changes, design guidelines, SEPA analysis, etc.)?



FIGURE 1.1
SUBAREA PLANNING VICINITY MAP

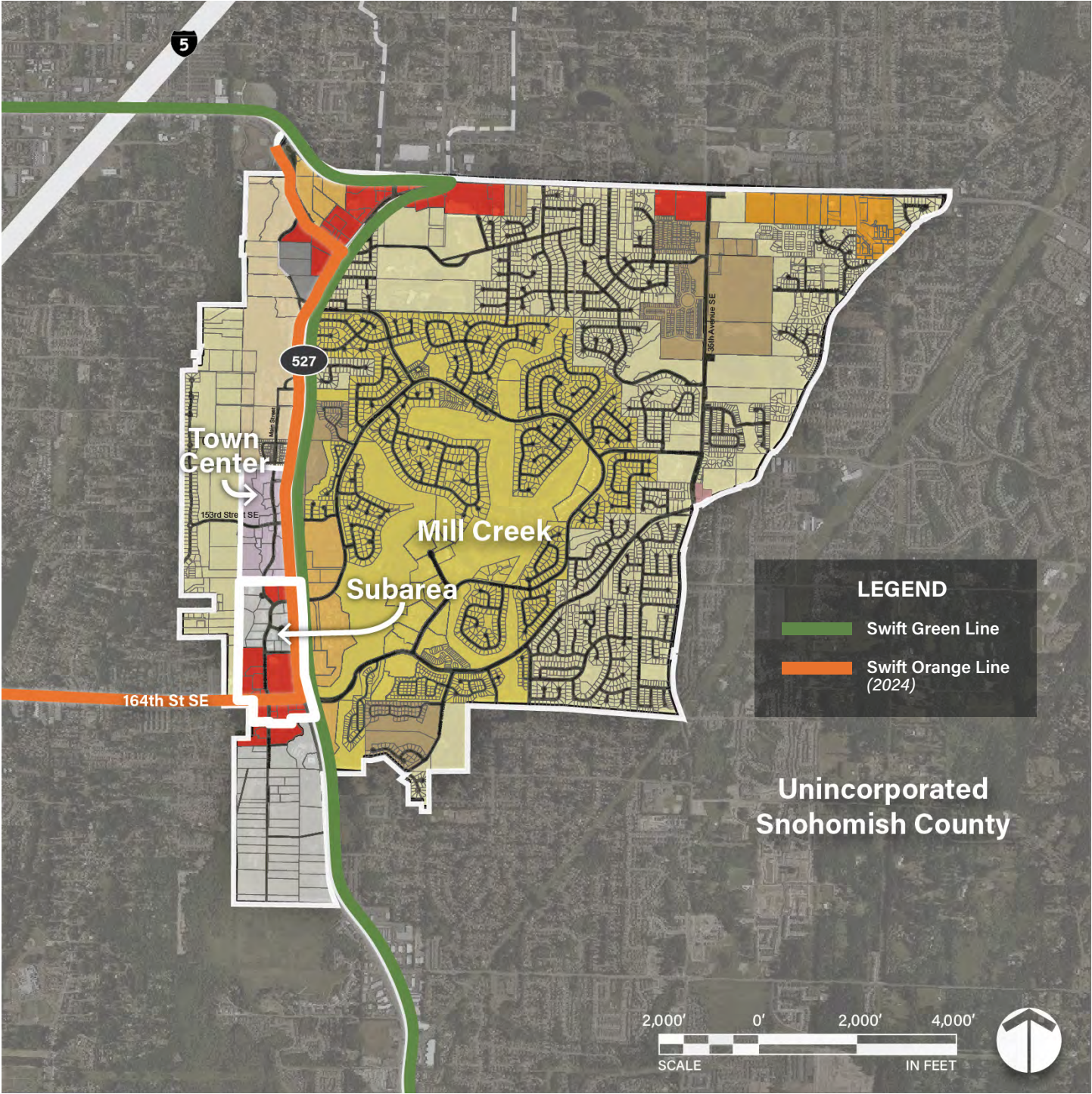


FIGURE 1.2
EXISTING CONTEXT MAP



PLANNING PROCESS AND PROJECT TIMELINE

As part of kicking off the project in 2019, the City displayed information about the subarea planning process at the Mill Creek Festival and comments and ideas were collected from the public. The planning team created a project information sheet that was distributed at the festival as well as available at City Hall.

Initial meetings were held with the PAC to gather input as the planning team proceeded with analysis of existing conditions in the subarea and held a community workshop series in the fall of 2019 to gather input. The team also contacted property owners in the Mill Creek Boulevard Corridor to learn about any near-term or long-term plans for their property and to gather their ideas and input on possibilities for the future.

The team then proceeded to analyze opportunities and challenges related to potential redevelopment of the properties in the corridor and conducted a market assessment to determine what type of development would be most feasible and practical.

As 2019 progressed and through the winter of 2019-2020, the planning process moved into defining potential alternatives (long term land use scenarios) and evaluation of alternatives, based on the outcomes of the existing conditions analysis and market assessment.

The project team met with City Council in March 2020 to share progress and present the results of the market assessment and a range of potential redevelopment scenarios. The City Council directed the project team to conduct an evaluation of three alternatives:

- » **Alternative A**—No Action/No Changes to Existing Zoning
- » **Alternative B**—Assume 30% Level of Change in the Subarea
- » **Alternative C**—Assume 50% Level of Change in the Subarea

The team then proceeded to conduct the alternatives analysis, which examined:

- » Public space and public improvement opportunities
- » Traffic and parking considerations and the function of Mill Creek Boulevard
- » Stormwater management considerations
- » Financial/revenue considerations

Visualizations and design concepts were prepared for a portion of the subarea to better understand how the potential form and height of redevelopment may look.

In December 2020 and February 2021, the PAC was reconvened, and the team presented the alternatives analysis results and the visualizations and design concepts. Additional PAC meetings were held throughout 2021 to develop a set of formal recommendations to City Council. The PAC continued to work on the recommendations throughout 2021, finalizing them for transmittal to City Council in January of 2022. Following the City Council meeting, the team developed this plan, which will be an important document of reference when the City prepares its updated 2024 Comprehensive Plan. Figure 3 illustrates the project timeline and planning process.



2019

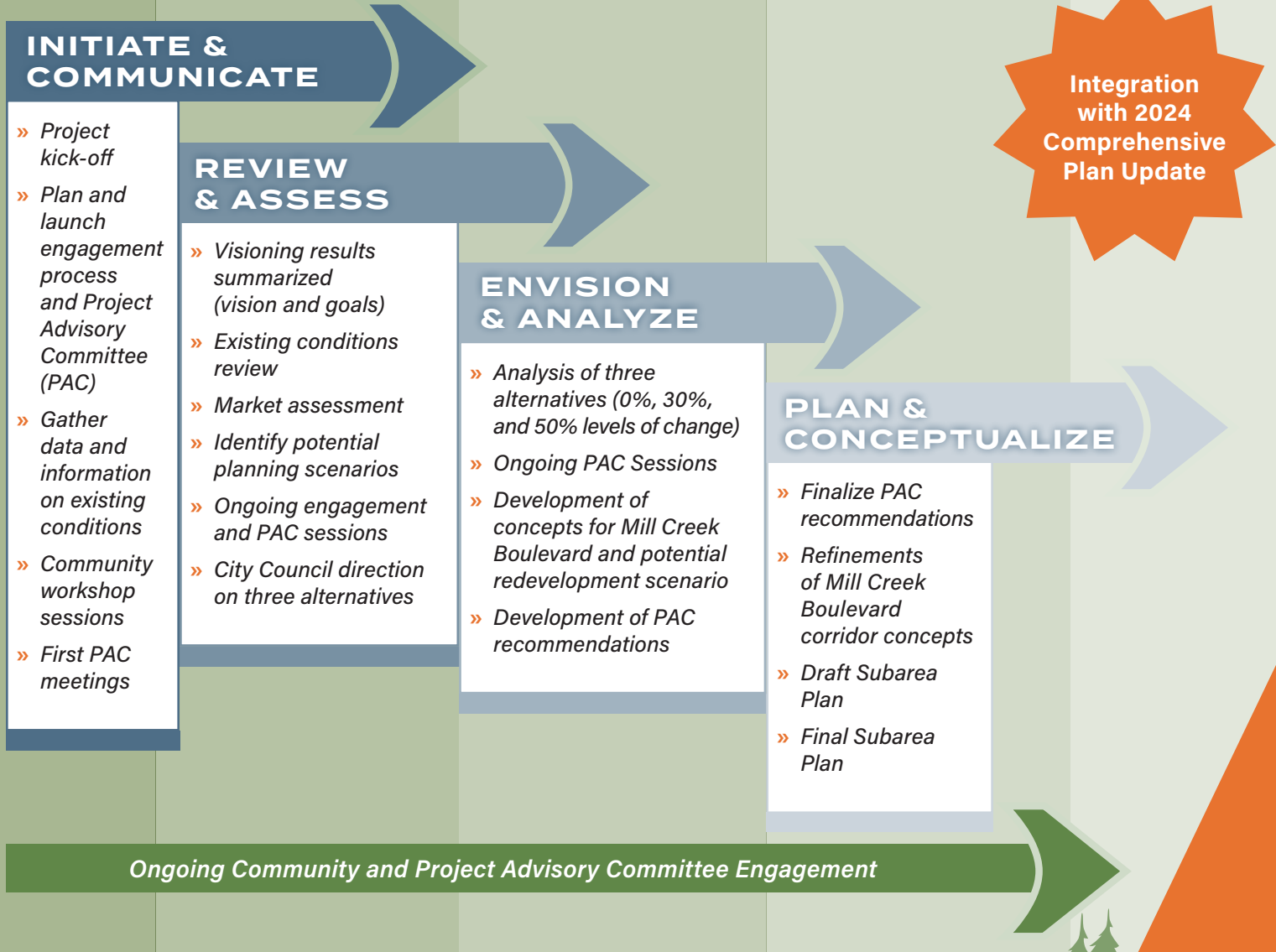
2020

2021

2022

2023-
2024

FIGURE 1.3
PLANNING PROCESS
AND TIMELINE



SUMMARY OF OTHER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

In addition to meetings with the PAC, a wide diversity of interests and the general public were engaged during the planning process and asked to provide input. Upon completion of the existing conditions analysis and market assessment, the project team conducted multiple workshop sessions with key community and subarea interests (property owners, business owners, chamber of commerce, arts, residents/neighborhoods, youth group, and others) in the fall of 2019. The general public also was invited to a workshop session, and a presentation was made to the Planning Commission as part of the engagement process.



Photographs of community engagement and Project Advisory Committee meetings

At the workshop sessions, participants were briefed about the purpose of the plan and asked their opinion on what should happen in the subarea if the properties were redeveloped. Participants were asked if land uses should be changed, or if they should remain the same. They were asked about what infrastructure facilities should be added, improved, or changed. Extensive input was gathered and is summarized in the Workshop Summary Report provided as an appendix to this plan.

The team also contacted property owners in the Mill Creek Boulevard Corridor to learn about any long-term plans for their property and to gather their ideas and input on possibilities for the future. This was especially important because the plan will need to be supported by the property owners to be successful.

In addition, a project webpage was maintained throughout the planning process, where the public could access information about the project and provide input. The public was invited to sign up on Notify Me to receive email notifications when new information is posted or public workshops or meetings are scheduled for this project.



OUTCOMES FROM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Several common themes were raised by participants throughout all of the workshop sessions. These are summarized below. The Workshop Summary Report, provided as an appendix to this plan, provides a full summary of participants' input.

Addressing existing problems: Workshop participants recognized and listed many problems in the subarea that the plan should address (cut-through traffic, lack of sense of place, automobile-oriented, not pedestrian friendly, need for civic core/campus, etc.)

The community generally acknowledges and supports the idea of change in the subarea: Most workshop participants acknowledged a need for and supported the idea of making changes in the subarea in various ways—land uses, forms of development, types of businesses, public space, streets, civic uses, and infrastructure.

Creating a more pedestrian-friendly place: One of the most common issues mentioned was that the subarea currently is not pedestrian friendly and is very automobile oriented. Mill Creek Boulevard only has sidewalks on one side in many areas. Businesses are not well connected. People drive around to different businesses rather than walking between them. In addition, people also mentioned the need for more bike paths and bicycle connectivity to transit.

North Creek/North Creek Trail/pond/green space: Enhancing North Creek and the North Creek Trail, and enhancing and expanding green space/open space opportunities was also a commonly mentioned interest of workshop participants.

Enhancing the civic core: Workshop participants expressed interest in enhancing the civic core of this area—making it look, feel, and function more like a civic campus and the core of the community. Ideas mentioned included creating more of a civic gathering space, performing arts center, community center, outdoor performance space, moving the library to the subarea, and improving city hall.

Transit connectivity: The need to enhance connections to the existing and future bus rapid transit lines was often mentioned, including the need for pedestrian and bicycle connections, as well as vehicle connections (rideshare drop, parking, etc.). Workshop participants also commonly mentioned that there is a need for better, more regular local transit/shuttle service to get people who live in surrounding neighborhoods to/from the subarea and Town Center (and to BRT) other than by driving.

Placemaking—creating places that attract people and business: The need to enhance the aesthetics of the subarea was mentioned, as well as the importance of creating stronger character and identity—either extending the character of Town Center to the subarea, or creating a new gateway district with its own strong identity and character. And as part of creating identity, placemaking that strengthens character by creating new, vibrant gathering spaces and places (public and private) was a high priority mentioned by many.

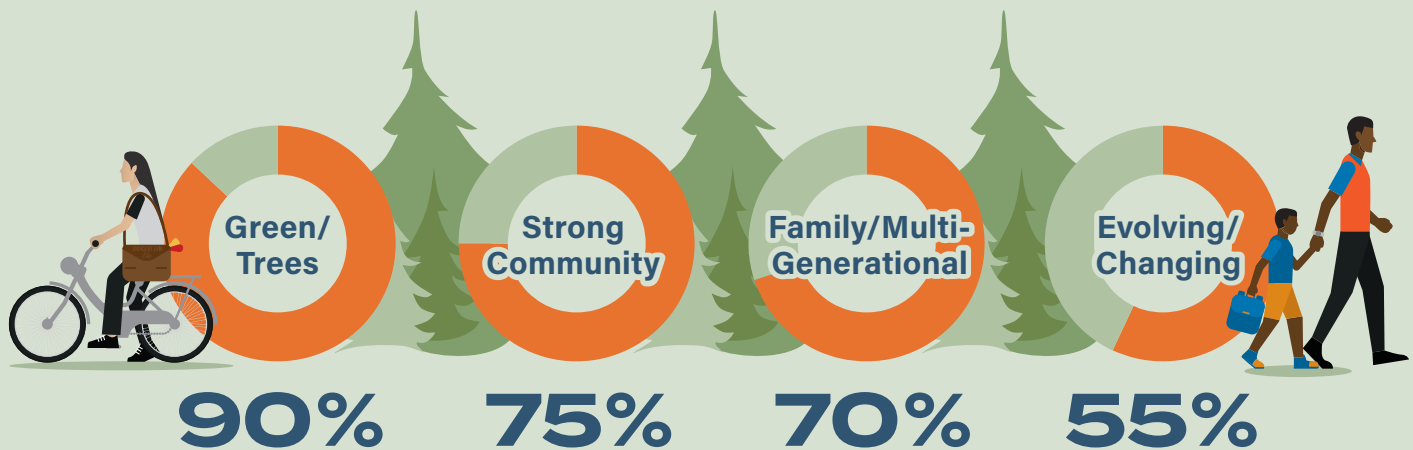
Supporting businesses and economic vitality: Workshop participants expressed a high level of support for keeping the business community in the subarea and Town Center thriving and vibrant. Many people mentioned that relevant businesses are needed, avoiding redundancy with Town Center businesses. People liked the ideas of market halls next to outdoor seating spaces/gathering places, as well as work sharing spaces. Several participants mentioned the need for hospitality/hotel uses and some expressed an interest in more vibrant night life opportunities.



Accommodating growth: When asked about if and how the subarea should accommodate future growth, most workshop participants said “yes” and indicated that growth should be well-planned and sustainable.

Housing choices: Many workshop participants mentioned a need to expand housing choices in the community, and that they would like to see multi-family housing in the subarea while also preserving surrounding single family neighborhoods as they are today. Although some workshop participants expressed concerns about adding housing to the subarea, because they thought the predominant land use in the area should be commercial. (The planning team explained that having more residents in the subarea would help to drive business to commercial and retail uses, making them more sustainable over the long term.)

THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS WERE MENTIONED THE MOST BY PARTICIPANTS (Percentage of Participants Mentioning Shown)



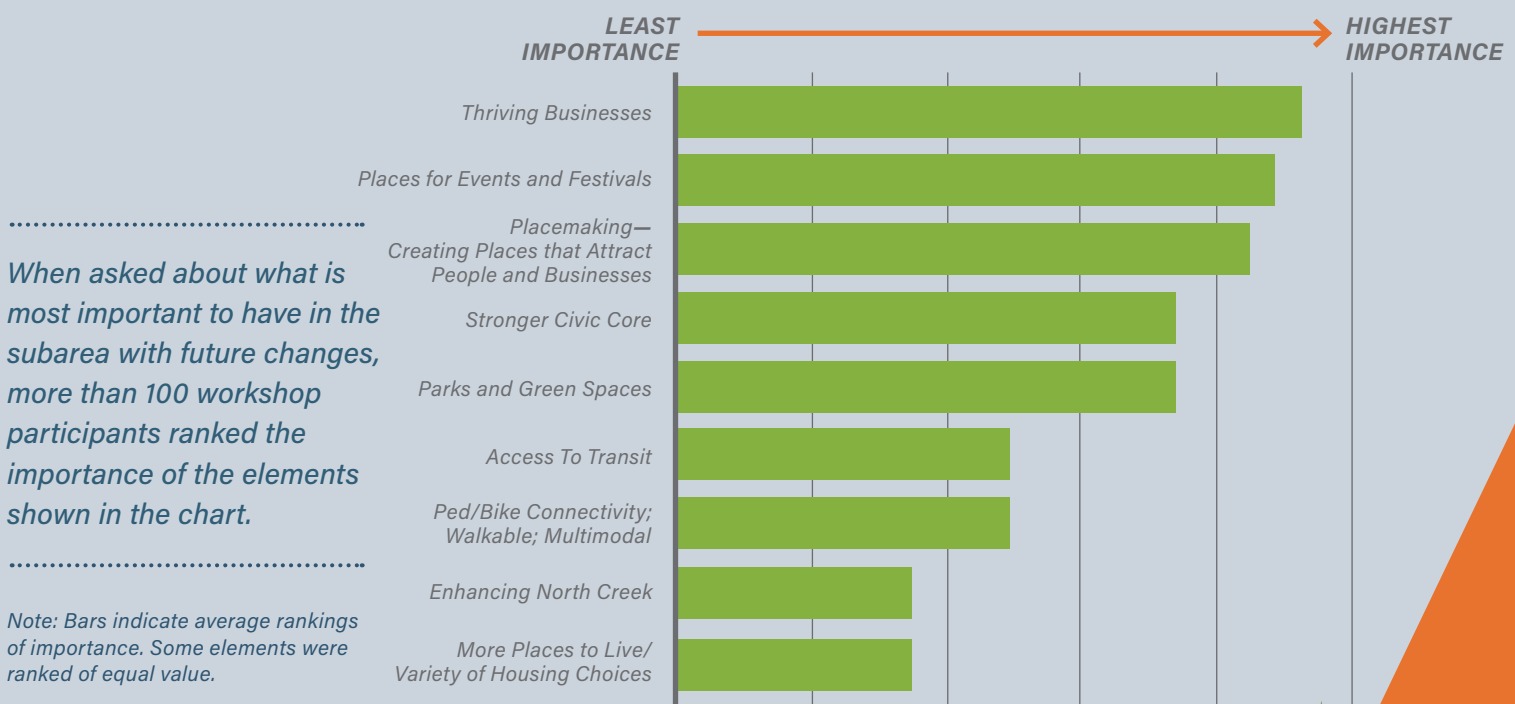
When asked about what living in the Mill Creek community means to them, workshop participations listed the following characteristics:

- » Sense of green (green space, open space)
- » Aesthetics/attractive
- » Evolving/changing/growing
- » Nice little town
- » Quality/stability
- » Livability/great place to live/ community living
- » Active
- » Family centric
- » Hometown atmosphere
- » Quaint
- » Clean
- » Healthy
- » Pleasant, safe, comfortable
- » Welcoming place for all
- » Upscale
- » Strong community/sense of community/full service community
- » Nature trails
- » Urban forest
- » Sustainable
- » Expanding village with acceptance of people who like to be involved in their community
- » Generational—family life in every season
- » Suburban
- » Outdoor experiences (walking, biking, trails)
- » Great location
- » Seeking its identity
- » Home



When prompted about problems in the subarea, participants listed the following:

- » Traffic flow/cut-through traffic/ traffic, traffic, traffic
- » Lacks a sense of place/character
- » Automobile-oriented; not pedestrian friendly; better pedestrian connectivity
- » Lack of community space
- » Lack of open space
- » Need more parking for new transit
- » Need pedestrian and bicycle connections
- » Poor "gateway" to Mill Creek
- » Need better local transit access to surrounding neighborhoods so more people can get here other than driving
- » North Creek Trail goes missing at south end of subarea
- » Too many of certain types of uses (banks)
- » Aesthetics are too industrial
- » Need better connectivity
- » Need better event and community functionality
- » Subarea needs better connectivity to Town Center; extension of the cohesive look and feel of the Town Center
- » Outdated look—need for more current, relevant businesses
- » Tired looking buildings
- » Panhandlers
- » You can only walk on one side of the street
- » Need more destinations and events that draw people here
- » Cost of living
- » Economic challenges for some businesses
- » Lack of diversity
- » Need for more recreational activities
- » North Creek Trail needs to be enhanced/more accessible
- » Support anchor businesses (Safeway, RiteAid, QFC, etc.) is an ongoing need
- » Need for more mixed use
- » Need more group meeting space/event space
- » Pedestrian connectivity/integration with transit on SR 527 and 164th
- » More ways for people to come to Town Center and subarea without their vehicles



Other important opportunities mentioned by workshop participants included the following:

- » Market hall/center/events space with adjacent public space
- » Stand-alone medium-priced food restaurants
- » Adding a built-out edge to pond/North Creek
- » Code changes to maximize property uses for redevelopment
- » Street festival uses
- » Allow space for office growth/work sharing
- » Experience-oriented businesses
- » Showcase North Creek
- » More study + hang out spaces
- » Green + walkable
- » Create a stronger civic core/civic campus area—this is uniting and gives a sense of community pride
- » We need meeting + event spaces
- » Community center + performing arts space
- » Enhance North Creek access for human learning and appreciation
- » Better transit—circling parts of residential areas to bring people to Town Center and subarea other than by car; ease of access to area; increased community connection
- » Humanized
- » More opportunities to enjoy a night out without it having to be at a bar
- » Protection of wildlife along the creek
- » Code changes should allow hospitality/hotel use
- » Movie theater/performing arts center combo – combine items here with multiple uses so they can be more viable
- » Performance space/amphitheater
- » Ways to promote more high tech jobs to come in (shuttle access)
- » Local tourism facilitation/festivals
- » Nightlife that is more club like
- » More vibrant night life
- » Art installments that are beautiful day and night
- » Area that makes you eager to walk around
- » Less traffic + more transit options
- » More green spaces; more trails
- » Full linkage via walkways; bridges to connect
- » Mill Creek is a high end planned community—keep the same focus to attract like-minded population
- » More gathering space for the public
- » Pond area could be more park like; a place to be
- » Climbing wall
- » Water feature
- » Community gardens
- » Creating a central splash park area in town



Existing Conditions



SUBAREA LOCATION AND SURROUNDINGS

The Mill Creek Boulevard subarea is located at the southwest corner of the city of Mill Creek within Snohomish County and immediately to the south of Mill Creek Town Center. See Vicinity Map, **Figure 2.1**. The subarea is connected to adjacent jurisdictions and the Interstate 5 (I-5) corridor by 164th Street SE and the Bothell Everett Highway (SR 527) and high-capacity transit via the existing Community Transit *Swift* Green Line and the future *Swift* Orange Line. See **Figures 2.5** and **2.6**. The Orange Line will operate in 2024, connecting to the Seattle to Everett light rail corridor (LINK).



Public art display in the subarea



DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

Most of the buildings in the Mill Creek Boulevard subarea were originally constructed between 1980 and 1990 with occasional infill and upgrades in 1994, 2012, and 2014. Development started with the construction of the Mill Creek Plaza shopping area in 1980 and expanded north between 1981 and 1983. The subarea was included in the original city limits when Mill Creek incorporated in 1983. Developments in the south end of the subarea were constructed in 1985 and 1986. By 1990 nearly all parcels in the subarea had been developed into office or commercial buildings, including “strip mall” style retail centers. The post office was constructed in 1994, and additional retail buildings were added to the Mill Creek Plaza shopping complex in 2012 and 2014. There are no residential uses currently in the subarea.

Related to these periods of development, the subarea has an automobile-oriented suburban pattern of development, with surface parking areas surrounding commercial and office buildings of varying sizes. This has resulted in some underutilized properties, and there are also buildings with vacancies. These conditions suggest that there is redevelopment potential in the subarea, and this is addressed in more detail in the Market Assessment in Section 4 of the plan.

Pedestrian and bicycle connectivity in the subarea could be greatly improved over time to enhance access to the Swift Green and Orange Lines. Despite multiple civic uses and the Mill Creek City Hall located in the subarea, there are minimal civic space and public open space or parks within the subarea. One exception is the presence of the North Creek Trail corridor, which extends through the subarea along North Creek, west of City Hall and other buildings. The North Creek Trail is recognized as a regional trail and is undergoing improvements further south in the City of Bothell.



A view of the subarea in the vicinity of City Hall

The subarea's proximity to Mill Creek Town Center directly to the north is an asset and an important opportunity. Mill Creek Town Center was created to give the community a commercial and social core with a very walkable main street as the central spine. After the town adopted its 1992 comprehensive plan, community members came together to develop plans for a town center, and construction began nearly ten years later. Town Center opened in 2004. Considered to be a lifestyle destination for Mill Creek residents and people throughout the region, Town Center today has over 80 shops, restaurants, and other services.



FIGURE 2.1
VICINITY MAP



LAND USE AND ZONING

Current land use designations are identified in the Mill Creek 2015 Comprehensive Plan, scheduled to be updated in 2024. Current zoning designations that align with the Comprehensive Plan are identified in the Mill Creek Zoning Code. **Figure 2.2** shows existing land use designations, and **Figure 2.3** shows existing zoning.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

The subarea consists of the four land use designations in the Comprehensive Plan:

- » Business Park
- » Community Business
- » Open Space
- » Quasi Public Space

Parcels in the subarea with the designation of Business Park and Quasi Public Space are regulated under the Business Park (BP) Zone. Parcels with the land use designation of Community Business are regulated under the Community Business (CB) Zone. There is one parcel in the subarea designated as Open Space. This parcel is owned by the City of Mill Creek and is intended to be preserved as natural open space for the North Creek corridor and North Creek Trail. A City-owned stormwater retention pond also is located within this Open Space area.

ZONING AND CITY MUNICIPAL CODE REGULATIONS

The two zoning classifications in the subarea are Business Park (BP) and Community Business (CB). **Table 2.1** provides a summary of zoning regulations for the BP classification, and **Table 2.2** provides a summary of CB zoning regulations. The zoning regulations determine the size, shape, and orientation of new structures and development that can be built in each zoning district. The regulations also determine the maximum lot coverage, design standards, landscaping standards, and streetscape requirements for site design. Parking is regulated by land use type, with different amounts of parking required for different development types such as retail, office, or industrial.

The BP zone is intended for warehousing and manufacturing uses, with some associated office uses and a limited amount of retail/commercial space (primarily to serve employees). No residential uses are allowed in the BP zone. Between the BP and CB zones, the BP zone is generally the most restrictive in terms of permitted land uses.

The CB zone allows for a range of commercial, retail, office, and personal service uses. The zoning designation also allows residential development as a secondary use. Secondary uses must have a floor area that is less than the floor area of the principal/primary use. Only multi-family residential use would be allowed as no single-family housing types are allowed in the CB zone. The maximum density allowed is 16 dwelling units/acre.

Neither the BP or CB zones are specifically intended to encourage mixed-use development. As discussed later in this plan, the City will be considering changing land use and zoning in the subarea as part of the 2024 Comprehensive Plan update. Recommendations for rezoning and associated potential outcomes and opportunities are addressed in Sections 5, 6, and 7 of this plan. As a precedent, specific zoning classifications have been created for other areas of Mill Creek. For example, the Town Center area has a specific zoning classification of Planned Community Business (PCB), and the East Gateway area has a specific zoning classification of East Gateway Urban Village (EGUV).



FIGURE 2.2

EXISTING LAND USE DESIGNATIONS IN THE CITY'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



FIGURE 2.3
EXISTING ZONING CLASSIFICATIONS IN THE SUBAREA



Additional observations related to current zoning:

- » Having two separate zoning classifications for similarly developed parcels creates challenges related to implementing a cohesive plan for redevelopment since each zone emphasizes a different set of uses.
- » The allowed uses in the zoning classifications are based on those that were in place at the time zoning was created, and as such, the provisions are limited to a range of potential new uses that may be better suited to current and trending market conditions. If zoning doesn't change, the same types of uses would continue in the subarea.
- » The level of development allowed under existing zoning does not correlate to the full market potential that could be realized and likely would not be sufficient to incentivize future redevelopment in the subarea.
- » The City could consider form-based zoning provisions or a hybrid of form-based and traditional zoning provisions along with design guidelines to better direct the desired form and character of redevelopment. The greater level of detail of design guidelines would support the desired architecture, site design, and quality of redevelopment in the future so that it is attractive and representative of Mill Creek community character.

CURRENT OWNERSHIPS, TENANTS, AND BUSINESSES

BP zoned parcels (shown as gray color in [Figure 2.3](#)) provide suitable areas for office and commercial development, light manufacturing, product assembly, wholesaling, outdoor storage, and other similar intensive uses in locations where these activities can be made compatible with adjacent and nearby land uses. Other uses in this zone may include health care facilities, public facilities, and utilities. This zoning classification is generally not intended for the development of retail sales and services. Some of the current tenants and businesses located in the BP zoning district include:

- » Mill Creek City Hall
- » Mill Creek City Hall Annex Building
- » U.S. Post Office
- » PUD Substation
- » Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- » Kindercare Learning Center
- » Concept Therapy
- » Mill Creek Women's Health Care
- » And a variety of other businesses and services/offices (see [Table 2.3](#))



Development in the BP zone has no minimum lot size or lot coverage regulations. Development also has no setback requirements unless the parcel is adjacent to a residential or commercial zone. New structures are limited to 50 feet in height and must be designed in conformance with Mill Creek Municipal Code (MCMC) Chapter 17.34, Design Review. Development must also incorporate 20-foot-wide landscaped buffers on streets that are adjacent to commercial or residential zones. Plantings are required to screen the office and industrial uses from potential retail and residential developments.

The CB zone provides for the sale of consumer goods and services appropriate to the area and the scale of the community they serve to ensure the compatibility with nearby land uses. Uses permitted within this zone are intended to provide a broad range of goods and services to the surrounding community. For example, some of the current businesses in CB zone of the subarea include:

- » Mill Creek Veterinary Hospital
- » Sammi Nails
- » State Farm Insurance
- » QFC
- » Safeway
- » RiteAid
- » McDonald's
- » Starbucks
- » Mod Pizza
- » A variety of other businesses, services, and offices (see [Table 2.3](#))



McDonald's at Mill Creek Plaza

The North Creek Trail corridor is a public open space area that also is located within the CB zone.

Development in the CB zone is required to have a minimum lot size of 7,200 square feet. Residential as a secondary use is allowed at a maximum density of 16 units per acre. So far, no residential use at this density has been developed due to a lack of market demand or financial incentive to property owners to redevelop to this maximum density. New structures are limited to 40 feet in height and must be designed in conformance with Mill Creek Municipal Code Chapter 17.34, Design Review.

Existing property ownerships and sizes are listed in [Table 2.3](#) and the number key relates to the numbered parcels shown in [Figure 2.3](#). [Table 2.3](#) shows parcel ownerships and sizes.



SURROUNDING LAND USES

The subarea is surrounded by the following land uses and development types, as shown in **Figure 2.4**.

- » **Planned Community Business:** Mill Creek Town Center, north of the subarea is located along Bothell Everett Highway, north of Mill Creek City Hall and Maple Leaf Square. The Town Center features over 80 businesses, services, and stores, including retail, boutiques, anchor stores, restaurants and services. Numerous arts and culture events are held in Town Center throughout the year including parades, Pianos on Main, summer art walks, and other events.
- » **High Density Residential:** Located to the east of the subarea and within and north of Town Center, various apartments and condominiums exist, including some along Bothell Everett Highway. Some of these communities are located adjacent to the Mill Creek Nature Private Reserve, which includes the Mill Creek Community Association Nature Trail and other outdoor experiences for the public.
- » **Low Density Residential:** Single family neighborhoods are located to the west of the subarea, on the opposite side of North Creek, as well as to the east of the subarea, on the hill and intertwined with the Mill Creek Country Club/golf course and other green spaces.
- » **9th Avenue SE Corridor/North Creek Park:** South of the subarea, the 9th Avenue SE corridor extends through existing parcels that are also zoned CB and connects to North Creek Park and the trail/boardwalk network there.



Existing businesses near the corner of Mill Creek Boulevard and 164th Street SE



Electricity substation, located near the corner of Mill Creek Boulevard and Bothell Everett Highway



TABLE 2.1

MILL CREEK BOULEVARD SUBAREA – BUSINESS PARK ZONING IN THE SUBAREA

ZONE	Business and Industrial Park (BP)
CODE (MCMC)	17.20
SUMMARY OF ALLOWED USES	<p>The MCMC identifies the following allowed uses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Offices, including but not limited to government, research and development, trade schools and professional services » Wholesale sales » Warehousing » Manufacturing » Financial institutions » Commercial day care centers » Health clubs » Retail sales and services primarily intended to serve the principal BP zone uses. Such uses shall occupy no more than 15 percent of the constructed floor area of individual buildings. In addition to the limitation on floor area, restaurants, delis, and other eating establishments are restricted to a maximum floor area of 3,000 square feet » Mini-storage facilities » Outdoor storage and display <p><i>Summary: There is an emphasis on office, warehouse, manufacturing; retail/services are limited; mixed use is not encouraged; no residential use currently allowed; allowed uses were based on existing uses in the area.</i></p>
ALLOWS RESIDENTIAL?	No
DENSITY/UNITS	N/A
BUILDING HEIGHT MAX.	50 ft.
MIN. LOT SIZE, MAX. LOT COVERAGE, AND SETBACKS	<p>No minimum lot size or maximum lot coverage provisions</p> <p>Front yard setback: zero feet from right-of-way or sidewalk or roadway buffer/cutting preserve, if applicable</p> <p>Side and rear yard setbacks: none, except when abutting a residential or commercial zone, which shall then be 25 feet or one foot for each foot of height of the structure nearest the side lot line, whichever is greater</p>
OTHER NOTES	<p>The intent of the BP zoning district is to provide suitable areas for commercial development where the primary land uses are manufacturing, product assembly, wholesale sales and professional and business office development.</p> <p>Other uses may include health care facilities and public facilities and utilities.</p>



TABLE 2.2

MILL CREEK BOULEVARD SUBAREA – COMMUNITY BUSINESS ZONING IN THE SUBAREA

ZONE	Community Business (CB)
CODE (MCMC)	7.16
SUMMARY OF ALLOWED USES	<p>The MCMC identifies the following allowed uses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Retail and wholesale sales » Professional services » Personal services, including self service » Offices » Health care, excluding overnight accommodations » Restaurants and taverns » Commercial recreation facilities » Hotels and motels » Accessory structures and uses » Parking facilities » Banks and similar uses » Veterinary clinics and indoor animal boarding » Commercial day care centers <p><i>Secondary uses include:</i> multi-family dwellings and floor area of multi-family as a secondary use must be less than primary use</p>
ALLOWS RESIDENTIAL?	Yes, MF as secondary use; but challenges related to development economics and parking provisions may deter actual redevelopment of housing or mixed use
DENSITY/UNITS	16 du/net acre max.
BUILDING HEIGHT MAX.	40 ft.
MIN. LOT SIZE, MAX. LOT COVERAGE, AND SETBACKS	<p>7,200 minimum lot size</p> <p>No maximum lot coverage provisions</p> <p>Front yard setback: zero feet</p> <p>Side and rear yard setbacks: none, except when abutting a residential zone, which shall then be 25 feet</p>
OTHER NOTES	<p>The purpose of the CB district is to implement this land use designation of the comprehensive plan by locating commercial businesses and higher density residential uses near activity areas, pedestrian accesses, and major transportation arterials. Other uses may include health care facilities and public facilities and utilities.</p>

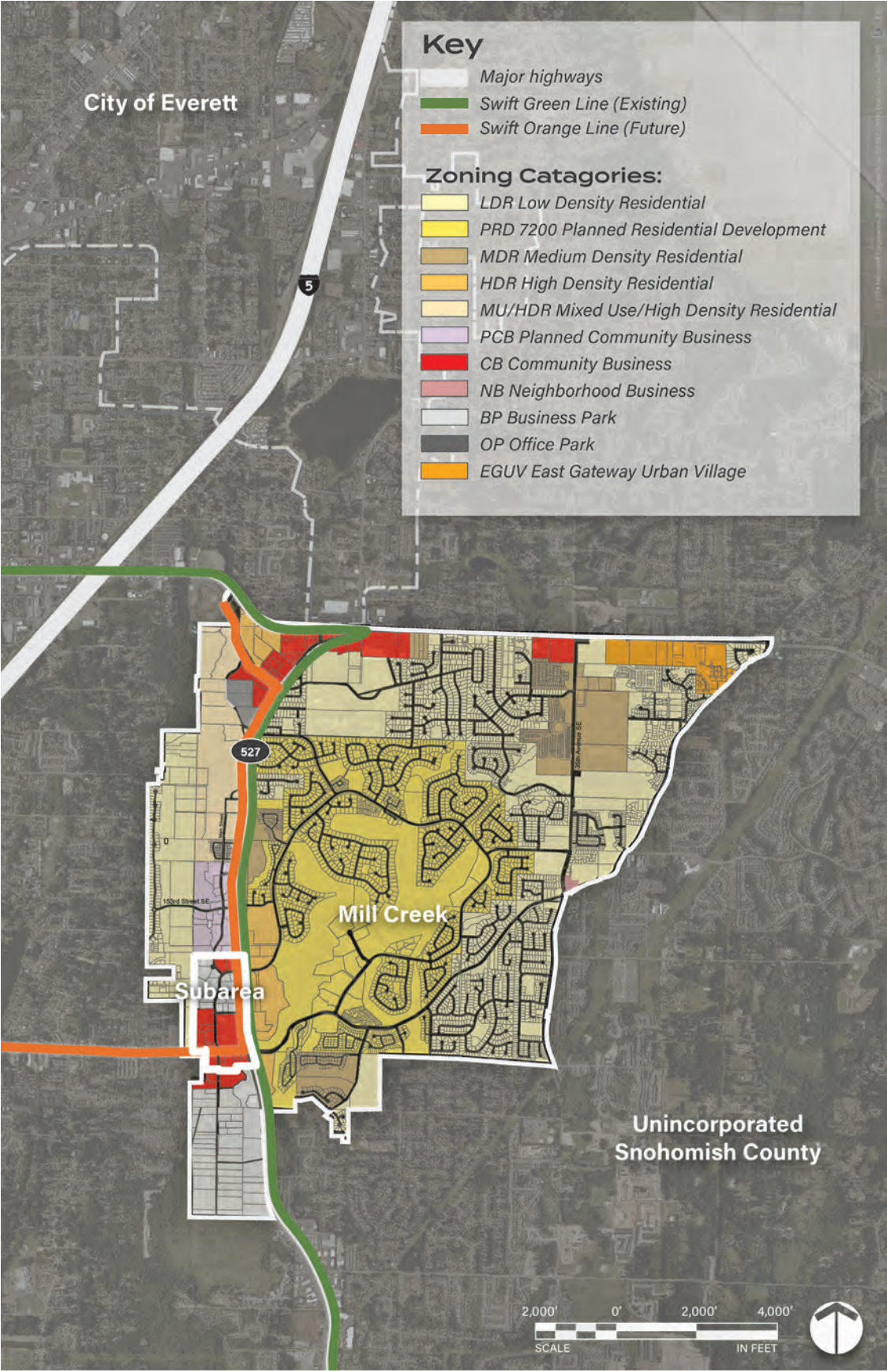


TABLE 2.3
PROPERTY OWNERSHIPS IN THE SUBAREA

#	ACRES	OWNER NAME
1	2.53	Maple Leaf Square
2	2.3	Best Family Partnership Commercial Trade Center
3	2.02	City of Mill Creek (Annex)
4	2.47	City of Mill Creek (City Hall)
5	1.05	Mill Creek Clinic LLC
6	1.98	Oskoui LTD Partnership Sydney Plaza
7	1.03	Best Family Partnership
8	1.24	Edgewater Management Services
9	1.26	Dept of Fish & Wildlife
10	0.99	PUD #1 of Snohomish County
11	0.91	KinderCare Learning Centers, Inc.
12	2.87	US Postal Service
13	1.7	K3BC Properties, LLC
14	1.19	Matand Associates
15 & 16	0.81 + 0.67	Bank of America
17	1.44	CEP II Mill Creek 12 LLC
18 & 19	2.78	Southeast Investment Group #2 LLC
20	12.57	Panos Properties LLC
21	0.48	IVANOV MILL CREEK LLC
22	0.97	Lamarche Properties LLC
23	3.49	North Creek Presbyterian Church
24, 25 & 26	0.23, 0.64, and 1.85	NWCC VILLAGE BY THE CREEK LLC
27	0.51	JP Morgan Chase Bank NA
28	0.43	Western Realty Holdings LP
29	2.58	Western Realty Holdings
30	0.57	BFS Retail & Commercial Operation
31	0.56	Best Medical Supplies, Inc.
32	1.29	Western Realty Holdings LP
33	11.6	City of Mill Creek



FIGURE 2.4
SURROUNDING LAND USES



TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

Modes of transportation to and from the subarea include auto travel, walking, bicycling, and transit. There are multiple local bus routes that stop along 164th Street SE and Bothell Everett Highway. Bus rapid transit, considered to be high capacity transit service, is provided by Community Transit via the Swift Green Line bus rapid transit service on the Bothell Everett Highway corridor. The Swift Orange Line bus rapid transit is slated to open in 2024 and will also serve the subarea with proposed stops at 164th Street SE/Mill Creek Boulevard and along the Bothell Everett Highway. See **Figures 2.5** and **2.6**. The Orange Line will connect with Sound Transit's Link light rail system at the Lynnwood City Center Station, proposed to be operable in 2024. See **Figure 2.7** for the subarea's transportation system. The Link system will provide access to Seattle, Everett, University of Washington, SeaTac International Airport, the sports stadiums, and other regional destinations.

Within the subarea, the auto-oriented suburban development pattern, which is a legacy of how the area was originally built out, could be improved with enhanced pedestrian and bicycle facilities to strengthen active transportation, interconnectivity, and access to transit. Designated pedestrian and bicycle corridors and facilities and a more complete gridded/connected street network would greatly improve walkability and bikeability in the subarea.

FIGURE 2.5
FUTURE SWIFT ORANGE LINE

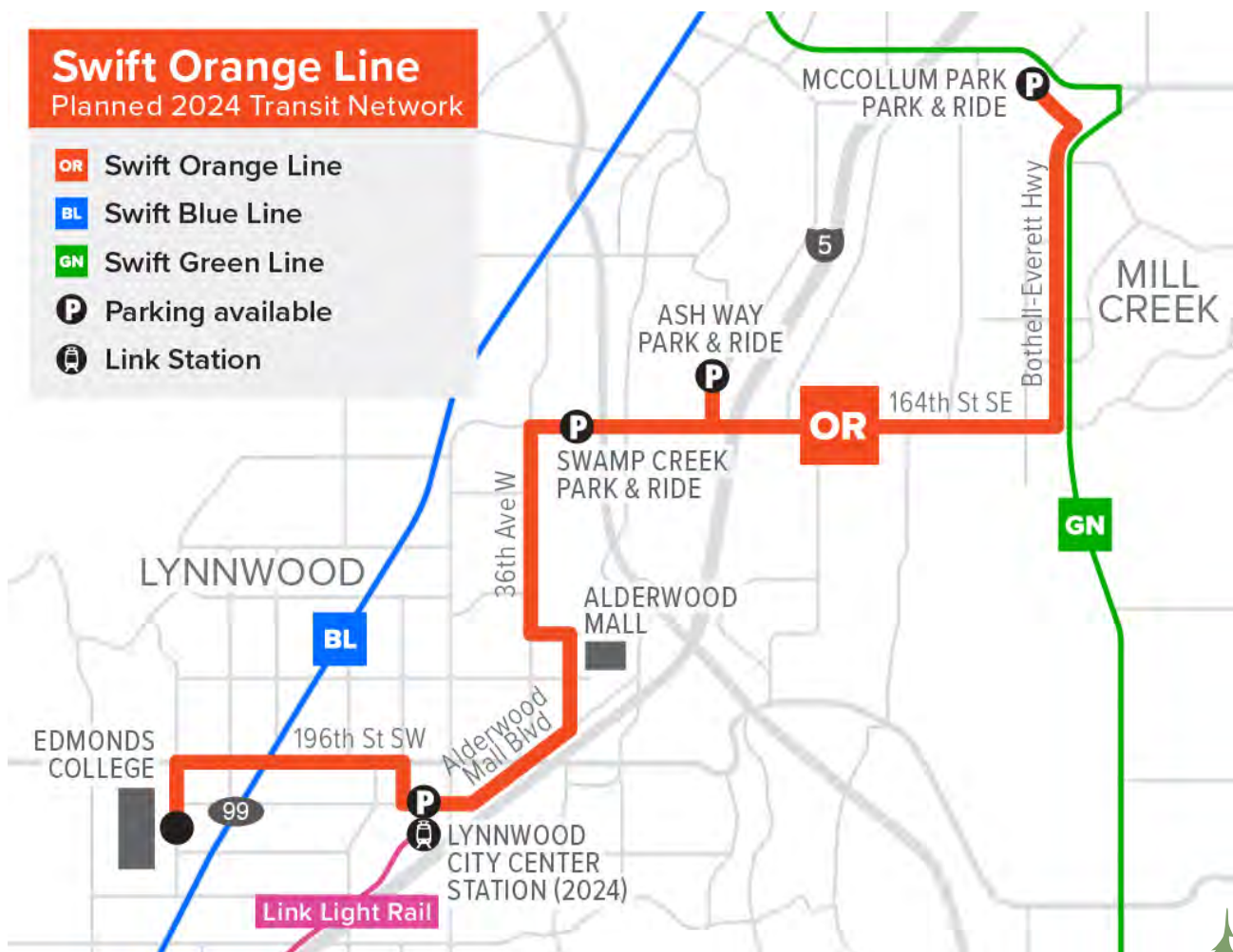


FIGURE 2.6
EXISTING SWIFT BLUE AND GREEN LINES

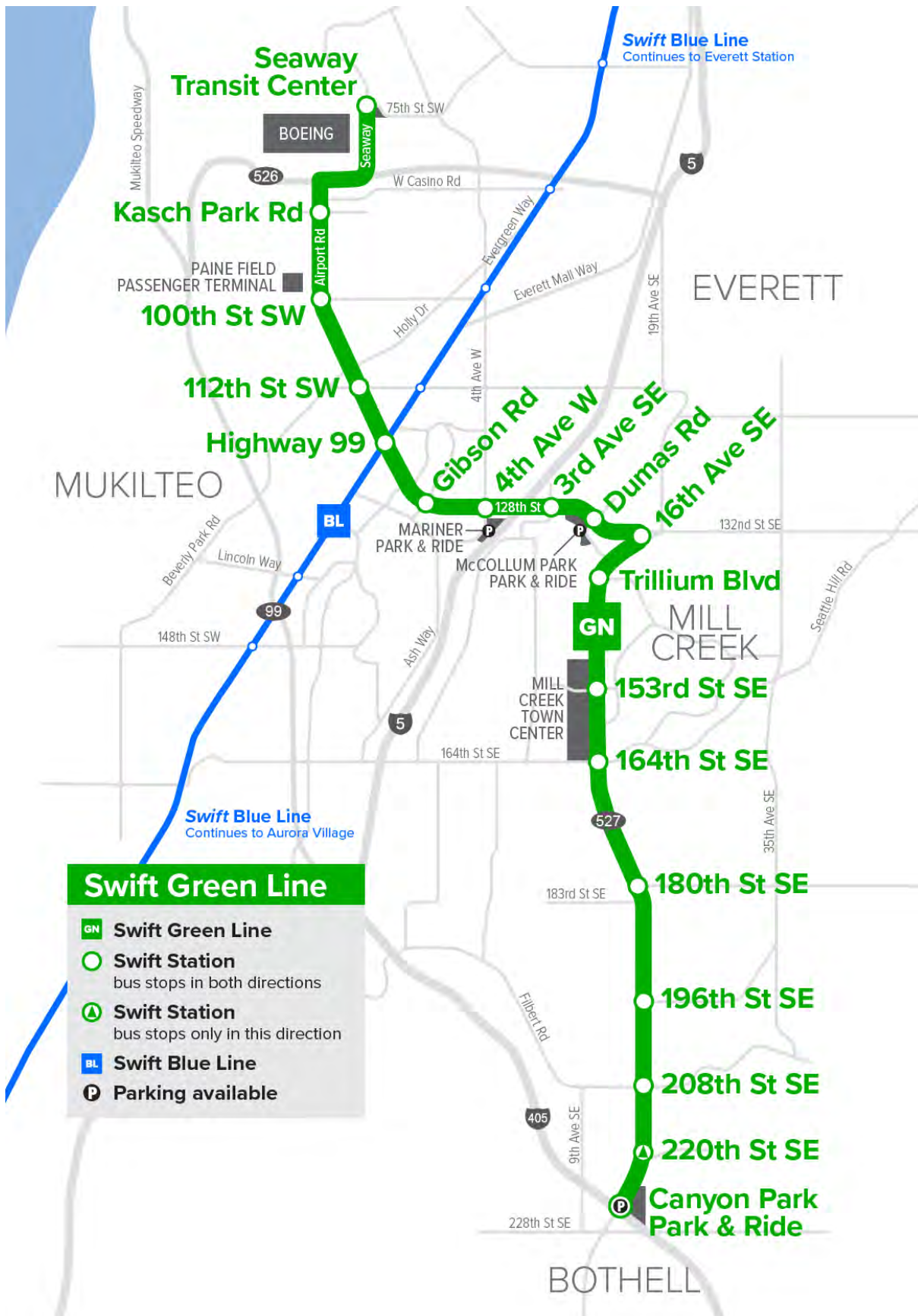


FIGURE 2.7
EXISTING STREET NETWORK AND TRANSIT STOPS IN THE SUBAREA



ADJACENT AND INTERNAL STREETS IN THE SUBAREA

The subarea is located at the intersection of Bothell Everett Highway (State Route 527) and 164th Street SE, major arterials, with connecting streets (161st Street SE, 159th Place SE). Mill Creek Boulevard connects directly to the Main Street spine of Mill Creek Town Center to the north. South of 164th Street SE, Mill Creek Boulevard becomes 9th Avenue SE, which connects to North Creek Park. Signalized intersections exist at the intersection of Mill Creek Boulevard and Bothell Everett Highway and the intersection of Mill Creek Boulevard and 164th Street SE. Existing cross sections (and related dimensions) of the streets internal to the subarea are provided as **Figures 2.8** below and **Figures 2.9** through **2.14** on the following pages. Refer to **Figure 2.7** for the locations of these cross sections.

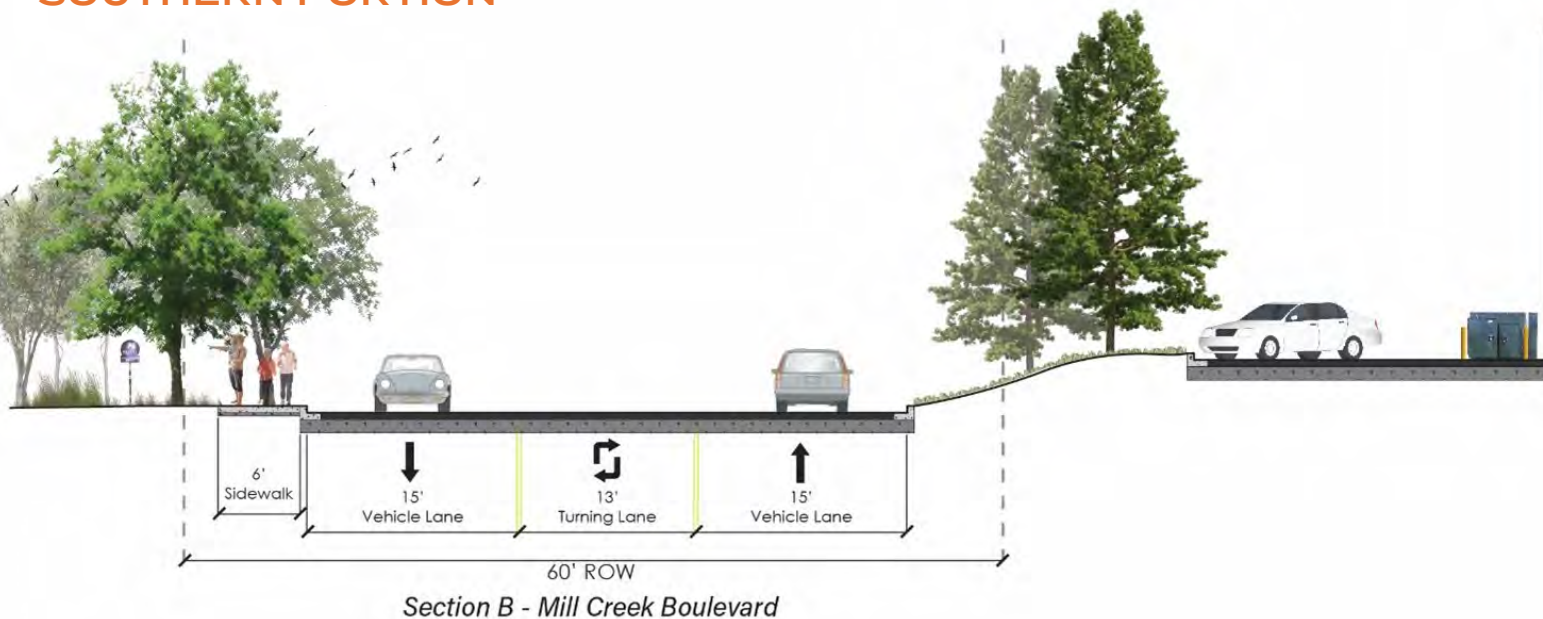
- » **Bothell Everett Highway:** Designated as State Route 527, Bothell Everett Highway operates with four travel lanes and a median for left turns into various access points. The highway runs along the east edge of the subarea and extends south to Bothell and north to Everett functioning as a primary traffic artery that provides access to retail, commercial, and office uses in the subarea, as well as Town Center and other Mill Creek destinations north of Town Center.
- » **9th Avenue SE:** South of 164th Street SE, Mill Creek Boulevard becomes 9th Avenue SE and provides access to properties to the south of the subarea, including manufacturing/commercial uses and also North Creek Park that has a system of trails and boardwalks (part of the North Creek Trail system). 9th Avenue SE is a two lane road with northbound and southbound travel lanes and a median lane for left turns. The road tapers to two lanes only (no median lane) south out of the subarea.

FIGURE 2.8
9TH AVENUE SE EXISTING CROSS SECTION



FIGURE 2.9

MILL CREEK BOULEVARD EXISTING CROSS SECTION, SOUTHERN PORTION



» **Mill Creek Boulevard:** The established cross section along Mill Creek Boulevard includes two travel lanes with a median lane for left turns into various commercial driveways and left turn pockets at the intersection with Main Street. Both sides of the street include additional width for curb-side parallel parking in both directions, but the parking lanes are not striped for the full length. There is an additional lane to allow two left turning lanes approaching Bothell Everett Highway. Sidewalks are provided along some segments of Mill Creek Boulevard, but there are missing gaps in some areas. Existing pavement conditions appear to be adequate; the City indicates that improvement upgrades to the boulevard and existing utilities and stormwater management facilities are being planned as part of capital improvements.

FIGURE 2.10

MILL CREEK BOULEVARD EXISTING CROSS SECTION, NORTHERN PORTION

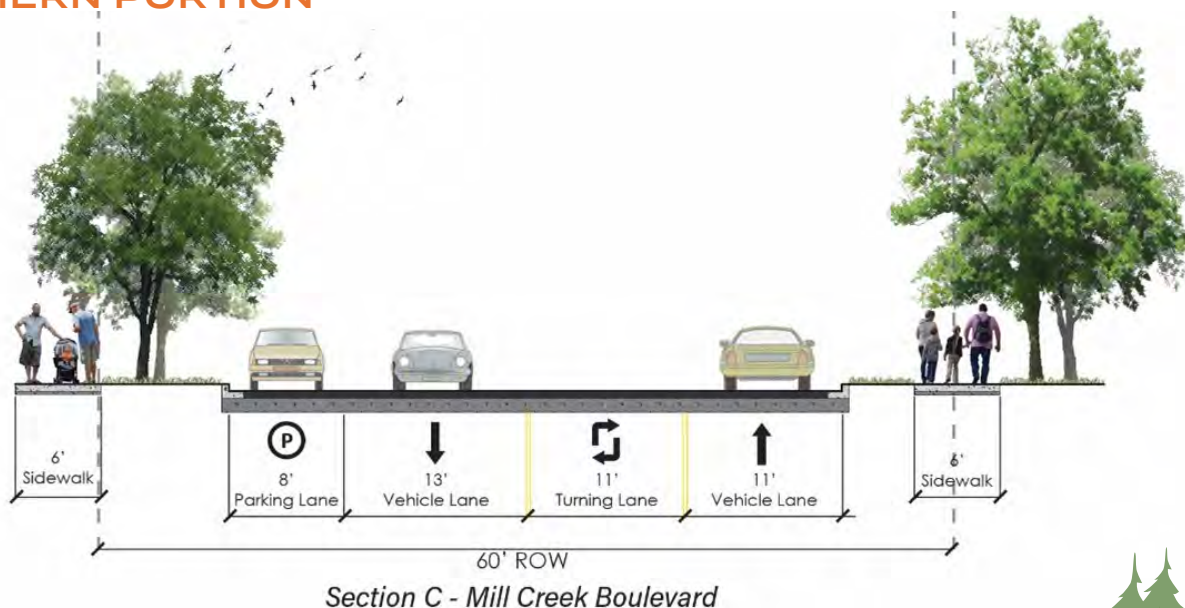
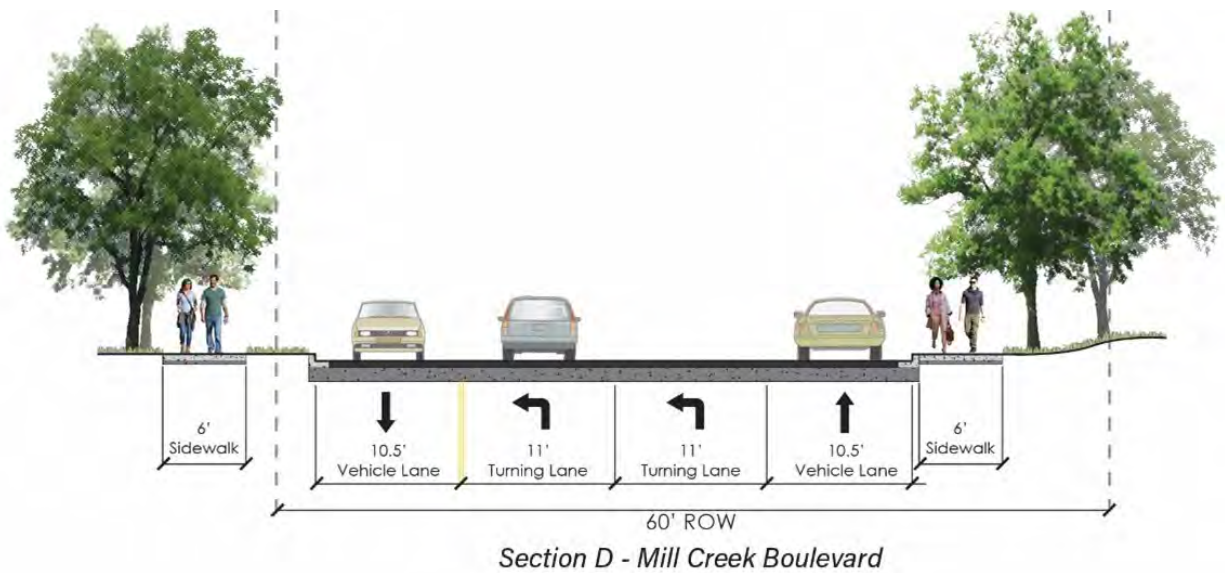


FIGURE 2.11

MILL CREEK BOULEVARD EXISTING CROSS SECTION AT INTERSECTION WITH BOTHELL EVERETT HIGHWAY



- » **161st Street SE:** Operating as a local street that extends between Mill Creek Boulevard and Bothell Everett Highway, 161st Street SE provides a full street connection about midway through the subarea, breaking up two large blocks of development. 161st Street SE is a three-lane road with two lanes of traffic and a median turn lane that provide access to driveways.
- » **159th Place SE:** A cul-de-sac (dead-end) street that provides access to office buildings and the post office, 159th Place SE extends from Mill Creek Boulevard as a two-lane street.

FIGURE 2.12

161ST STREET SE EXISTING CROSS SECTION

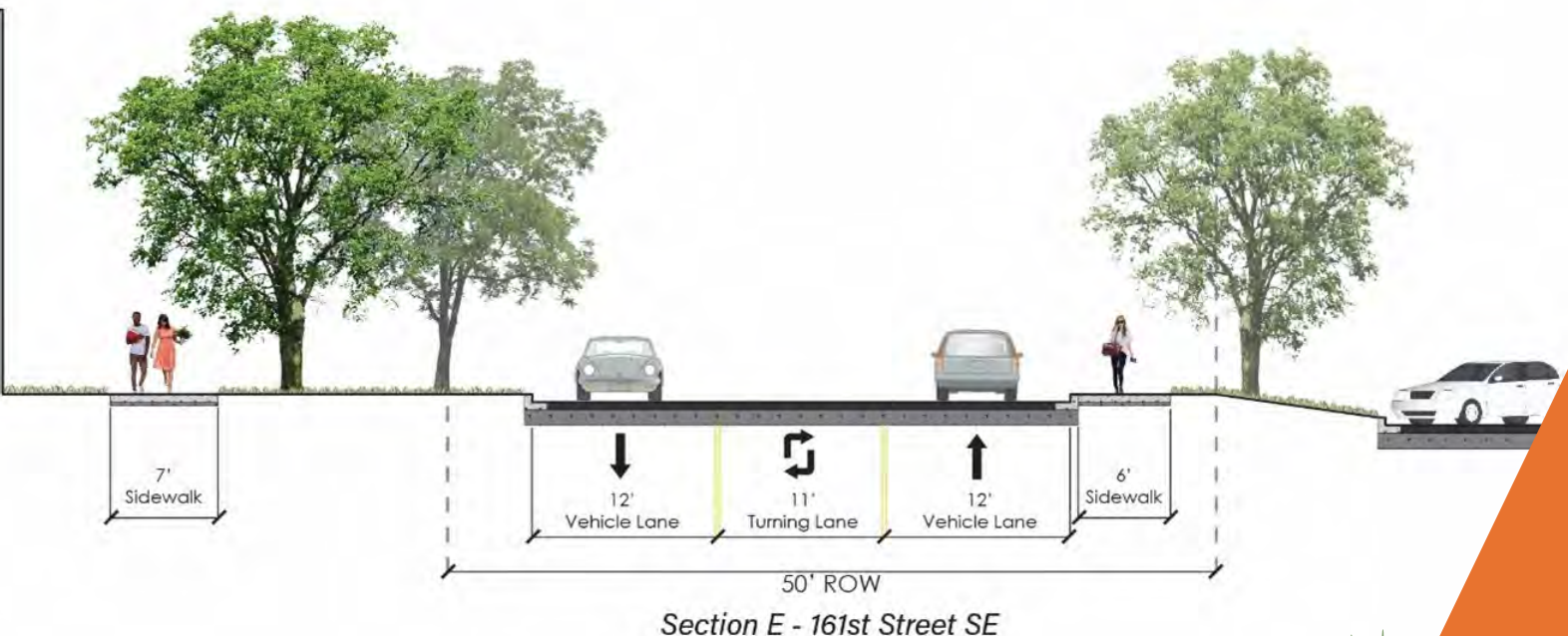


FIGURE 2.13
159TH PLACE SE CROSS SECTION

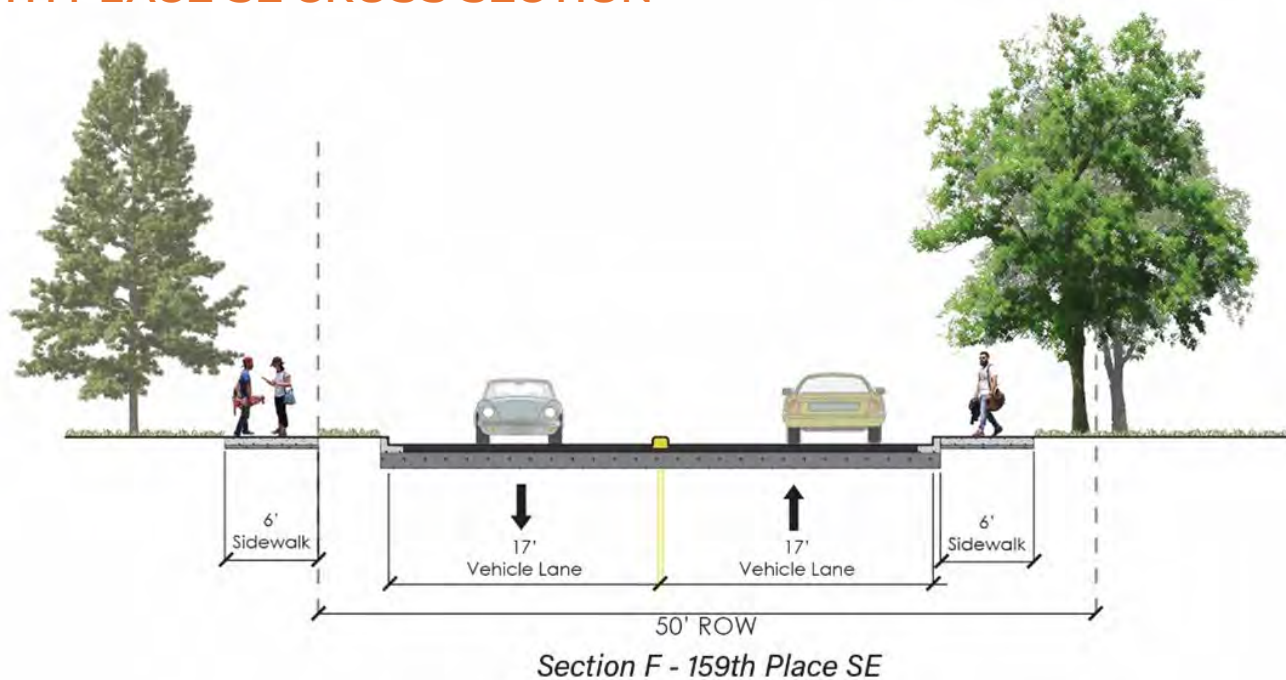
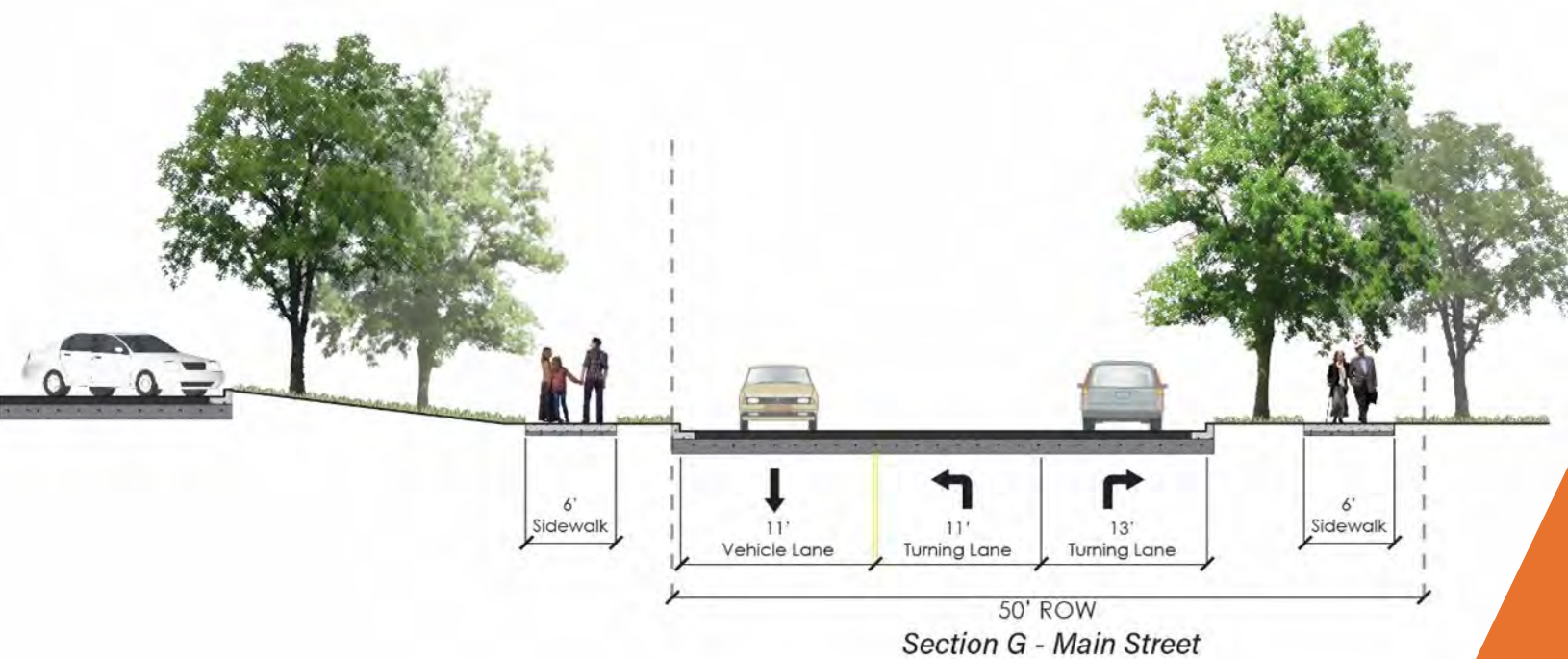


FIGURE 2.14
MAIN STREET EXISTING CROSS SECTION (IN THE SUBAREA);
FURTHER NORTH THE CROSS SECTION HAS WIDER SIDEWALKS
AND ON-STREET PARKING



- » **Main Street:** a highly walkable and bikeable street that functions as the main spine for Mill Creek Town Center. Main Street connects to Mill Creek Boulevard in the north portion of the subarea. Main Street includes two traffic lanes (northbound and southbound) as well as continuous sidewalks on both sides. As Main Street extends to the north in Town Center, the sidewalks are wider, and there are raised intersection crossings, as well as on-street parking in various configurations (mostly diagonal). Many people engaged in the Mill Creek Boulevard planning process stated that Main Street is a good model for future improvements to Mill Creek Boulevard. Many suggested existing the “look and feel” of Main Street, as well as the function with continuous sidewalks and on-street parking would be a positive direction for Mill Creek Boulevard.
- » **164th Street SE:** 164th Street SE is a main arterial road connecting that connects Mill Creek (and the subarea) to Interstate 5 to the west. 164th Street SE is a five-lane road with two travel lanes in either direction and a median left turn lane in the middle. East of the subarea, as the arterial extends up the hill, it becomes Mill Creek Road, transitioning to Seattle Hill Road.

EXISTING AND PLANNED TRANSIT SERVICE

As previously mentioned, public transit service in the subarea is provided by Community Transit, which is a public transit agency that provides service throughout Snohomish County. Community Transit currently operates three local transit routes, one commuter route, and one Swift Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route—the Green Line—in the vicinity of the subarea. Community Transit is slated to begin operating a second Swift BRT route—the Orange Line—adjacent to the subarea, with service starting in 2024. Transit services are further described below.

- » **Swift Green Line (Existing):** The Swift Green Line is a BRT route that runs along the Bothell Everett Highway from the Canyon Park Park and Ride to the south to the Seaway Transit Center in Everett. The Green Line provides bus service with every 15 minutes during peak hours with access to multiple regional transit connections at the Canyon Park Park and Ride.
- » **Swift Orange Line (Planned):** The Swift Orange Line is a BRT route that will run through the subarea with its eastern terminus at Edmonds College in Lynnwood and the western terminus at McCollum Park Park and Ride 1.6 miles north of Mill Creek Town Center. When it opens in 2024, the Orange Line will provide access from the subarea to multiple regional transit connections, including the Link light rail system at the Lynnwood City Center Station, currently under construction and also proposed to start operations in 2024.
- » **Bus Route 435:** Community Transit runs one commuter route in the vicinity of the subarea. Commuter routes run only during peak commuting hours and provide service to large areas of employment. Route 435 provides service from Mill Creek to Downtown Seattle.
- » **Bus Routes 105, 115, 116:** Community Transit runs several local routes in the vicinity of the subarea in addition to the BRT and commuter routes. Local routes provide service less frequently than BRT and run all day unlike commuter routes. Local routes service a wider variety of destinations. Services available in the vicinity of the subarea include Route 105, which provides service to Mariner Park and Ride in Everett to Bothell; Route 115, which provides service to McCollum Park Park and Ride and to Aurora Village Transit Center; and Route 116, which provides service to Edmonds Ferry Terminal and to Silver Firs.



SIDEWALKS AND PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

Most streets in the subarea have sidewalks on one or both sides of the street, but there are gaps. To create a pedestrian-friendly walkable district, having sidewalks on both sides of all streets would be optimal. Existing sidewalks are generally five feet wide, and wider sidewalks may be more desirable to allow for couples and groups of people walking together.

Sidewalks along Mill Creek Boulevard tend to vary between being right on the curb and being protected behind planting strips with trees. Sidewalks are continuous along the west side of Mill Creek Boulevard, but not continuous on the east side. Protected sidewalks have been installed on both sides of Main Street and 161st Street SE in the subarea. Sidewalks along Bothell Everett Highway are unprotected and located directly adjacent to the curb; as such, pedestrians can feel more vulnerable when walking along the highway that carries high volumes of traffic traveling at higher speeds. Bothell Everett Highway is also where bus rapid transit stops are located for the existing Green Line and future Orange Line. One Orange Line stop will be constructed at the corner of 164th Street SE and Mill Creek Boulevard.

Due to the vehicle-oriented development in the subarea and the large blocks with minimal interconnecting streets, the pedestrian network would benefit from improvements to better connect pedestrians to businesses, services, and transit. These types of improvements could occur either as capital projects funded through the City and/or with future redevelopment.

NORTH CREEK TRAIL AND BICYCLE FACILITIES

The North Creek Trail runs along the west edge of the subarea, extending approximately three miles from McCollum Park at the north to North Creek Park at the south. The trail is used by bicyclists and pedestrians and is open to the public, connecting neighborhoods, open space, and shopping districts. Through the North Creek Regional Trail project, the trail is to be extended south from North Creek Park between SR 524 and 183rd Street SE. The trail will become part of a connected regional trail system that will eventually connect the Sammamish River/Burke-Gillman Trail with the Snohomish County Interurban Trail in Everett.



North Creek Trail corridor in the subarea

Dedicated bike lanes exist on 164th Street SE and the Bothell Everett Highway, but no bike lanes currently exist on Mill Creek Boulevard or Main Street. Presumably accomplished and commuter bicyclists would prefer to travel in lane with traffic on Main Street, given that traffic is slow moving, and also on Mill Creek Boulevard if its function is to remain more as a collector street serving local access purposes. Slow-moving bicyclists or children on bikes, often use North Creek Trail as an alternative route or travel on sidewalks.



SURFACE PARKING AREAS

Existing buildings and businesses in the subarea provide a substantial amount of parking. Approximately 2,100 parking spaces exist over the entirety of the subarea in surface parking lots (not including on-street parking). There currently are no parking structures associated with any businesses in the subarea, but structured parking is available to the north in Town Center. Surface parking lots are predominant throughout the subarea, with most buildings set back from the street with parking in front.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

NORTH CREEK

North Creek runs along the east border of the subarea and serves as an important regional stream corridor that has been the focus of multiple habitat restoration projects in Mill Creek, Bothell, and other locations along its run, from Everett to the Sammamish River. North Creek drains much of the suburban runoff from the cities of Bothell, Mill Creek, and South Everett and is home to several species of salmon, steelhead, and cutthroat trout. The creek empties into the Sammamish River after passing through the University of Washington North Creek Wetland Restoration Project.

In 2008, Mill Creek invested in a habitat enhancement effort that placed log structures to provide habitat for fish and stabilize banks along 2,500 linear feet of North Creek in the city. Log structures were installed to halt erosion and provide cover for salmonids.



North Creek Trail corridor adjacent to North Creek in the subarea (looking south)



TREES AND VEGETATION

The predominant tree species in the subarea streetscape is the London planetree (*Platanus x acerfolia*). The subarea also has many specimens of Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*), including the 'Crimson King' cultivars with purple leaves, red maple (*Acer rubrum*), Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) and vine maple (*Acer circinatum*). There are a handful of unique ornamental trees like paperbark maple (*Acer griseum*), mountain hemlock (*Tsuga mertensiana*) and Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum*) along with some riparian species of willow (*Salix* sp.) and cottonwood (*Populus trichocarpa*) near the pond. The existing tree canopy in the subarea is shown on **Figure 2.15**.

Most of the streetscapes in the subarea are approximately 25 to 35 years old, with tree sizes ranging from about 12 to 24 inches in diameter at breast height. The expected life span of the street trees planted in the subarea is highly variable but likely would extend several decades in the future. There are some areas where sidewalks have been lifted by roots. The sidewalk surfaces have been ground to create a more level plane and prevent tripping hazards, but sidewalk lifting is likely to continue in these locations if roots haven't been pruned to minimize future impacts. In locations where sidewalk lifting is occurring, the City could analyze and consider removal and replacement of existing trees to diversify the tree species, provide a more varied tree canopy structure, and reduce the need for on-going sidewalk maintenance.

Soil volumes provided to the street trees are adequate to support continued growth well into the future. During any future redevelopment, generous soil volumes should be protected and/or excavated and stored for reuse. Protecting existing trees to be preserved to their driplines (and the soil volumes beneath) in these areas will be critical for those trees identified for preservation. Trees in and surrounding parking areas need to have more generous landscape areas rather than smaller isolated islands.



Existing streetscape and tree canopy in the 161st Street corridor



FIGURE 2.15
EXISTING TREE CANOPY IN THE SUBAREA



EXISTING UTILITIES AND STORMWATER MANAGEMENT FACILITIES

UTILITIES

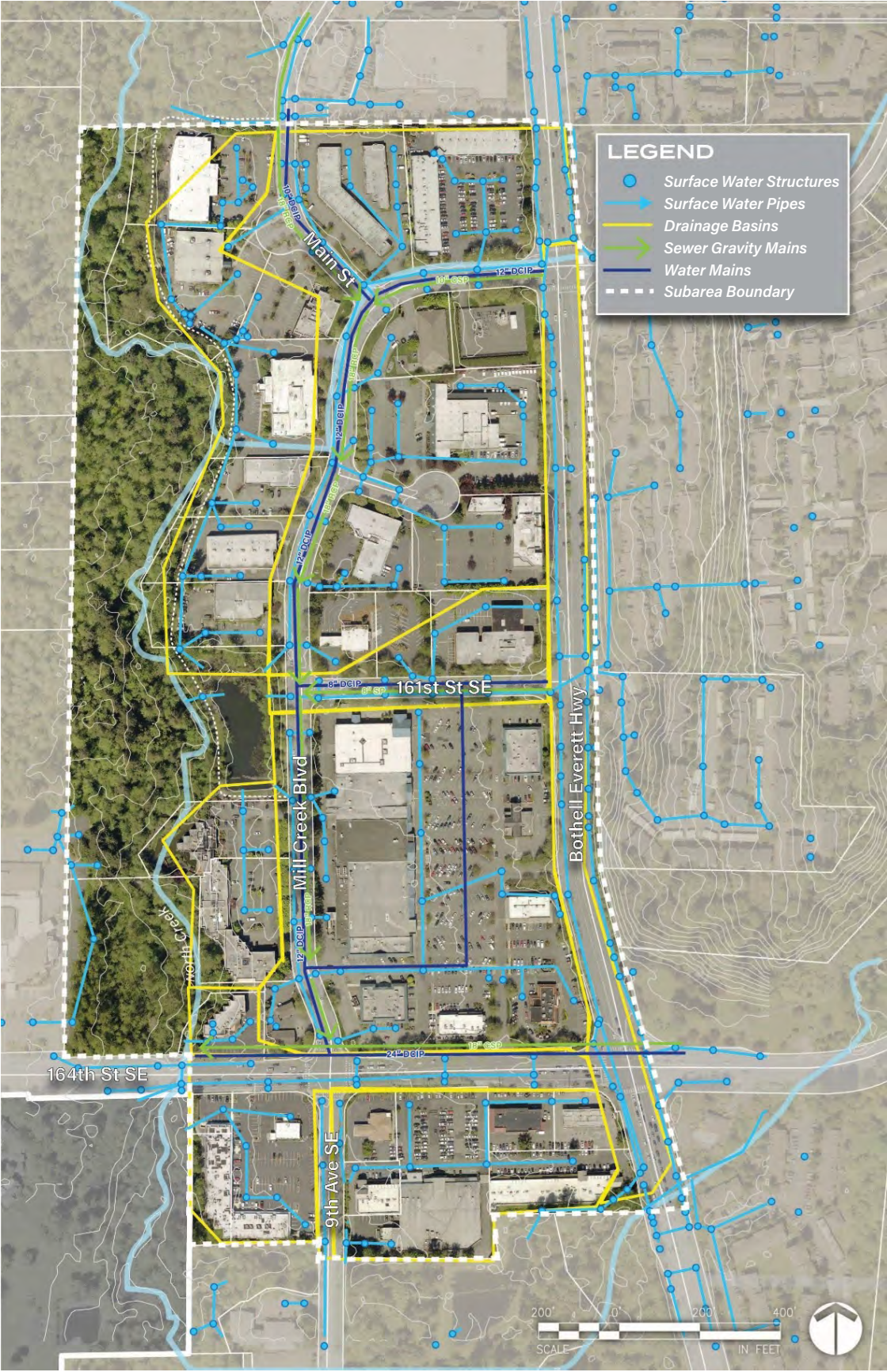
Mill Creek Boulevard and 9th Avenue SE serve as underground utility corridors for the adjacent fully developed commercial properties within the subarea. Both streets include a variety of telecommunication lines for telephone, cable, fiber optic and signal connects. Communication utilities are owned by various different providers. Snohomish County PUD is the primary electricity provider, and they own a substation and property located within the subarea at the southwest corner of Mill Creek Boulevard and Bothell Everett Highway (Parcel No. 00689100001800). Puget Sound Energy (PSE) is the primary natural gas provider. Water and sanitary sewer service are both provided by Alderwood Water and Wastewater District. Stormwater utilities are owned and operated by the City of Mill Creek and are described in the Surface Water Management Facilities section below. Existing water, sewer, and drainage utility locations are represented on **Figure 2.16** Existing Utilities.

SURFACE WATER MANAGEMENT FACILITIES

Surface water facilities, structures, and pipes are used to convey stormwater run off and drainage to three discharge locations within the subarea. Elements of the surface water system are shown in **Figure 2.16**. The area north of 164th Street SE and west of Bothell Everett Highway flows west into a pond facility ultimately discharging into North Creek. Drainage along Bothell Everett Highway flows south into a separate pond facility that discharges into Penny Creek. Along 164th Street SE, drainage is collected and conveyed west discharging into North Creek. South of 164th Street SE, drainage collects west 9th Avenue SE discharging south into Penny Creek. The parking lot west of 9th Avenue SE drains west and is dispersed into North Creek in proximity to the same location as 164th Street SE.



FIGURE 2.16
EXISTING UTILITIES INCLUDING SURFACE WATER FACILITIES



SUBAREA CHARACTER AND IDENTITY

The Mill Creek Boulevard subarea is an important place to the community. With City Hall, the post office, and a wide variety of businesses, shops, and services located here, the subarea is often a busy hub of activity in the heart of the Mill Creek. The subarea is also a destination for several annual events. While this area functions as an important place for community use and destination, more could be done to improve the public use and functions of the area. Either through capital investment and/or with private redevelopment, there could be opportunities to create public spaces, park and open space enhancements, pedestrian oriented plazas or pocket parks, and shared/festival streets that could host events and other public gathering spaces on city-owned parcels and rights-of-way. **Figure 2.17** shows the locations of some of the community features in the subarea.

EXISTING MILL CREEK BOULEVARD AND SUBAREA STREETSCAPES

Streetscapes throughout the subarea consists of a 4-foot to 5-foot typical concrete sidewalks and some asphalt paths directly running alongside the streets with the occasional landscaped or lawn buffer between the pedestrian route and the roadway. Large street lights line the roadway, but no pedestrian lighting is present. There are no streetscape furnishings except in one location next to KinderCare Learning Center. There, a waterwise garden has been installed with a bench and educational signage.

While some portions of the streetscapes have been updated, there is a need for a continuous improvement project and streetscape enhancement in the Mill Creek Boulevard corridor. This could be accomplished as a capital investment project or through redevelopment in the future. See Section 6 of this plan for concepts related to potential future Mill Creek Boulevard improvements. The community has expressed a strong interest in continuing the look and feel of Town Center's Main Street throughout Mill Creek Boulevard, and for Mill Creek Boulevard to function as a collector serving local access to businesses and destinations along the corridor, rather than as a cut-through arterial that people use to travel from 164th Street SE to the Bothell Everett Highway.



Existing Mill Creek Boulevard streetscape character and mature trees



FIGURE 2.17
COMMUNITY FEATURES IN THE SUBAREA



ANNUAL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Throughout the year, the City of Mill Creek hosts several events within the subarea. The North City Hall parking lot is used for farmers markets, the Star Fest basketball tournament, 'Trunk-or-Treat', and is the terminus of all holiday parades. One of the larger events, Mill Creek Festival and Street Fair, closes off part of Mill Creek Boulevard and uses multiple properties such as the Bank of America parking lot and Medical Office Building parking lot. Public art installations occur at varying locations across the subarea (see [Figure 2.17](#)).



Photos from Mill Creek Festival and Street Fair



Market Assessment Summary



3

INTRODUCTION

Understanding market conditions is important as a foundation for developing realistic planning scenarios for the subarea. A market assessment was completed by Leland Consulting Group (LCG) in 2020 as part of the existing conditions analysis stage of work for Mill Creek Boulevard Subarea planning process. Following is a summary of the findings of the market assessment. The full market assessment is provided as an appendix.

PURPOSE

The intent of completing the market assessment was to inform the planning process by identifying relevant demographic and economic drivers of development. As part of the process, LCG and Otak completed case studies of the development of several town centers located in the Puget Sound region. The team evaluated a range of potential development options for the subarea, which can be viewed in the full assessment report as an appendix.

Most of this analysis was completed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some efforts have been made to update the analysis and adjust them to recognize the impacts that the outbreak may have on real estate development and placemaking. However, it is not possible at this time to know or fully understand how COVID-19 and ongoing health and social practices will impact our communities. In many cases, our baseline view is that over the long term, there will be a return to a new “normal;” the development dynamics identified in this report will remain relevant; and that COVID-19 likely will accelerate but not change the underlying course of many trends that were already in place in 2019.



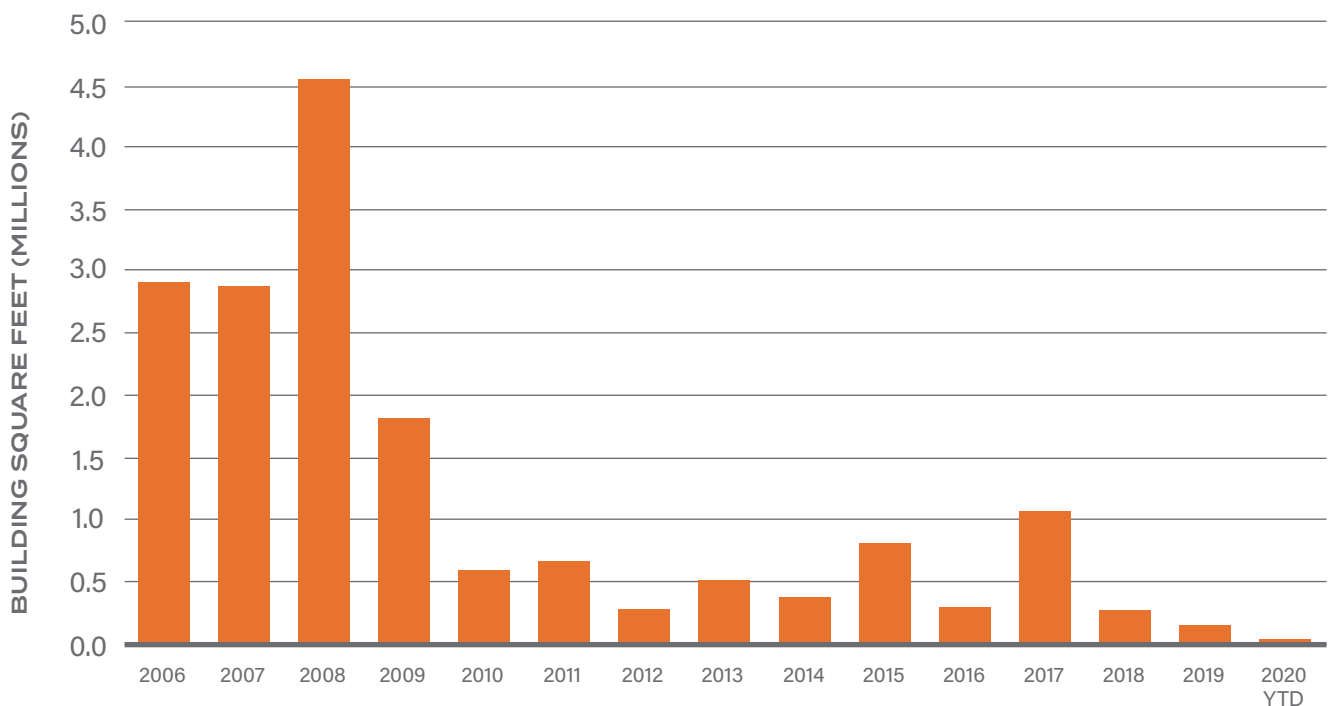
MARKET CONTEXT AND ASSESSMENT

RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

There is a strong interest in the continuation of commercial and retail land uses in the subarea, including the potential to extend the character of the Mill Creek Town Center (immediately to the north) through the subarea as part of improvements to Mill Creek Boulevard and as part of redevelopment that may occur along the corridor. **Figure 3.1** below provides some context for the potential for retail showing the square footage of retail space built each year in the Puget Sound region since 2006. The trend is striking. After peaking in 2008, retail development decreased dramatically, despite some upticks in 2015 and 2017.

The consensus among real estate professionals is that there are several reasons for this sharp downturn in development. First, the Great Recession, which began in late 2007, reduced consumer spending and was a reminder to developers and lenders that retail in many locations was overbuilt. Second, online shopping has increased steadily over the past decade, and now may account for 25 percent or more of all spending. Online shopping has impacted many of the retailers with the largest traditional footprints, such as home goods, appliances, books, electronics, and other stores. Finally, even successful “bricks and mortar” retailers have found they need less space compared to warehouse goods due to just-in-time shipping.

FIGURE 3.1
RETAIL DEVELOPMENT, PUGET SOUND REGION



Source: CoStar, Leland Consulting Group. Seattle MSA Retail Deliveries, built since 2010 (Building SF).



RETAIL: THRIVING AND DECLINING

The retail formats shown in **Figure 3.2** underscore the types of shops that are thriving and declining. Two formats were particularly resilient between 2010 and 2020, as online shopping increasingly asserted itself. One is food and drink, including restaurants, brewpubs and bars, coffee shops, grocery stores, food halls, etc. While people can get these goods online, the experience of sharing food with friends cannot be replicated. The other is “experiential” retail. While this can be difficult to define, it is something that provides a special experience as opposed to offering a grab-and-go commodity, must be done in-person, and is something people often do with friends or family. One example is the Starbucks Reserve Roastery in Capitol Hill, Seattle. While the “product” could be thought of as a cup of coffee, in reality it is much more. Visitors are treated to the experience of smelling, seeing, hearing, and ultimately tasting the process of coffee being ground, roasted, and brewed. This is an experience that cannot yet be matched online. Spas, yoga, wine tasting, crafts and makers places, and many other types of establishments can be in this experiential category.

It is also notable that much of what we traditionally think of as “retail” may fit better within the category of active uses as part of ground floor commercial or general commercial. For example, yoga and neighborhood-scale health clinics now occupy many ground floors, but are not providing retail goods in the traditional sense. “Active” ground floor uses can include many more types of business and services, beyond the traditional view of “retail.”

The takeaways of this analysis are that retail development is not what it once was, prior to the recession that took place 2007-2013. The traditional retail footprint is smaller, and the most successful formats are related to food and beverage, experience, and other goods and services that must be completed in-person. We expect these trends to be applicable in the Mill Creek subarea.

FIGURE 3.2
RETAIL FORMATS



DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Figure 3.3 shows the Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC) forecast for which age groups will grow and shrink as a share of the region's population between 2015 and 2040.

The big change will be the significant increase in people aged 65 and older, which is expected to double and increase from about 10 to 20 percent of the population. Meanwhile, the share of children (aged 0 to 19), and adults (aged 20 to 64) will decrease slightly. Planning for the 2020 to 2040 timeframe should consider this increasing senior population.

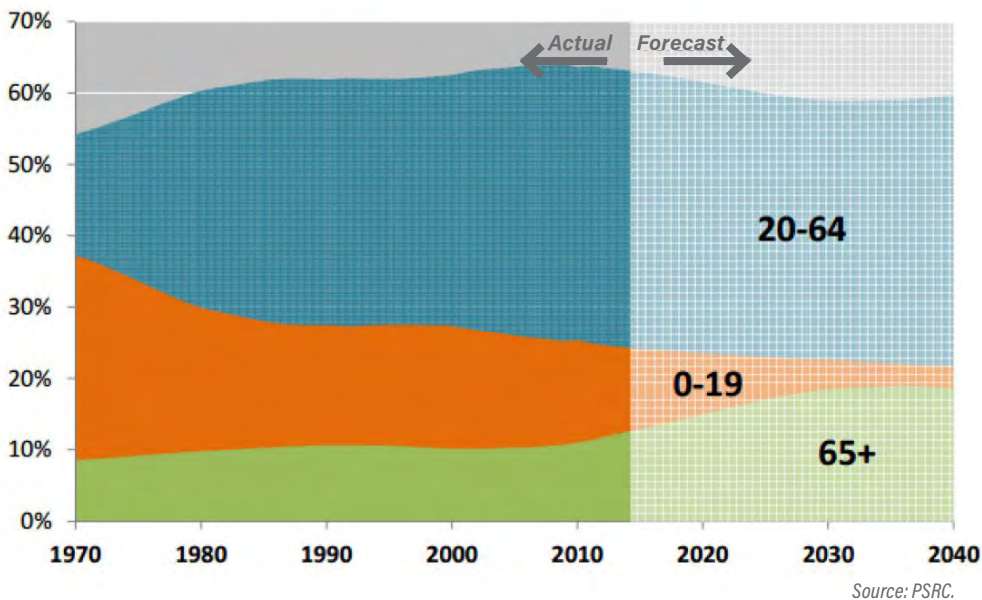
Figure 3.4 shows some of the preferences of baby boomers, based on studies conducted nationwide. Many boomers want to age in place—in other words, remain where they are and stay connected to their community. Those who move, however, talk about “rewinding”—doing new things—as opposed to winding down. They are living longer than any previous generation and want to stay mentally and physically active. Some may continue working part or full time. As a result, there is a great attraction to mixed-use, walkable places with many amenities in close proximity.

FIGURE 3.4
BOOMERS



- » Not winding down—rewinding
- » “Lock & leave”
- » Living longer, staying more active, mentally and physically
- » Many plan to continue working indefinitely
- » Neighborhood centers in, golf courses out
- » Urbanity and activity

FIGURE 3.3
AGE CATEGORIES AS SHARE OF POPULATION
(2015 - 2040, PUGET SOUND REGION)



NEIGHBORHOOD PREFERENCES

Figure 3.5 shows the results of a survey conducted by the National Association of Realtors. When asked where they would most like to live, the greatest number of participants said it would be in a “suburban neighborhood with a mix of houses, shops, and businesses”—an option that was nearly twice as popular as the next most popular option. This underscores the popularity of mixed-use places, and shows it is a nationwide phenomenon that is not confined to a single generation. The Mill Creek Town Center fits in this category.

Millennials also known as Generation Y are now in their late 20s through early 40s, Millennials (or Gen Y) are like the Boomers, a large demographic cohort, and have had a significant impact on housing and real estate markets throughout the past decade.

Figure 3.6 shows how they have chosen a new set of products and cultural references than previous Americans. For example, Millennials are more interested in owning a smart phone than a car, and they use their phones to navigate the internet, social media, and the sharing economy. One study indicated that 39 percent of millennials either do work while riding on transit, or see others doing so. College-educated millennials have clustered in eclectic, mixed-use, urban areas over the last two decades. Their cultural references—such as watching *Grey’s Anatomy*, *How I Met Your Mother*, reality shows, or podcasts—are often more urban than suburban.

FIGURE 3.5

IF YOU COULD CHOOSE WHERE TO LIVE, IN WHICH TYPE OF THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO LIVE?

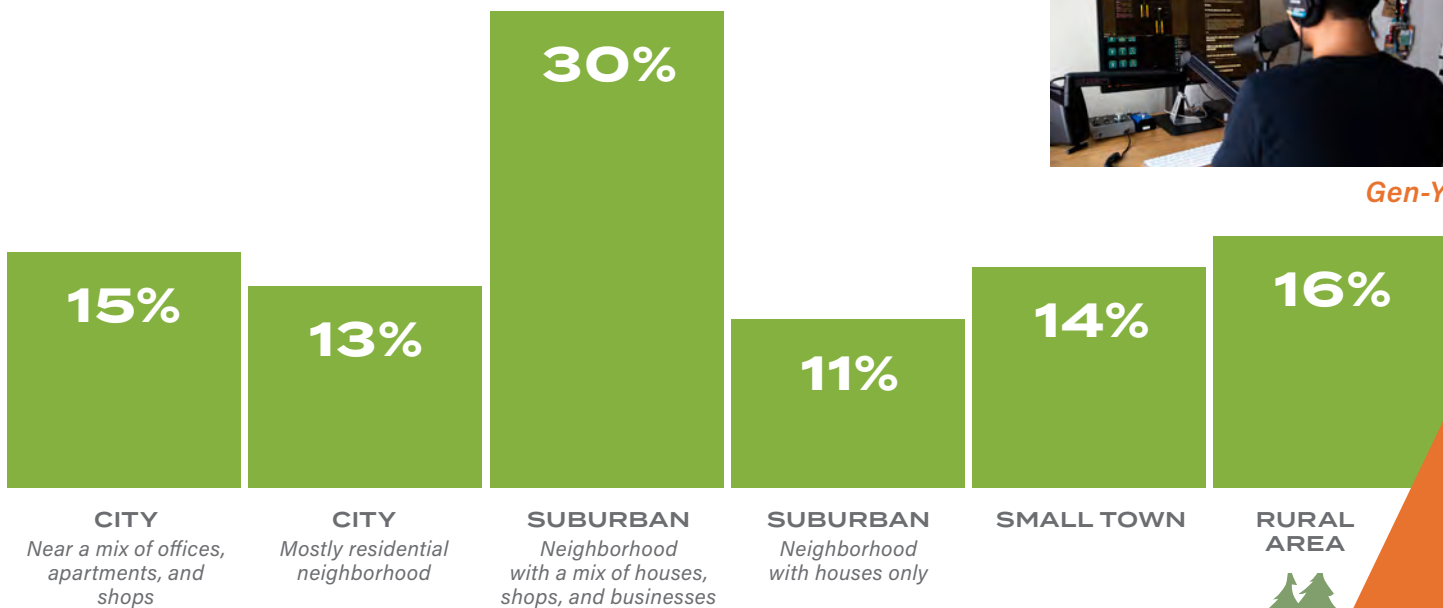


FIGURE 3.6

COMPARISON OF BOOMERS TO GENERATION Y

MUST-HAVE PRODUCT



Boomers

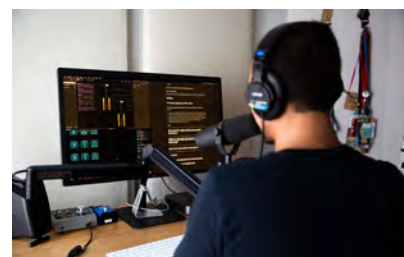


Gen-Y

LIFESTYLE



Boomers



Gen-Y



MILL CREEK BOULEVARD SUBAREA OPPORTUNITIES

The presence of high capacity transit via the *Swift* Green Line already in operation and the *Swift* Orange Line planned to open in 2024 provide important opportunities for the subarea. While most residents of Mill Creek will continue to drive for most trips, transit will have a growing role in the subarea.

The Green Line's connection to the Paine Field commercial air terminal—with service to destinations around the West—and the surrounding employment area, should have a positive impact on Mill Creek, and particularly on the housing market, as residents can easily get to and from the airport. The Mill Creek Town Center and

surrounding areas are the most attractive, mixed-use environment along the Green Line. This connection could also have a more subtle but positive impact on the office and lodging markets. Canyon Park business center is another significant employment center, at the other end of the Green Line. In the long-term future, the Green Line could be extended to downtown Bothell and the University of Washington Bothell/Cascadia College Campus.

The Orange Line will connect travelers to LINK light rail at the Lynnwood City Center station, from here, those that transfer from

Swift to LINK riders will eventually be able to ride to nearby Alderwood Mall and Everett to the north, as well as and many other regional destinations, such as Seattle, University of Washington, the sports stadiums, and Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, though some of these trips will require a transfer and therefore take longer.

Transit's impact on district development can range from being transformative to negligible, particularly in suburban locations where driving is the norm, distances are longer, and the "first and last-mile" trip from transit to home is also longer. That said, these transit investments are significant. In LCG's view, few other Snohomish County locations will have the same combination of high-quality transit service that connects travel origins and some high-use destinations, an attractive mixed-use environment (Town Center and surroundings), and general community desirability. Mill Creek can leverage this combination to encourage "transit-oriented development," if desired.

LCG's view is that the subarea is a special opportunity. There are several reasons for this, including the success of the adjacent Town Center and high-capacity transit. The reputation, desirability, and demographics of Mill Creek are other reasons. The presence of three grocery stores (Safeway and QFC in the study area, Town & Country Market just north in the Town Center), is another asset to the subarea that will create interest in housing development. Lastly, North Creek and the North Creek Trail and surrounding natural areas and connections to the north and south are great amenities.



THE CITY'S RETURN ON INVESTMENT

When real estate developers and business owners make investments, achieving a financial return on investment (ROI) is critical, though they often take other things into account, such as reputation, social responsibility, and corporate standards.

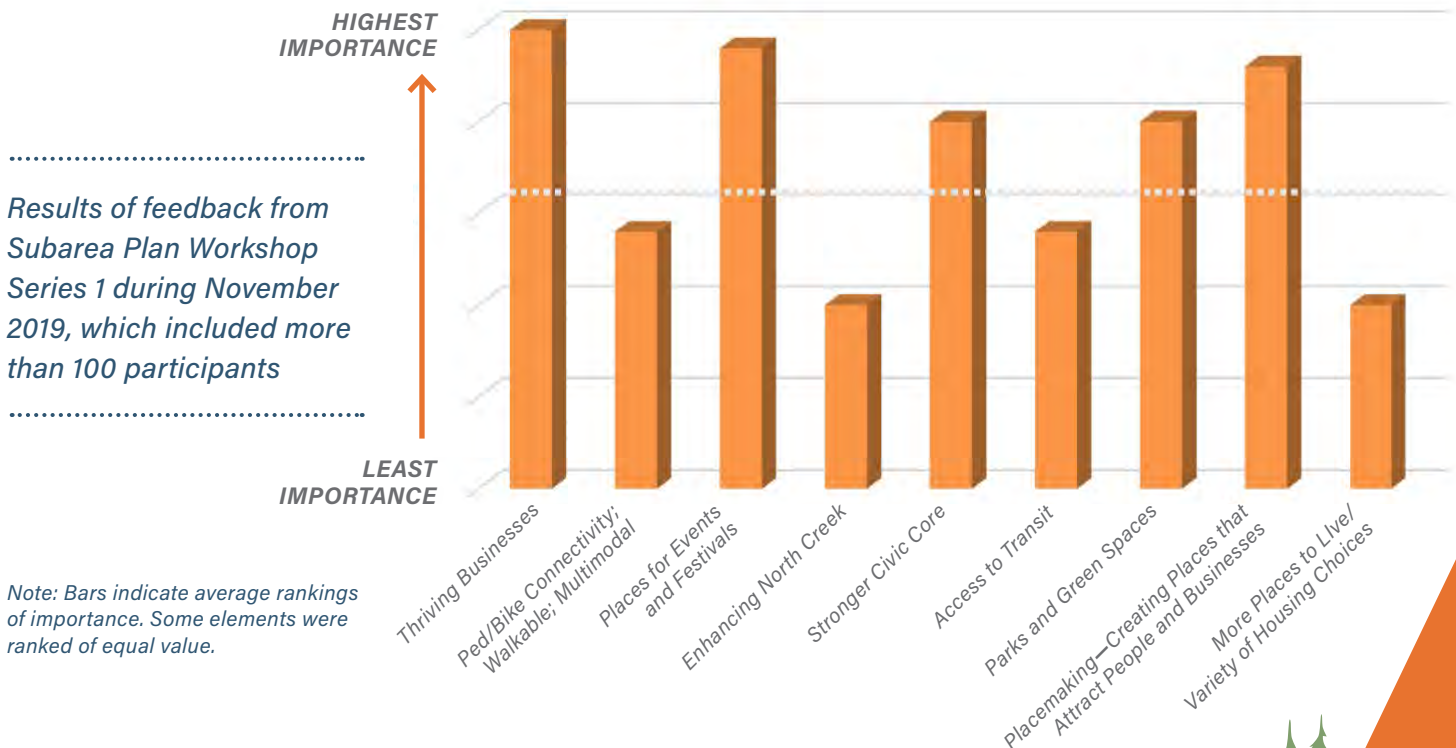
Cities must also consider the fiscal impacts of investment, but typically make investments in order to achieve a broader set of goals. Cities also have a longer time horizon, since it is safe to assume they will be “in business” for decades to come.

For the Mill Creek Boulevard Subarea, the City’s potential return on investment is reflected by public and community participants in a poll conducted during the planning process. More than 100 diverse participants in the engagement process were asked, “What is most important to you in the subarea?” See **Figure 3.7**. Achieving these things (while balancing fiscal considerations) offer returns on City investments (Council, staff, and consultant time; studies; and capital investments).

Participants identified nine different categories of goals they felt were important for the subarea. The five most popular goals were:

- » **Thriving Businesses**
- » **Places for Events and Festivals**
- » **Placemaking (creating places that attract people and businesses)**
- » **Parks and Green Spaces, and**
- » **Stronger Civic Core**

FIGURE 3.7
WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU? (ROI)



RETAIL FOLLOWS ROOFTOPS

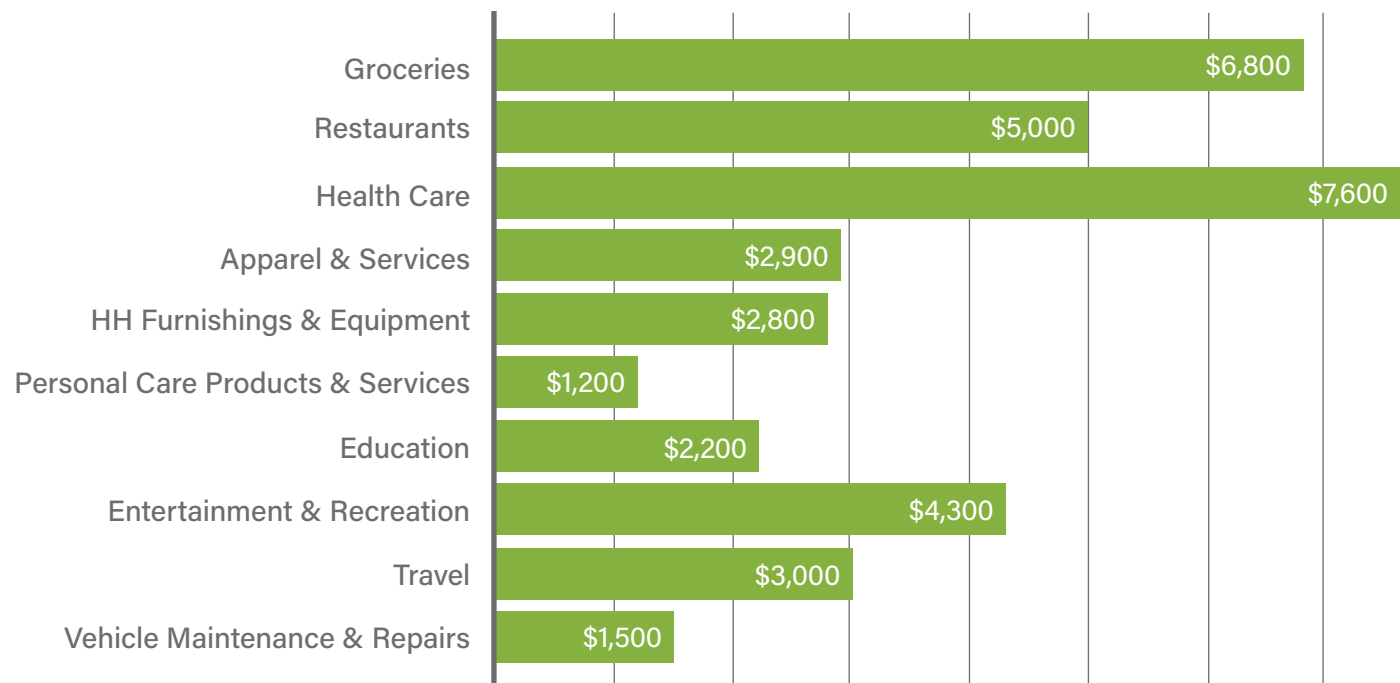
Retail developers have said for decades that “retail follows rooftops.” In other words, where housing development goes, retail and commercial development will follow to serve the new residents. In the 20th century, this was true for new single-family home development.

It is also true in this century, particularly where new, “infill” projects such as the ones in Bothell and Kenmore have been completed. **Figure 3.8** shows one reason that retail follows rooftops: each new household spends a considerable amount on a range of goods and services, including groceries, restaurants, healthcare, apparel, etc. These expenditures are based on data collected by the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditure Surveys (CEX) and ESRI Business Analyst and show the average spending for each household currently living within one mile of the subarea.

New residents in the subarea have the potential to support new ground-floor commercial space in the subarea itself, and also to support existing commercial space, particularly in the Town Center. Given that more than any other land use in the region, residential use and housing demand are at an all time high over retail/commercial, office, industrial, and other uses, providing opportunities for additional housing in the subarea through updated zoning is highly recommended.

FIGURE 3.8
“RETAIL FOLLOWS ROOFTOPS”

Annual Spending per Household, within One Mile of MCB Subarea, 2019



Source: ESRI Business Analyst Leland Consulting Group



PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF DEVELOPMENT FEASIBILITY

As part of the Market Assessment, LCG and Otak completed an early evaluation of potential development options for the subarea to understand what approaches would be most feasible in the marketplace. This preliminary assessment of options (see [Figure 3.9](#)) was intended to illustrate some of the trade-offs and potential direction for further analysis of alternatives for the subarea. This analysis occurred prior to the more detailed analysis of specific alternatives directed by City Council (see Section 5 of this report).

FIGURE 3.9
VARIABLES

	A	B	C	
	Baseline / No Zoning Change	4 to 5 Stories Mixed Use	Mixed Use TOD C-1: Some	C-2: More
SIGNIFICANT ZONE CHANGES?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
% OF SUBAREA REZONED	0%	50%	30%	50%
HOUSING PERMITTED	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
MAXIMUM BUILDING HEIGHT (FLOORS)				
Must be	4 to 5	4	6	6
Optimum	Not allowed	5	7	7
Building Type	No change	Urban Garden Apt. / Wrap	Mid Rise (Podium)	Mid Rise (Podium)
Model	MCB Subarea	Downtown Kenmore	Downtown Bothell	Downtown Bothell

Options analyzed included:

- A.** Baseline (No Zoning Changes);
- B.** 4 to 5 Stories, Mixed Use; and
- C.** Mixed Use Transit Oriented Development (TOD) of up to 7 stories (per feasible construction building types of wood frame over podium) with "Some" (C-1) and "More" (C-2) redevelopment levels

The Baseline option assumed that there would not be any "significant" zone changes. None of the subarea would be rezoned, and housing would not be a permitted use. Nonetheless, for currently allowed employment and commercial uses, maximum 4 to 5 stories of height, would continue to be allowed. Residential is currently only allowed as a secondary use in the Community Business (CB) zoned portion of the subarea under current zoning and to a maximum density of 16 units per acre, which is inconsistent with market demand for residential as a primary use and mixed use development precedents in similar contexts throughout the region. For the Baseline option, the Mill Creek Boulevard Subarea would continue to look similarly as it looks today, but some changes may occur over time. Most likely, these would be similar to changes seen over the last decade, such as tenant improvements, some buildings renovated with new retail tenants, and various site improvements.



With the Mixed Use option (4 to 5 stories), the assessment assumed rezoning of about half of the subarea to allow housing as well as the employment and commercial uses that are already allowed.

The Mixed Use TOD option would have a similar mix of land uses (active uses at the ground floor with residential use above) and suboptions evaluated rezoning approximately 30 percent and 50 percent of the subarea to allow housing as well as the employment and commercial uses that are already allowed. Six and seven story buildings would be allowed. **Figures 3.9** and **3.10** depict the outcomes of this analysis. Based on this preliminary assessment, Mill Creek City Council directed the planning team to progress with a more detail analysis of alternatives, including financial revenues that would be expected with each. The results of this more detailed analysis are presented in Section 5 of this plan.

ALIGNMENT WITH RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI) GOALS

Generating additional City revenues is a good outcome, as cities need to be fiscally healthy in order to continue to provide services to the community. However, for the Mill Creek Boulevard Subarea, the Mill Creek community may decide to measure the return on investment of subarea planning and redevelopment against community-based desires and goals shown in **Figure 3.7**. Below, we compare the options against several of these goals.

THRIVING BUSINESSES

There are a number of ways to interpret the goal of thriving businesses. On the one hand, options A and B would limit displacement of and keep rents low for existing businesses, because less redevelopment would be expected to occur in these options and older buildings tend to charge lower rents.

On the other hand, options C-1 and C-2 would be expected to introduce far more new ground floor commercial tenants and bring in more residents who would support new businesses in the subarea and existing businesses in the Town Center.

Figure 3.10 depicts the capacity for each option to meet this goal and the others below. The greener the box below the option, the more we believe the option will meet the goal.

PLACEMAKING - CREATING SPECIAL PLACES; PLACES FOR EVENTS AND FESTIVALS; A STRONGER CIVIC CORE; PARKS AND GREEN SPACES

LCG believes that fiscal impacts are positively correlated with the above goals because taxes and fees can be used to make capital improvements and if desired, enhanced operational/maintenance activities. For example, parks impact fees could be used to improve parks and green spaces including the North Creek area, and transportation impact fees could be used to transform Mill Creek Boulevard or Main Street into more special, pedestrian oriented places. Mill Creek would have discretion about how to spend new property and sales taxes; these sources could be used to manage additional events or strengthen the civic core.



Private construction can also help to achieve the above goals. As private developers redevelop, they can be required to make frontage improvements. Most redevelopment projects will also bring buildings and ground floor commercial space up closer to the sidewalk and street edge, creating a stronger sense of place. Some (though not all) developers are likely to provide additional plazas and a gathering places within their projects, since if done right, they will realize benefits in terms of higher residential and commercial rents. The City can also provide impact fee credits when developers build a transportation or park-related public improvement.

In general, the process of significant redevelopment opens up the opportunity for the City or developers to redesign and rebuild special places, streets, and even parks, and the additional cost of “doing things right” becomes an increasingly small percentage of the parties overall costs (for example, \$803 million developer costs in option C-2).

STRONGER CIVIC CORE; PARKS AND GREEN SPACES

While more City revenue and private investment create an opportunities to build a stronger civic core and improved parks and green spaces, accomplishing these goals will also require City planning, resolve, and action.

FIGURE 3.10
OPTIONS EVALUATION

	A	B	C	
	Baseline / No Zoning Change	4 to 5 Stories Mixed Use	Mixed Use TOD C-1: Some C-2: More	
THRIVING BUSINESSES				
Limits displacement (area that redevelops)	0%	5%	30%	50%
Keeps rent low for existing businesses	0%	5%	30%	50%
Brings new ground floor commercial tenants		✓	✓	✓
Brings additional households & discretionary income		✓	✓	✓
PLACEMAKING (Creating Special Places)		✓	✓	✓
PLACES FOR EVENTS & FESTIVALS		✓	✓	✓
STRONGER CIVIC CORE		✓	✓	✓
PARKS & GREEN SPACES		✓	✓	✓
Annual fiscal impacts	\$0.0		\$1.8	\$3.1
Total Construction Cost	\$0.0	\$41	\$482	\$803
STRONGER CIVIC CORE				
Requires City Action	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
PARKS & GREEN SPACES				
Building height could shade green spaces	2.0	4.5	6.5	6.5
OTHER				
More employment space for 21st century jobs		✓	✓	✓
Improved likelihood of attracting hotel		✓	✓	✓
More transit users, more transit investment		✓	✓	✓



OTHER GOALS

Several other potential goals were assessed, and these reflect comments that LCG heard from community members during interviews and meetings. In general, LCG believes that options C-1 and C-2 would make it easier for the subarea and City to achieve these goals.

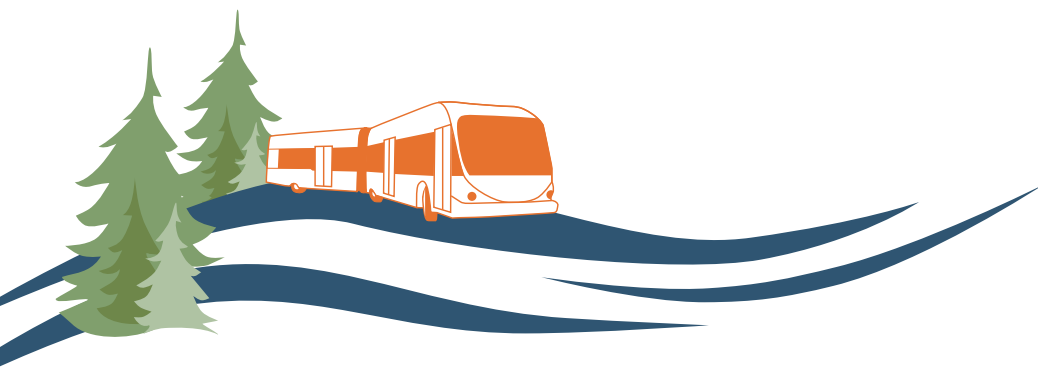
More employment space for 21st century jobs: As described above, mixed-use development has the capacity to “pull in” new commercial space along with new residents, who are often employed in professional service industries. Some of this new commercial space could be office space, which could expand Mill Creek’s job base. Mixed-use redevelopment also has the capacity to redesign and remake districts, which are appealing to talented professionals. Employers seek locations with an educated and skilled population base.

Improved likelihood of attracting hotel: In some ways, hotels are like retail—they are a “following use.” Typically, hotels follow other development and locate near major employment hubs and activity centers (downtowns, suburban office campuses, hospitals) to capture business travelers; tourist destinations; and/or high-volume travel routes to capture ambient travel. In the past decade, hotels have gravitated towards mixed-use, pedestrian oriented places. The Anderson School in downtown Bothell and several new hotels in central Everett are examples.

Mill Creek today is not a major employment center or tourist destination: The City’s transportation infrastructure is probably adequate if not exceptional for lodging. Bothell Everett Highway and 164th Street carry significant traffic volumes, and the *Swift* line to Paine Field is a plus. If the subarea redeveloped with a mix of uses and was connected to the Town Center and transit, it would make a more compelling location for hotel development.

More transit users, more transit investment: When more people are located within a mixed-use, walkable place that is adjacent to high quality transit, transit ridership at that location should increase. And transit agencies are sometimes willing to make additional investments (e.g., in station amenities and service frequency) to serve the additional ridership. With options C-1 and C-2, the City could have an opportunity to work with Community Transit to enhance transit service over time.





POST PANDEMIC CONSIDERATIONS

While the demand for office space has steeply declined, housing demand levels and values continue to increase in Mill Creek and throughout the region. No one has a crystal ball that will show us what the new normal will be in the wake of the pandemic and as people return to previous patterns of working and community. However, we can anticipate there will be changes. There will be a transitional recovery period that starts as the pandemic begins to subside. Then, eventually, there will be a return to a new “normal.” During the recovery period, some types of businesses will continue to struggle while others may stay strong. Restaurants, for example, may continue to struggle. Once we reach a new normal stage, restaurants should rebound, and there may even be an increase in business. Trends related to the COVID-19 pandemic are depicted in the full report as an appendix.

During the pandemic, most people have become accustomed to remote working from home, and technological resources have improved to support web conferencing and online communications. More public meetings and community engagement events are being held online. While restrictions during the pandemic have heavily affected many retail establishments and restaurants, many grocery stores, office supplies, and other types of retail and services have seen increases in business and revenue.

Travel and vacation patterns have changed dramatically, and it is difficult to predict what the long-term changes may be. Currently, more people are staying close to home, but when they do venture out, it has been to the outdoors—trails and parks and open spaces within close proximity or driving distance to/from home. Many parks and trails experienced very high use during the summer months of the pandemic.

Overall, we anticipate that the trends experienced prior to the pandemic—high demand for all types of housing, lower demand for office and commercial, declining retail from previous decades, and increasing emphasis on creating public amenity spaces and experiential retail and dining will continue, if not accelerate.

There are some patterns of change showing that people are interested in moving from large urban cities to suburban cities and smaller towns. This could increase the demand for a variety of housing types in Mill Creek. People have been able to increase the amount of time they work remotely, another trend that may continue. As such there may be more demand for live/work types of housing units, and when social distancing restrictions are reduced and eventually lifted, we may see more demand for remote working centers close to home/in neighborhoods that provide services such as meeting rooms, printing/copying, and access to technology to support new patterns of working.

Access to groceries, goods, services, medical care, and other essential needs close to home and in the neighborhood will also continue to be important. Placemaking and creating opportunities for community amenities and social engagement as part of redevelopment also will continue to be important. People are looking forward to opportunities to gather again with family and friends and be an active part of their communities.



MARKET ASSESSMENT CONCLUSIONS

Development has changed from the time that the Mill Creek Town Center was built. Prior to the Great Recession, many community centers were focused primarily on retail and commercial development. In the last decade, the development of special community places has been led by housing and mixed use development that pulls in restaurants, retail, offices, and lodging development.

Looking ahead—because of surveys that show community preferences; the preferences of Boomers, Millennials, and others; and the economic health of the Puget Sound region—we anticipate continued demand for community-oriented, mixed use development once the danger of the COVID-19 pandemic has been brought under control via therapeutics, vaccinations, and other measures.

The Mill Creek Boulevard Subarea is a special area and opportunity for the City of Mill Creek due to its proximity to the Town Center (a unique address in Snohomish County), the desirability of the community, North Creek, and bus rapid transit that connects to Paine Field and other significant locations.

The subarea offers the City a set of choices and options. The Baseline option would leave existing zoning and regulations as-is, likely resulting in the subarea remaining in a physically similar condition as it is for the coming decades, though individual tenants will change. Unfortunately, our analysis indicates that option B—rezoning to allow four and five story mixed use buildings—would result in a change to regulations but little development because of development economics—particularly the cost to acquire occupied buildings and land. Options C-1 and C-2 show that there may be a way to find the “right” amount (e.g., 30, 50, or another percent) of change in the subarea that results in new mixed-use development, new City revenue, and if executed thoughtfully

and carefully, the realization of the goals identified thus far: placemaking, places for events, a strong civic core, and parks and green spaces.

If only a portion of the area is rezoned, the most logical areas would include some of the northern, western, central, and southern areas, particularly where property values are lower (more likely to redevelop) and properties are closest to the Town Center and transit. The City-owned properties, though not discussed extensively here, could provide the City with an asset to catalyze redevelopment.



Vision and Goals for the Subarea

4

OVERVIEW

To guide development of the recommendations in the subarea plan, the planning team and the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) prepared a vision statement and key goals as guiding principles for the subarea plan. The vision statement and key goals will be carried forward when the subarea is further considered as the City's 2024 Comprehensive Plan update process.



VISION STATEMENT

Serving as a gateway to Mill Creek and an extension of Town Center, the Mill Creek Boulevard Subarea will redevelop and change over time, extending the character and identity of Town Center south. The subarea will continue to function as a vibrant commercial and civic hub, with the addition of compatible mixed use buildings and residential uses to support local business, as well as space for new businesses and services. The new buildings will be similar in character to the mixed use and multifamily buildings in and surrounding Town Center.

Public uses of the subarea will be enhanced and expanded through improved and new spaces for community uses, events, and festivals, better access to North Creek Trail, beautiful streetscapes, pedestrian corridors, and a welcoming civic campus where City Hall is located. Additional retail shops, restaurants, and other active uses will occur in a flexible framework of redevelopment that responds to the market. With implementation of the plan, the subarea will become an extension of Town Center and will enhance Mill Creek's desirability as a great place to live, work, shop, socialize, and spend time supporting our strong community.



GOALS

- » Strengthen the character and identity of the subarea to enhance its sense of place and its importance as a gateway to Mill Creek.
- » Address traffic congestion through multi-modal improvements and access to high capacity transit. Provide adequate parking for existing and future uses.
- » Allow for mixed use (commercial/residential/office) over a portion of the subarea, in alignment with the Project Advisory Committee recommendations to support the market demand for residential.
- » Support economic development and business vitality and related employment opportunities in the subarea through land use and zoning changes.
- » Leverage the subarea as a suitable location to meet population, housing, and jobs targets allocated to Mill Creek.
- » Make the subarea more pedestrian friendly—walkable and bikeable so that people will feel encouraged to walk and bicycle between uses rather than to drive.
- » Design Mill Creek Boulevard to function as an attractive gateway to the community, as well as a to serve local transportation and parking needs rather than serving as a cut-through between 164th and SR 527.
- » Consistent with Mill Creek's reputation as a safe community, ensure that the subarea continues to be a safe and secure place, leveraging the proximity of the police department in the subarea.





- » Enhance public open spaces and streetscapes to provide opportunities for everyone in the community and promote multigenerational activities, with a focus on creating:
 - ▶ An attractive multi-modal street network and a network of tree-lined streets as well as connecting pedestrian and bicycle linkages (on-street and off-street);
 - ▶ Greenways with healthy trees and vegetation and trails for walking and bicycling that connect to the North Creek Trail corridor, Town Center, and surrounding neighborhoods;
 - ▶ An enhanced and expanded North Creek Trail corridor through the subarea;
 - ▶ A well-designed regional stormwater system that enhances water quality, controls flows to area creeks, and improves habitat for fish and wildlife;
 - ▶ An active use area surrounding the City's pond that relates to surrounding redevelopment; and
 - ▶ Festival streets and public plaza spaces, creating the Mill Creek Commons.



Alternatives Analysis



THE PURPOSE AND DIRECTION OF ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

The potential for increasing the economic activity in the subarea was a catalyst for preparing this subarea plan. This plan identifies potential land uses that could bring increased economic activity to the subarea, potential public amenities, and increased revenue to the City to support a variety of community needs.

As the market assessment for the subarea found, residential use is the highest type of land use in demand in the region. This would require changing the zoning over a portion of the subarea because the current zoning designations do not allow residential as a primary use.

During the planning process, many community members spoke about the importance of economic strength and supporting businesses in the subarea and Town Center. One of the best ways to do that would be to introduce more residents living in close proximity to the businesses and services there.

The market assessment also concluded that the most financially viable type of redevelopment would be mixed use with residential stories over an active ground floor level. The most constructible and financially feasible model for this type of redevelopment would be five to six stories of wood frame over one to two levels of concrete podium (maximum height of six to seven stories). The market assessment found that if this level of change was not allowed through upzoning, it would be unlikely that property owners would see enough of a financial benefit to redevelop their land and conditions would be likely to remain much the same as they are in the subarea for the future.

The question that the City carefully considered, is how much of the subarea should be changed to accommodate this redevelopment?



After review of the market assessment, the City Council directed the planning team to evaluate three potential alternatives that could take place in the subarea:

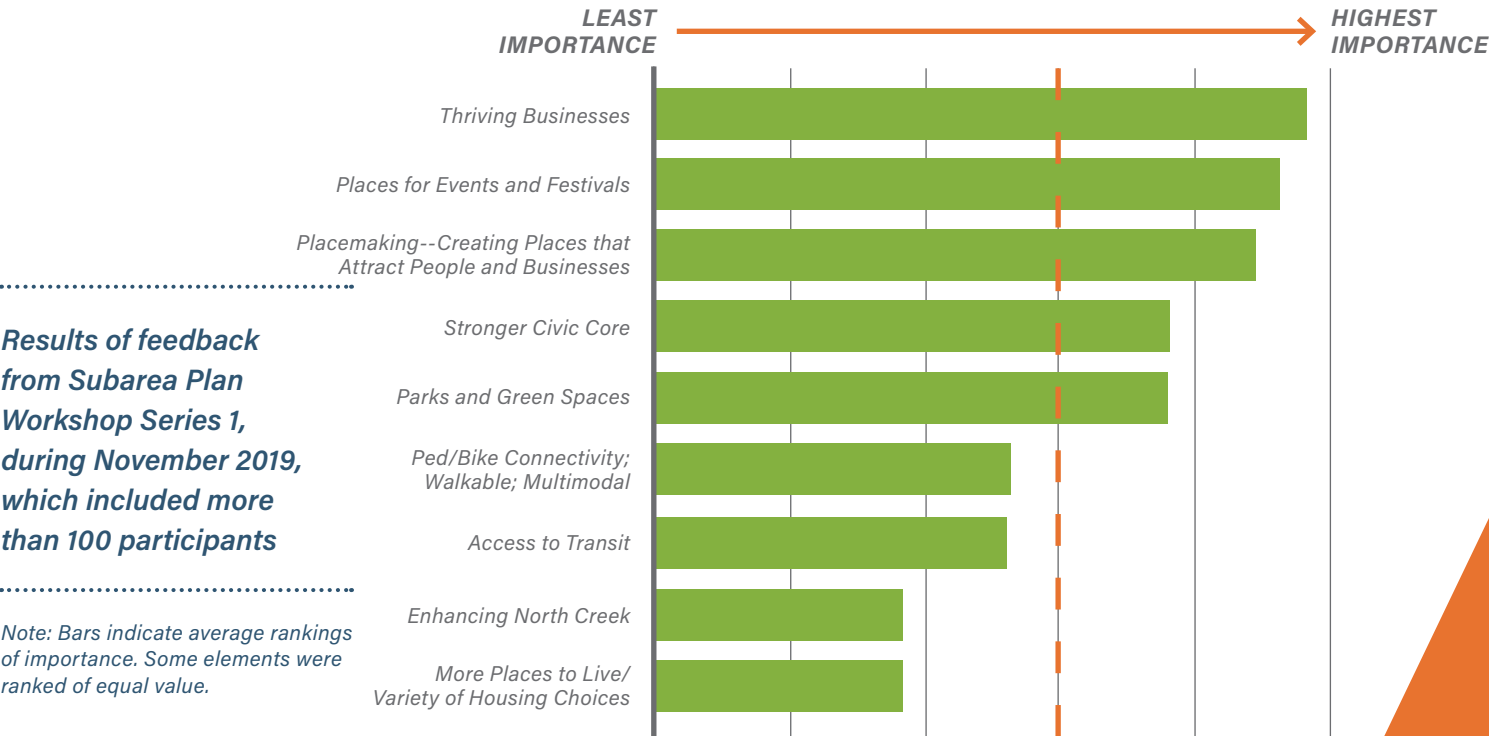
- » **Alternative 1:** No action alternative—no changes to zoning in the subarea;
- » **Alternative 2:** Potential intensified land uses (upzoning) in 30 percent of the subarea; and
- » **Alternative 3:** Potential intensified land uses (upzoning) in 50 percent of the subarea.

The planning team worked collaboratively with the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) to review and discuss the alternatives analysis. The analysis, shown in the matrix on the following pages found that Alternatives 2 and 3 would bring significant economic development opportunities, amenities, and revenues to the community, with Alternative 3 creating a more extensive level of change and more opportunities than Alternative 2.

A key point made during the alternatives analysis process was that zoning could be written to incentivize development to provide community amenities such as public space improvements and an attractive ground floor level by setting the maximum height at six stories and allowing a bonus height of seven stories with the provision of amenities. The PAC wanted to better understand how this form of redevelopment might look in the subarea. As such, the planning team developed illustrative visualizations depicting potential redevelopment over three parcels in the subarea to scale. These illustrations are presented in Section 6 of this subarea plan.

The alternatives analysis summarized in the matrix on the following pages also considered the alternatives' alignment with the community priorities that had been identified through the public engagement process and depicted in **Figure 5.1**.

FIGURE 5.1
WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU? (ROI)



Results of feedback from Subarea Plan Workshop Series 1, during November 2019, which included more than 100 participants

Note: Bars indicate average rankings of importance. Some elements were ranked of equal value.



Another important consideration raised during the planning process was the need for the City of Mill Creek to reach assigned growth targets for the 2044 planning horizon, as allocated by Snohomish County, Puget Sound Regional Council, and the State of Washington. The 2044 initial population growth targets for cities and Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) were published on December 1, 2021 (<https://snohomish.county.codes/CPP/AxB>). The targets allocate a population growth for the City of Mill Creek of +3,887 people by 2044 and employment growth of 736 employees. These would be new residents and employees above 2020 census levels. With Mill Creek's current persons per household of 2.46 per dwelling unit (average for all residential—single family and multifamily), the population increase equates to a demand of 1,580 new residential dwelling units. For renter-occupied units, the average persons per households in Mill Creek is 2.07, so this equates to a demand of 1,878 new units. The alignment of alternatives with these growth targets is important because there are limited other locations for Mill Creek to accommodate additional population and employment growth beyond the subarea.

In consideration of these growth targets and concerns about the potential for too much change in the subarea, the PAC recommended that City Council consider upzoning approximately 30 percent of the subarea (which for the 52-acres of developable land in the subarea, would result in allowable change over approximately 17 acres). See **Figure 5.2**. This consideration would occur as part of the City's 2024 Comprehensive Plan update, where additional review of the potential for change in the subarea would be completed. Work on the Comprehensive Plan update is expected to begin in 2023 with completion required by the end of December 2024. The Comprehensive Plan update process will include review by the Planning Commission and the City Council, which both include opportunities for public participation.

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS SUMMARY MATRIX

ELEMENTS/ CRITERIA:	ALTERNATIVE A NO ZONING REVISIONS	ALTERNATIVE B UPZONE ONE THIRD OR 30% OF LAND AREA	ALTERNATIVE C UPZONE OF ONE HALF OR 50% OF LAND AREA
Land Use Assumptions	Same as Current Existing zoning: Business Park (BP) and Community Business (CB)	Mixed Use Residential over active use ²	Mixed Use Residential over active use ²
Building Form Assumptions	Same as Current BP: Max. 50-foot heights; no DUs CB: Max. 40-foot heights; 16 DUs/acre allowed as secondary to commercial ¹	6 to 7 Stories 5-6 wood frame residential stories over 1-2 concrete podium active use/parking levels	6 to 7 Stories 5-6 wood frame residential stories over 1-2 concrete podium active use parking levels
Forecasted Net Changes in Density/GSF	Similar to Current Conditions Existing = 609,000 GSF Commercial/Office (No Change) and 0 DUs Anticipated With current zoning; lack of incentive/opportunity for change; long term economic vitality concerns	1,200 to 1,500 Dwelling Units + Additional 210,000 to 260,000 GSF* Active Use² (Net Increase) 80 to 100+ du/acre approx. <i>*As noted above, the allocated growth targets for Mill Creek create a demand for 1,580 to 1,878 dwelling units (serving a population growth of +3,887). The allocated employment target for Mill Creek is 736 employees. At an average of 200 to 700 square feet per employee estimated for Snohomish County across all commercial uses, Alternative 2 would provide space for 300 to 1,300 additional employees, and Alternative 3 would provide space for 492 to 2,150 additional employees.</i>	2,000 to 2,500 Dwelling Units+ Additional 345,000 to 430,000 GSF* Active Use² (Net Increase) 80 to 100+ du/acre approx.



Buildable Area Assumption	N/A = No Change to the 52 Acres ³	52 Acres x 30% = 15.6 Acres	52 Acres x 50% = 26 Acres
Horizon for Change	N/A ³	20-25+ Years	20-25+ Years
THRIVING BUSINESSES —Level of Opportunity/New Businesses/New Customers (<i>Rooftops = Customers</i>)	Similar to Current Conditions Some decline could be expected due to trends in office and some retail; commercial hub function should continue to be strong (banks, groceries, restaurants, services)	Positive Effects on Business New households and customers in proximity to existing and future businesses; new ground floor commercial/active use tenant space	Better than Alternative B More households and customers in proximity to existing and future businesses; more ground floor commercial/active use tenant space
EFFECTS ON EXISTING BUSINESS ACTIVITY —Potential for Displacement/Rent Increases	Minimal Effects	Potential Negative Effects; Could Introduce Strategies and Regulations to Mitigate Market-driven, based on property owners' interests/initiatives	Potential Negative Effects; Could Introduce Strategies and Regulations to Mitigate Market-driven and based on property owners' interests/initiatives
PLACES FOR EVENTS AND FESTIVALS —Level of Opportunity to Continue to Support and Enhance Events/Festivals	Similar to Current Conditions No significant changes would be anticipated; minimal public/capital investment would be expected	Positive Effects; also More Demand Would leverage some improvement opportunities to create key spaces/higher level of amenities; see parks and green spaces analysis	More Opportunities and More Demand than Alternative 2 Would leverage more improvement opportunities to create key spaces/higher level of amenities; see parks and green spaces analysis
STRONGER CIVIC CORE —Level of Opportunity to Enhance Civic Core	Similar to Current Conditions No significant changes would be anticipated; minimal public/capital investment would be expected	Positive Effects; also More Demand Would leverage some improvement opportunities/higher level of amenities; need to consider if City Hall Campus is included in rezoning or not	More Opportunities and More Demand than Alternative 2 Would leverage more improvement opportunities/higher level of amenities; more opportunities for partnerships; need to consider inclusion of City Hall
PARKS AND GREEN SPACES —Level of Opportunity to Enhance Parks and Green Spaces	Similar to Current Conditions No significant changes would be anticipated; minimal public/capital investment would be expected	Positive Effects; also More Demand Would leverage some improvement opportunities/higher level of amenities; see impact fees summary below	More Opportunities and More Demand than Alternative 2 Would leverage more improvement opportunities/higher level of amenities; may create more opportunities for partnerships/increased investments; see impact fees summary below
Regional Stormwater Management Considerations	Similar to Current Conditions No significant changes would be anticipated; minimal public/capital investment would be expected	Some Positive Effects Expected with Redevelopment Would leverage some opportunities to improve regional stormwater management system	Most Positive Effects; More Likely to Support a Regional Management Approach Would bring the most potential for improving and further developing a regional stormwater solution; better grant eligibility



Transportation Considerations	Inconsistent with regional planning policies to locate jobs and housing in proximity with high capacity transit	315 to 394 PM Peak Hour Trips for Residential 1,377 PM Peak Hour Trips for Commercial Uses Trips reduced by 40% with mixed use and access to high capacity transit (HCT) Compact mixed use near HCT is consistent with regional planning policies; increases eligibility for grants	525 to 656 PM Peak Hour Trips for Residential 2,328 PM Peak Hour Trips for Commercial Uses Trips reduced by 40% with mixed use and access to HCT Most beneficial in supporting regional planning policies; increases eligibility for grants
Mill Creek Boulevard Street Improvements	Function would be similar to current condition with minimal improvements	Improved Local Collector Function through Redevelopment Some Opportunity for Funding Would leverage some improvement opportunities but likely would need strong capital investment to support project <i>Of Note: If City moved ahead with street and stormwater infrastructure improvements, this would provide an incentive for redevelopment</i>	Improved Local Collector Function through Redevelopment Most Opportunity for Funding Would bring the most potential for improving the corridor with less capital funding needed <i>Of Note: If City moved ahead with street and stormwater infrastructure improvements, this would provide an incentive for redevelopment</i>
Impact Fee Revenues <i>(estimated for all projects based on 2020 rates)</i>	\$0	+ \$21,950,000	+ \$36,600,000
Periodic Revenues <i>(REET; estimated over 25 years)</i>	\$0	+ \$7,460,000	+ \$12,400,000
Property and Sales Tax Revenues <i>(estimated over 25 years)</i>	Minimal change	+ \$16,500,000 Mixed use yields highest revenues	+ \$27,500,000 Mixed use yields highest revenues
Property Values— Maximizing Investment/ Redevelopment Potential for Property Owners	Minimal change	Increases would be expected	More increases in value than under Alternative 2 would be expected

NOTES:

1. This type of development is not currently financially feasible based on the market assessment and likely the reason that it has not occurred in the subarea under the CB zoning.
2. "Active use" would be defined to include a range of business, office, and service uses that create activity and vibrancy at the ground floor level/streetscape level of the building. Zoning for retail only at the ground floor would be too limiting, as such jurisdictions in the region are zoning for active use, which could include fitness and yoga studios, personal services (insurance providers, tax preparers, salons, etc.), and a variety of neighborhood retail type uses.
3. N/A = Not applicable because zoning would not change and therefore, minimal change to uses would be expected to occur across the subarea based on current and trending market conditions. Properties may still host new tenants and undergo renovations or upgrades over time. However, demand for retail is declining, so this trend could continue over time in the subarea and Town Center.



As shown in **Figure 5.2** (bold orange outline), the PAC has recommended that the City allow for mixed-use redevelopment by revising the Comprehensive Plan land use map and related zoning provisions for the west and north sides of Mill Creek Boulevard between 164th and the Maple Leaf Square shopping center. Mixed-use would include active uses at the ground floor level (including commercial) with residential and/or office uses above. These revisions would be considered part of the 2024 Comprehensive Plan update required by the Growth Management Act and as an outcome, would result in potential upzoning that would allow mixed-use development (including commercial and residential development) in up to approximately one third percent of the developable lands of the subarea, focusing on the mixed-use development along the west and north sides of Mill Creek Boulevard.

The mixed-use development would be strategically placed adjacent to the North Creek Corridor, buffering the area of change. Additionally, it provides density near the city's core to respect/protect single-family neighborhoods and offer new and existing commercial tenants public amenities.

FIGURE 5.2

AREA OF RECOMMENDED POTENTIAL CHANGE (UPZONING) IN THE SUBAREA



Based on analysis by the planning team, the following outcomes could potentially occur with redevelopment of the area shown **Figure 5.2** (17.58 acres / 33.8 percent of the subarea):

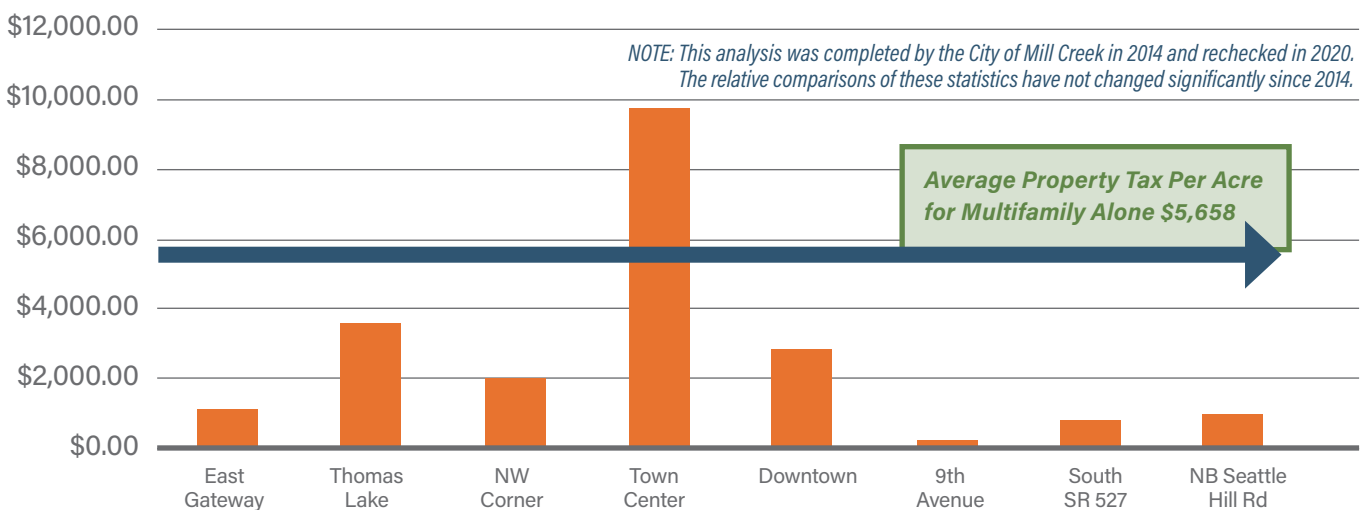
- » Over 200,000 additional square feet of commercial/business space could be provided in the subarea.
- » Up to 1,500 additional dwelling units (and over approximately 3,000 residents/customers) could be provided in the subarea.
- » Additional residents in the core of downtown Mill Creek would help support existing and new businesses.
- » Redevelopment within the subarea could potentially generate over \$20,000,000 in impact mitigation fees.
- » Over 20 to 25 years, an additional \$16,500,000 of additional property and sales tax could potentially be generated for the city.

Targeting the area of change to the west and north sides of Mill Creek Boulevard represents a realistic perspective on the level of change that might realistically happen within the next ten to twenty years. Although Parcel #20 (Mill Creek Plaza shopping center) has the potential for redevelopment, the long-term leases related to commercial anchors limit redevelopment potential for many years. The property owner of Parcel #20 supports a recommendation that does not include this parcel, assuming that this parcel could also be designated for amended zoning at a later date.

PROPERTY TAX REVENUE ANALYSIS IN MILL CREEK

To support the alternatives analysis, City of Mill Creek staff pulled property tax revenue information correlated to land use type from records for over the past ten years. The following two charts (**Figures 5.3 and 5.4**) show property tax per acre comparison across different areas of Mill Creek and surrounding lands and that the average property tax per acre for mixed use is higher in Town Center. The statistics show that the average tax per acre for multifamily alone is highest of any use at \$5,658 per acre. As shown in **Figure 5.4**, from statistics pulled in 2020, property tax revenues generated by 5-story mixed use residential/office in Mill Creek are higher than those associated with 3-story office, restaurant, or other commercial uses, which are present in the subarea.

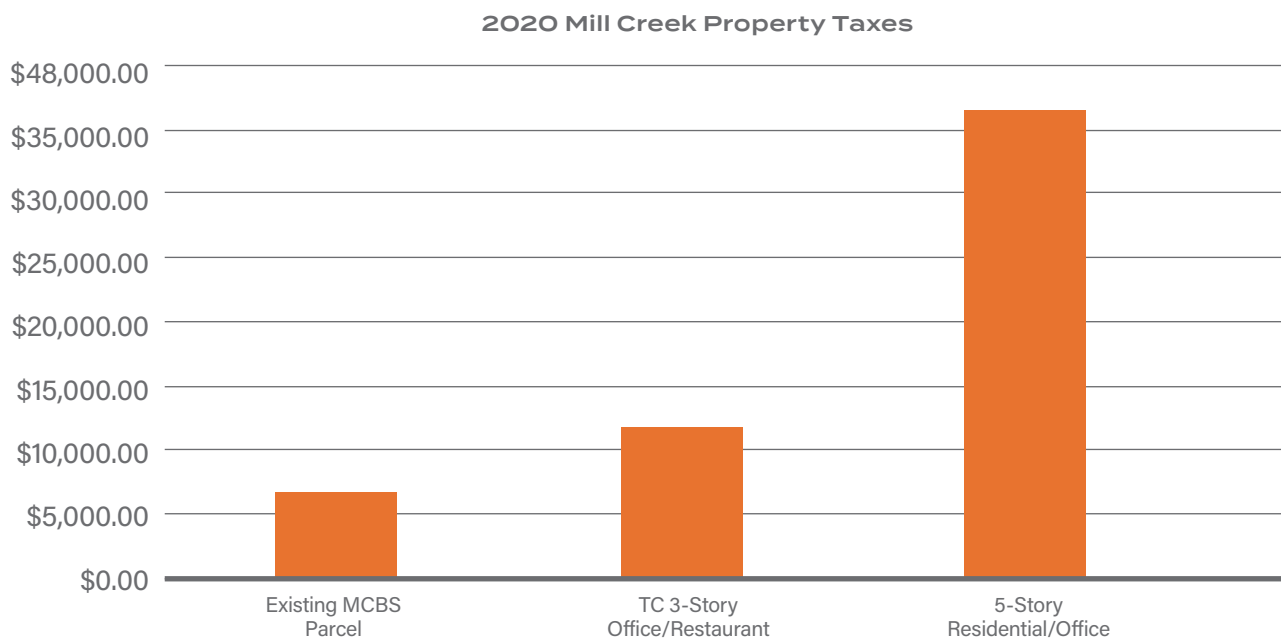
FIGURE 5.3
PROPERTY TAX PER ACRE COMPARISON





Existing retail uses in Mill Creek Town Center

FIGURE 5.4
PROPERTY TAX PER ACRE COMPARISON



Visualizations, Corridor Concepts, and Public Realm Opportunities

6

WHAT WOULD CHANGES LOOK LIKE IN THE MILL CREEK BOULEVARD SUBAREA?

As the planning team began to analyze potential alternatives for the subarea, the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) was interested in knowing more about how changes would look. The planning team identified an area in the subarea (three parcels—see **Figure 6.1**) that could have potential for redevelopment in the future and could be the focus of a site planning and visualization exercise to theoretically show how redevelopment might look. The team developed a plan with the form of mixed use (wood frame over podium construction) that the previously completed market assessment found to be the most feasible and financially viable for the subarea.

It is important to emphasize: *The visualizations, corridor concepts, and public realm opportunities illustrated in this section of the plan are only theoretical. These concepts and illustrations are not proposals. The property owners for these parcels have no specific plans for redevelopment that we know of.* The concepts and illustrations that follow are conceptual and hypothetical, prepared solely for the purpose of illustrating how change might look to scale and in relation to an actual place in the subarea.

Figures 6.2 and **Figure 6.3** show the example site plan of a mixed use redevelopment concept for the three parcels. For the purposes of creating the visualizations, the concept calls for mixed use of 6 stories of wood frame residential construction of a two-story concrete podium, which includes the ground floor level for active uses (retail, services, offices), and a lower level (below grade) for structured parking. This creates a base height above grade of six stories. The concepts also show how a seventh level could be added as a bonus level to incentivize the provision of public amenities and spaces with redevelopment. The seventh level is set back from the sixth level, providing space for a rooftop public or private use area.





Examples of streetscape improvements, shared streets, and public amenities

The example redevelopment site is located along the North Creek Trail and North Creek open space corridor. This provides opportunities to tie in to the trail from Mill Creek Boulevard, as well as opportunities to show how public enhancements around the adjacent City-owned detention pond could look in the visualizations, with trail connections, and a public use boardwalk/overlook area. In addition, the public provided input related to the types of public spaces and streetscape amenities they would like to see in the subarea. Public art installations, wall murals and attractive walls to screen the backsides of commercial buildings, streetscapes designed to function as shared event/festival spaces, and other ideas were offered. The photographs on this page show examples of public space and streetscape enhancements of the quality envisioned by the community in the subarea planning process.

The concepts also show a high quality streetscape along Mill Creek Boulevard that is similar to the look and feel of Main Street in Mill Creek Town Center. Conceptual cross sections for the Mill Creek corridor are presented later in this section of the subarea plan. In addition to the streetscape, the concepts show a variety of at grade (and potentially rooftop) public amenities – plazas, outdoor dining spaces, and other features.

The arrows in **Figure 6.3** relate to viewpoints of the visualization illustrations along the Mill Creek Boulevard frontage. These follow as **Figures 6.4** through **6.12**.



FIGURE 6.1
AREA OF HYPOTHETICAL STUDY FOR VISUALIZATIONS
OF AN EXAMPLE OF REDEVELOPMENT

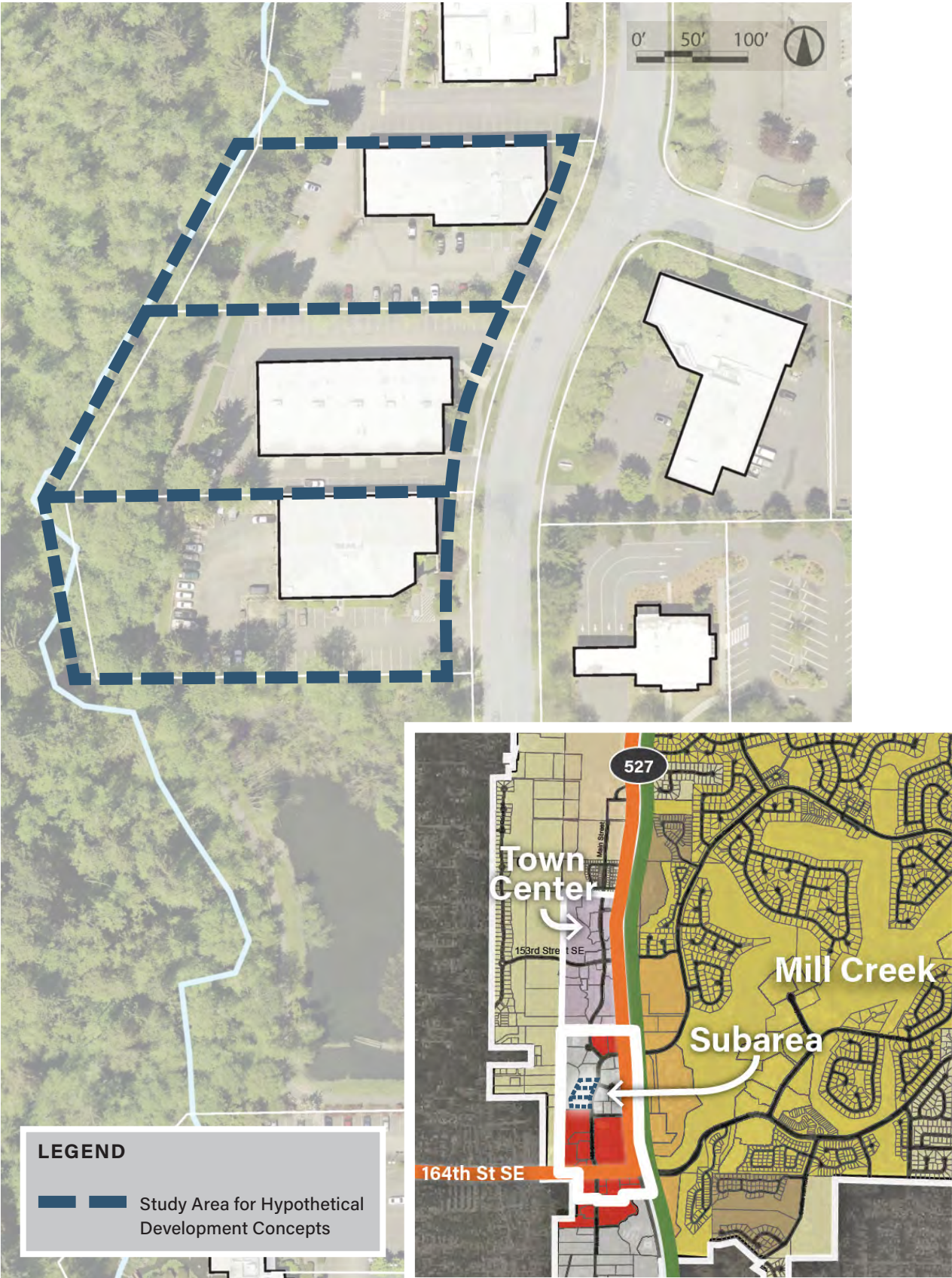


FIGURE 6.2
CONCEPTUAL AND HYPOTHETICAL SITE PLAN SHOWING HOW
POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT MIGHT FIT ON THE THREE PARCELS

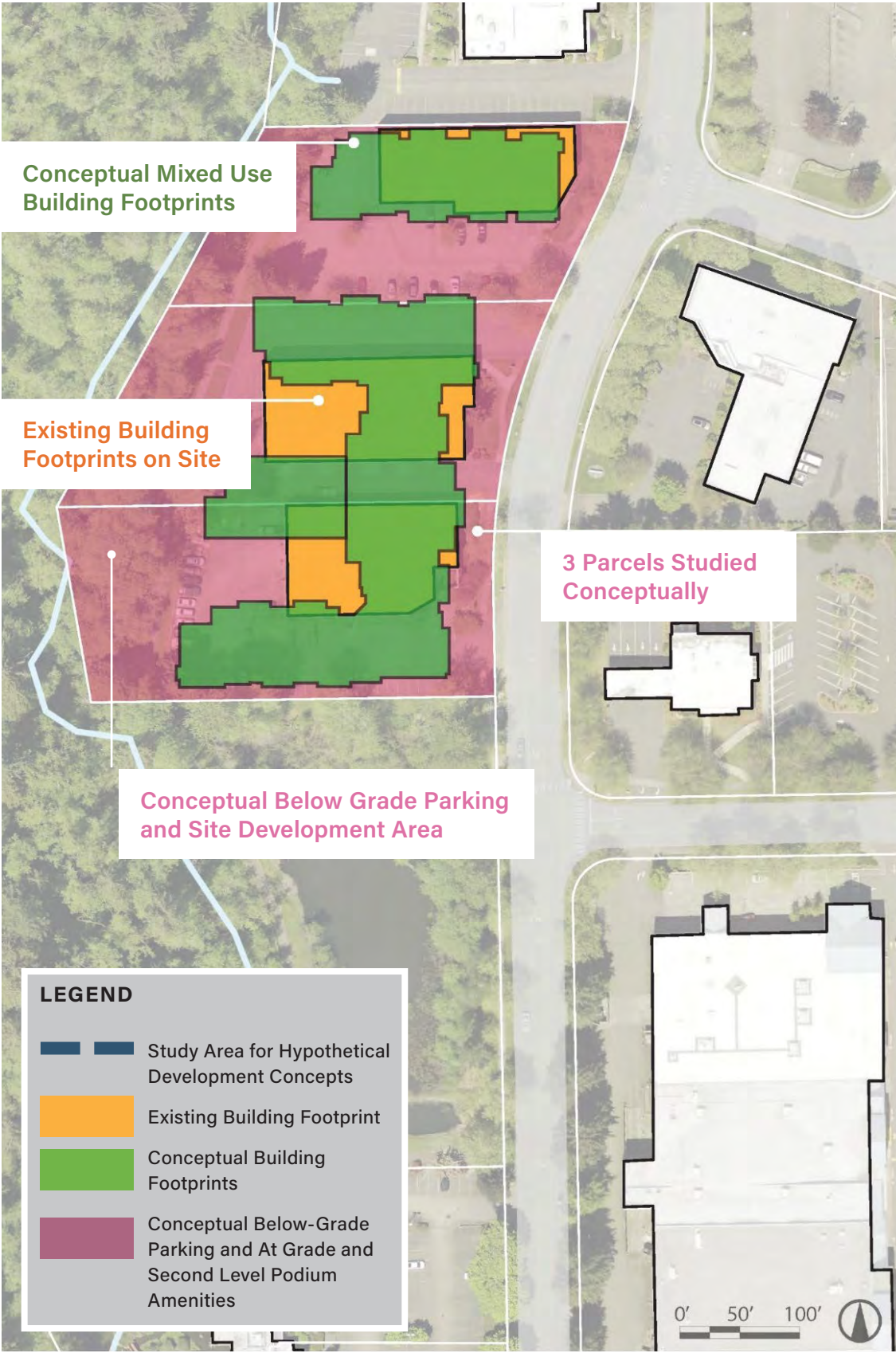
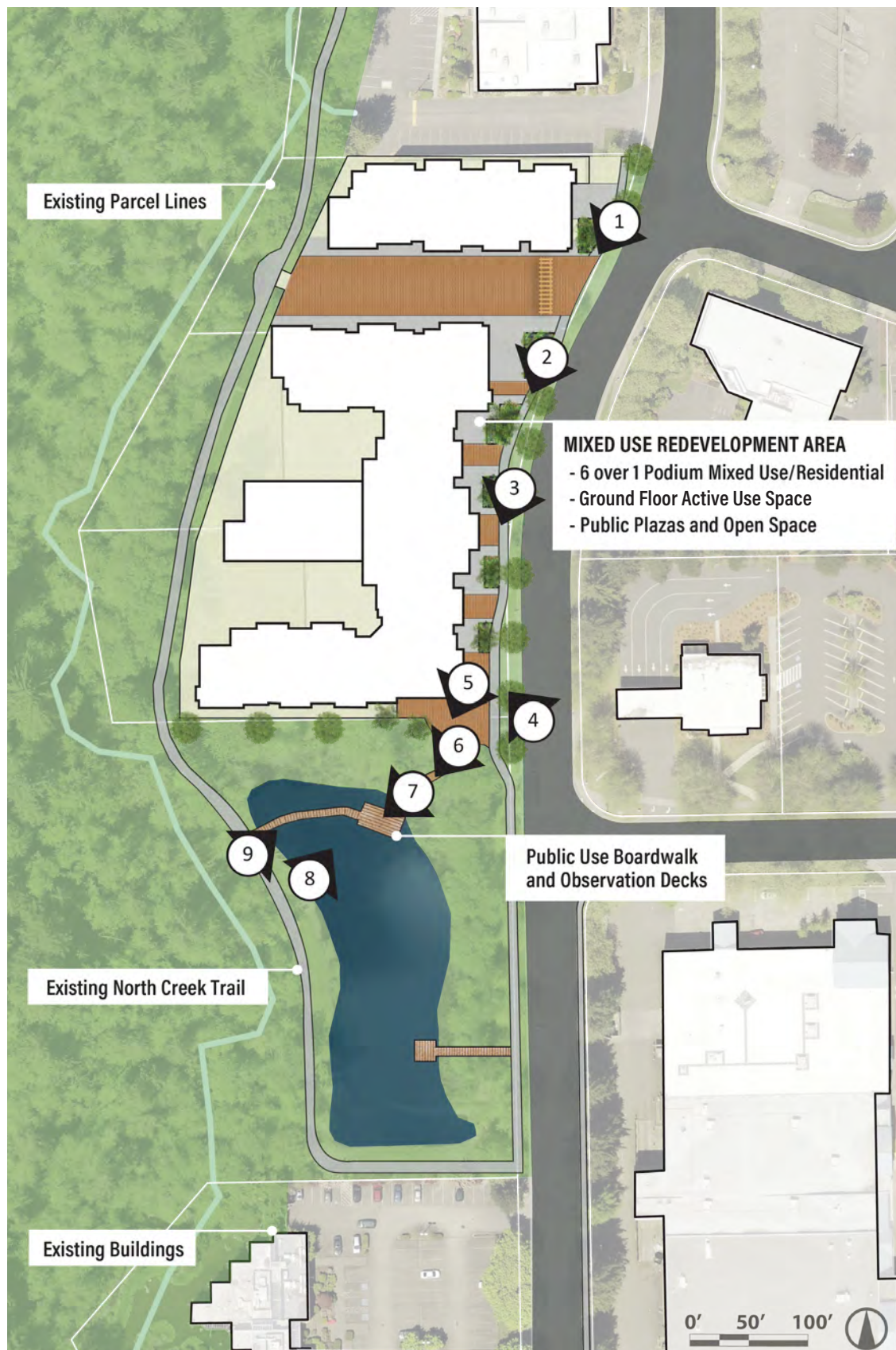


FIGURE 6.3

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL SITE PLAN
(ANNOTATED WITH VIEWPOINTS SHOWN)



Visualizations of Theoretical Redevelopment

(VIEWPOINTS MOVE FROM NORTH TO SOUTH ALONG MILL CREEK BOULEVARD)

FIGURE 6.4



FIGURE 6.5



Visualizations of Theoretical Redevelopment

(VIEWPOINTS MOVE FROM NORTH TO SOUTH ALONG MILL CREEK BOULEVARD)

FIGURE 6.6



FIGURE 6.7



Visualizations of Theoretical Redevelopment

(VIEWPOINTS MOVE FROM NORTH TO SOUTH ALONG MILL CREEK BOULEVARD)

FIGURE 6.8



FIGURE 6.9



Visualizations of Theoretical Redevelopment

(VIEWPOINTS MOVE FROM NORTH TO SOUTH ALONG MILL CREEK BOULEVARD)

FIGURE 6.10



FIGURE 6.11



Visualizations of Theoretical Redevelopment

(VIEWPOINTS MOVE FROM NORTH TO SOUTH ALONG MILL CREEK BOULEVARD)

FIGURE 6.12



MILL CREEK BOULEVARD CONCEPTS

The planning team studied potential concepts for improving Mill Creek Boulevard to create a more pedestrian-friendly streetscape and to provide on-street parking to serve local businesses. **Figure 6.13** shows the locations of cross section studies that are illustrated in **Figures 6.14** through **6.16**. The photographs on this page show examples of additional festival streets in Denver, Colorado and Seattle, Washington. Portions of Mill Creek Boulevard and other streets in the subarea function as event spaces on certain dates of the year and could be designed to enhance that function.

Like the visualizations of potential redevelopment, the street cross sections in **Figures 6.14** through **6.16** are conceptual and do not represent a specific proposal or project. The City will continue to analyze potential design treatments for Mill Creek Boulevard and may pursue funding options to take the improvements through design and construction as a capital project, or improvements could be made on a more case by case basis with redevelopment along the corridor.



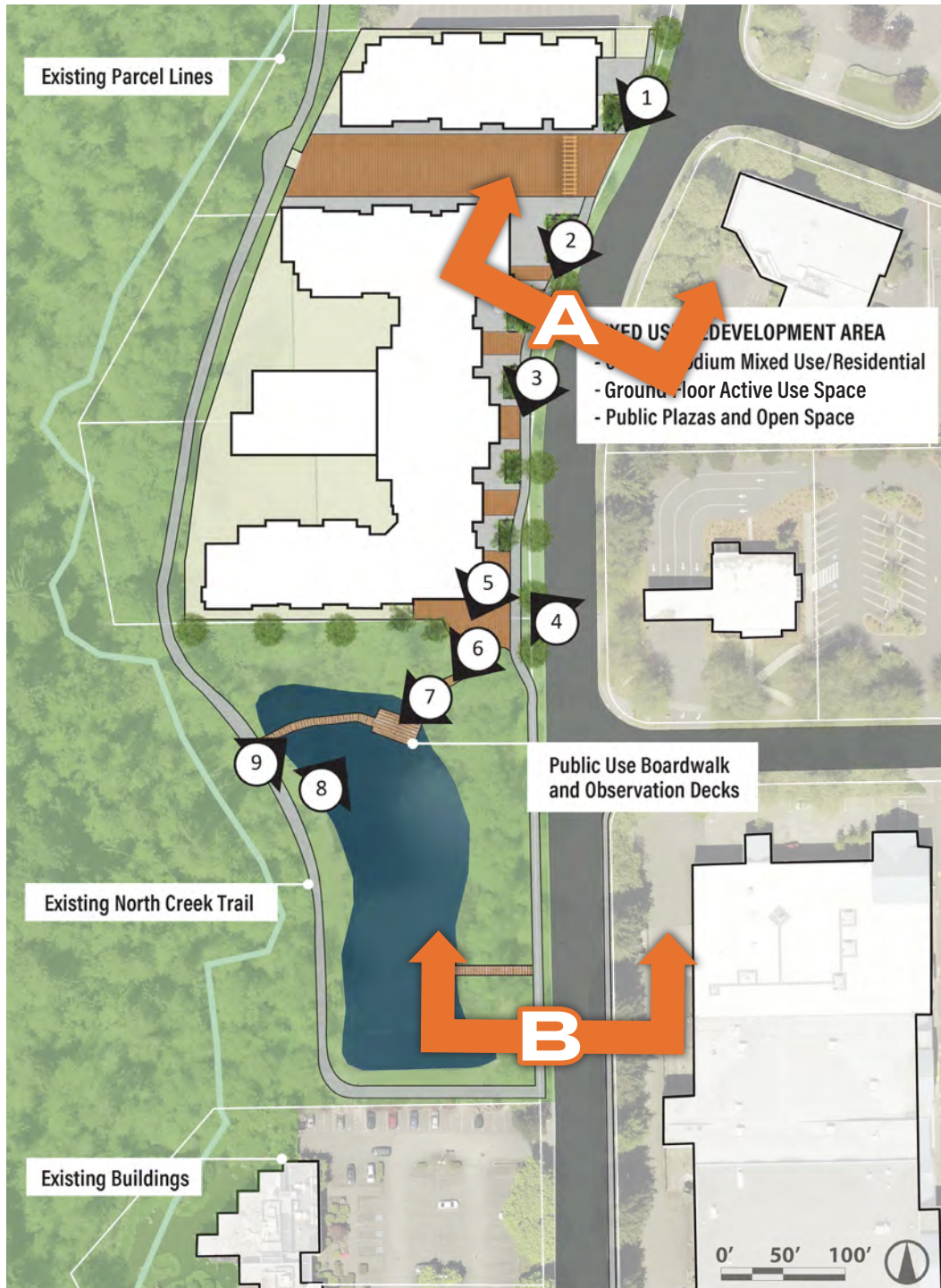
Examples of festival streetscapes

As noted in Sections 7 and 8 in this subarea plan, looking into potential capital investment and grant funding opportunities may be the best path for implementing a cohesive, attractive street improvement project throughout the corridor, resembling the Main Street corridor in Mill Creek Town Center to the north. Cities are eligible for public grants and funding sources that developers don't have access to. Completing the project in advance supported by City resources can help to catalyze and attract potential redevelopment in the future. In addition, completing these street and streetscape improvements (as shown in concepts on the following pages) will enhance pedestrian and bicycle access to the Green Line and Orange Line bus rapid transit systems.



FIGURE 6.13

LOCATIONS OF MILL CREEK BOULEVARD CROSS SECTION STUDY CONCEPTS



A1: Parking Both Sides
A2: Parking One Side
B: No Parking

Three Conceptual Cross Sections for Mill Creek Boulevard



FIGURE 6.14

CROSS SECTION STUDY CONCEPT A1

ON-STREET PARKING BOTH SIDES OF STREET WITH SIDEWALKS ON BOTH SIDES AND ADDITIONAL PEDESTRIAN SPACE NEXT TO BUILDINGS; TRAVEL LANES WITH SHARROWS FOR SHARED USE WITH BICYCLISTS

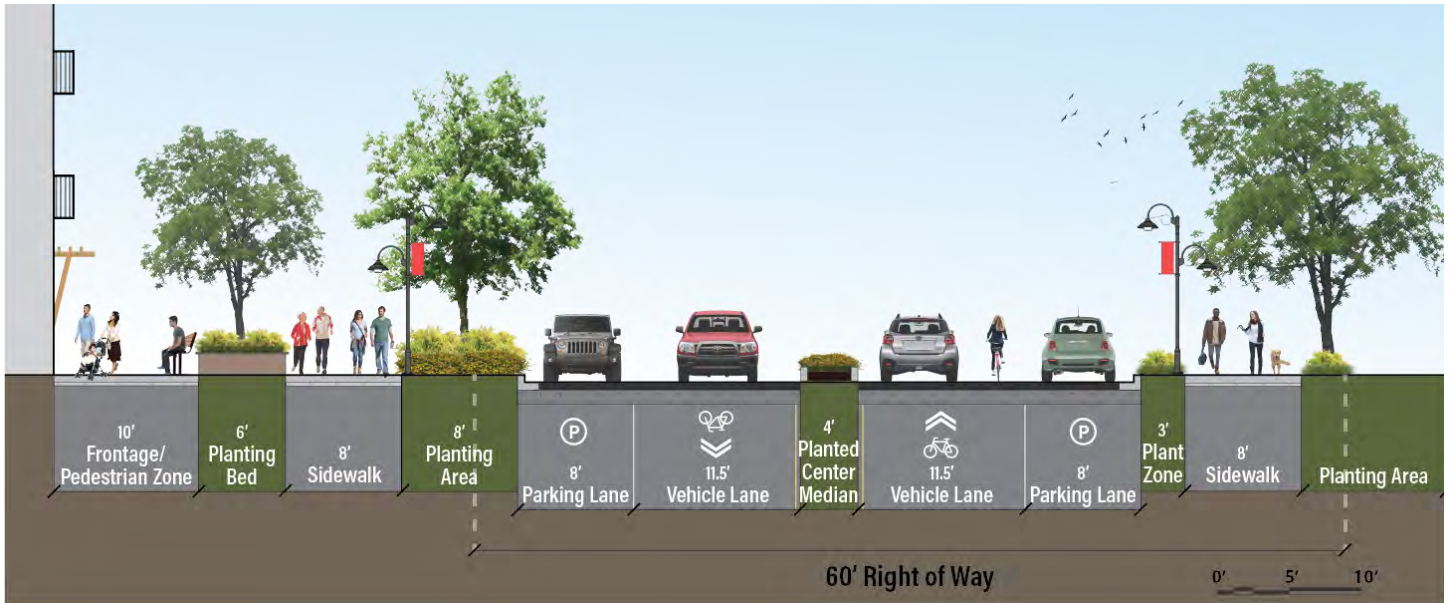


FIGURE 6.15

CROSS SECTION STUDY CONCEPT A2

ON-STREET PARKING ONE SIDE OF STREET AND DEDICATED BIKE LANES IN THE STREET; SIDEWALKS ON BOTH SIDES AND ADDITIONAL PEDESTRIAN SPACE ALONG THE BUILDINGS

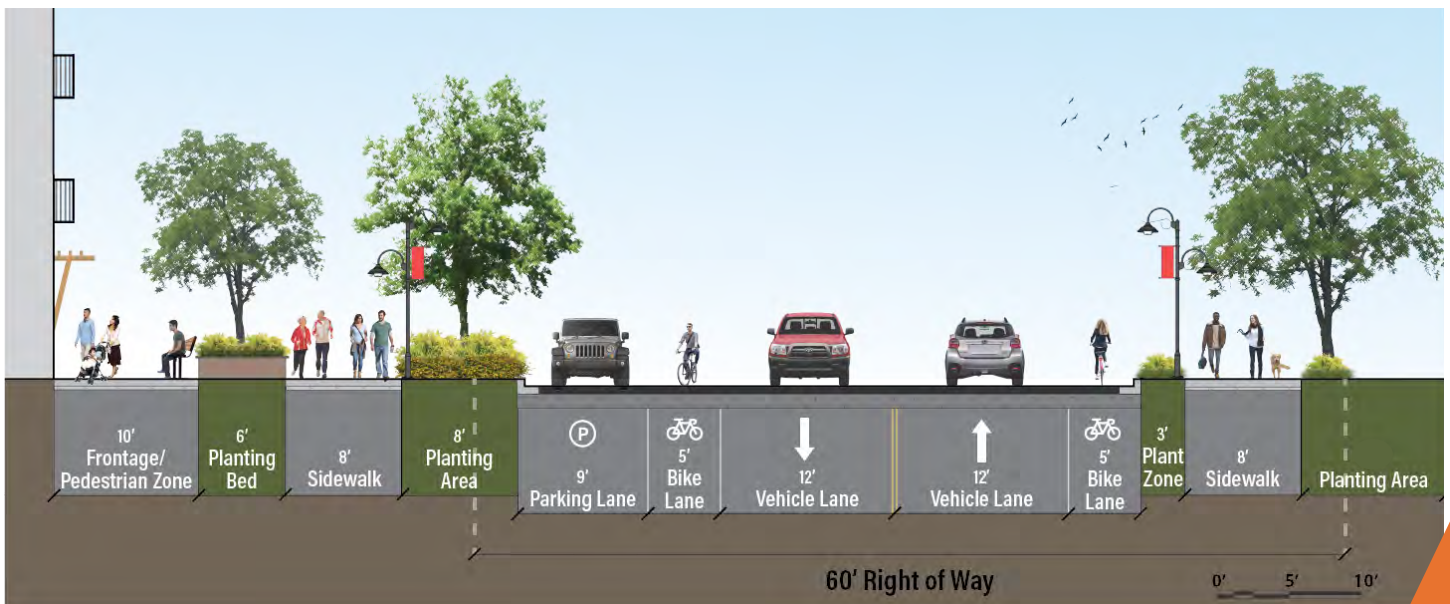
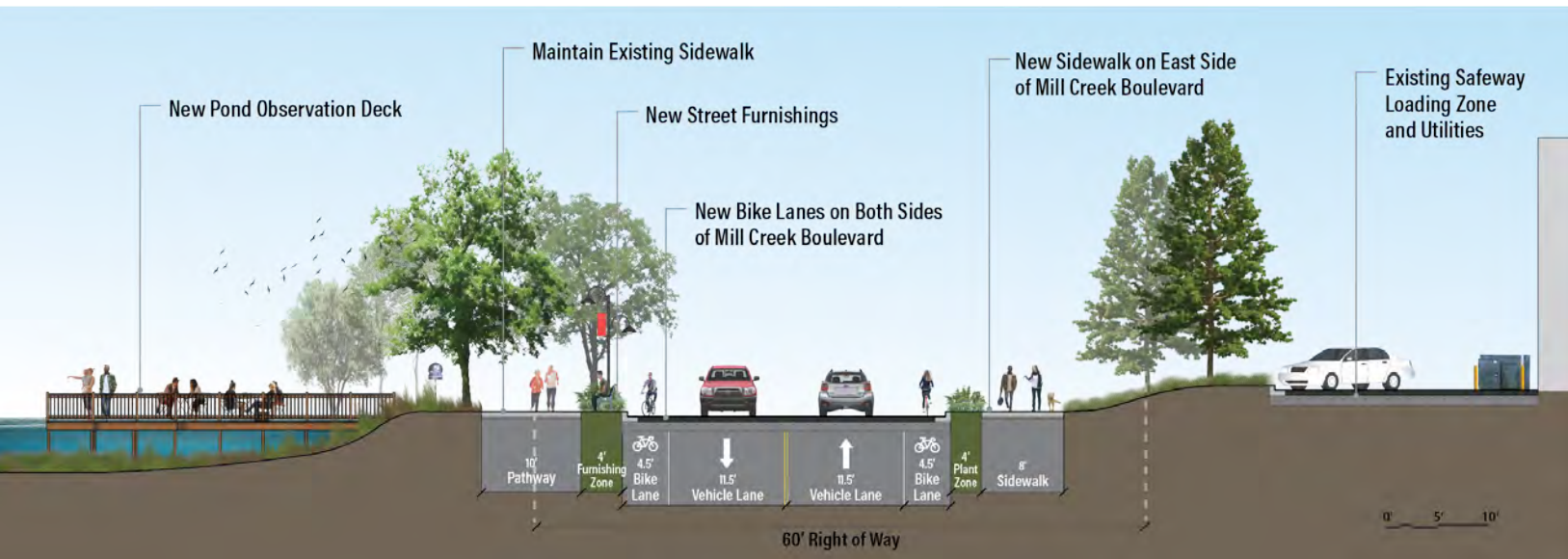


FIGURE 6.16

CROSS SECTION STUDY CONCEPT B

NO ON-STREET PARKING WITH SHARED USE PATH ON WEST SIDE WITH BOARDWALK/OVERLOOK AT CITY-OWNED POND; DEDICATED BIKE LANES IN THE STREET



The Mill Creek Boulevard cross sections convey the possibilities of various options for the corridor, without selecting a preferred cross section at this time. The focus of developing the concepts was on creating a more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly corridor that would enhance access to local businesses and to the bus rapid transit stops in the vicinity of the subarea (existing and planned). On-street parking is an important component for serving the needs of local businesses and services and also provides the added benefit of calming traffic and reducing speeds in the corridor.

A clear point of consensus with the PAC in the planning process was for Mill Creek Boulevard to be designed to serve local businesses rather than as a cut-through or short cut between 164th and SR 527 (Bothell Everett Highway). This change in Mill Creek Boulevard's function also would require adjustments to intersections and signal timing for the purpose of reducing cut-through traffic and related congestion on Mill Creek Boulevard and focusing traffic on the major arterials. This will require amending the City's Comprehensive Plan (as part of the 2024 update process) to reflect this preferred policy. Then, if the City determines if Mill Creek Boulevard will be a capital investment project and obtains funding to progress towards design and construction, the street and streetscape can be designed in alignment with this policy. With this additional work in future stage(s) of design for the corridor project, more input can be gathered from the community and property owners on the potential preferences for the corridor.





Example of pedestrian friendly street with active uses at ground level

SURFACE WATER MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENTS

Surface water management improvements would be part of any Mill Creek Boulevard corridor improvements—to treat (water quality) and manage (capacity) stormwater runoff associated with the improvements.

As part of this planning process, the planning team evaluated the current stormwater facilities in the subarea (see Section 3 of this subarea plan) and the potential for creating subregional stormwater facilities in the subarea to serve future redevelopment. The evaluation confirmed that the system and facilities in the subarea were installed as part of the original development, decades ago, and were not designed to meet the current standards (state and local) for water quality treatment and runoff management.

Future improvements in the Mill Creek Boulevard corridor would upgrade surface water treatment and management facilities and other utilities (lighting/electrical, water, sewer, communications, etc.), bringing all of these facilities up to current standards. It is also possible that the project could expand to include a broader evaluation of subregional, suburban retrofit opportunities in the subarea. The planning team's evaluation indicated that for every six acres of redevelopment, approximately .42 acres needs to be developed into surface water management capacity space.



If stormwater management capacity could be handled in a subregional approach by constructing an underground vault or potentially expanding the City-owned pond, this would result in more space devoted to buildings and site amenities on privately-owned redevelopment parcels, rather than for stormwater management. This would create a clear incentive to property owners and developers to move projects forward since they would be able to use more of their land in doing so. This subregional/regional approach has been successfully implemented in Redmond, Burien, and other jurisdictions across the region. A summary of findings of the planning team's evaluation included the following key points.



Examples of public art and festive street design

- » Property owners/developers would gain more available site area for other uses.
- » Less risk/more predictability for developers in permitting and development process; contingency costs are reduced in proforma.
- » Connection fees are clear from the outset of development projects (more predictability).
- » Developers are not responsible for ongoing maintenance and operations.
- » Subregional system components can be designed and constructed over time in phases and in line with phases of redevelopment planned.
- » Property owners and developers could be incentivized to opt-in.
- » The City would be eligible for grants and financing structures that private developers are not eligible for.
- » Low impact development features, such as rain gardens, bioretention planter boxes, tree boxes (Silva Cells, etc.) under sidewalks and paths, Filterra or equal systems, porous pavements, storage chambers and vaults, and combinations of these can be installed to upgrade the subarea's surface water management system to current standards.
- » A subregional approach to surface water management makes the most sense with rezoning of the subarea (or portions of the subarea) because a primary purpose of the system would be to provide capacity for and help to incentivize future redevelopment.
- » Upgrading facilities in the subarea would bring important benefits for enhancing water quality and aquatic and riparian habitat in the North Creek corridor and downstream environments in Puget Sound.





Examples of public art and public space improvements

PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The planning team studied a variety of opportunities to improve and enhance public spaces within the subarea, such as public rights-of-way and streetscapes, the North Creek and North Creek Trail corridor, space around the City-owned pond, and publicly accessible spaces that might be part of redevelopment in portions of the subarea in the future. We shared, discussed, and gathered additional ideas for public improvements that could create more of a sense of place for the subarea.

Given that the subarea is a gateway to the broader Mill Creek community and a location for community events and festivals, improvements and enhancements to the public realm will be important to further reinforce and strengthen the sense of place and community pride for this important part of Mill Creek.





A community project to create a wall mural on the back of a commercial building

Improvements and enhancements can be made either as part of future redevelopment projects, or through resources and projects sponsored by volunteers, service clubs, property owners/businesses, and the City. The subarea is already a place where public art is being showcased, and this trend could continue in the future to celebrate this important hub of the community. Some of the ideas that came forward through public engagement and ideas from the PAC included:

- » Murals along blank walls to enhance pedestrian areas
- » Small concert/performance space along the North Creek Trail corridor
- » Expanded trails and pathways system through the subarea that connect to North Creek Trail
- » Designing street segments and access areas of existing and future improvement projects to function as shared streets/festival street spaces—these areas function normally to support multimodal uses and parking during most times, but then can be converted to spaces for events, festivals, food trucks, and other uses (with sufficient electrical hook ups, access to water, and amenities for pedestrians)
- » Places for group picnics and enjoying lunch for the employees (and potential future residents) in the subarea
- » More places to sit (benches, outdoor café style seating, etc.) and ample pedestrian scale lighting for security
- » Connecting dead end streets with pedestrian promenades/corridors to help support pedestrian access across the subarea
- » Public art of all types integrated into sites, streetscapes, and public spaces



Project Advisory Committee Recommendations



PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE PROCESS

The Mill Creek City Council appointed a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) to work with City staff and consultant team to evaluate land use, transportation, and economic development opportunities within the Mill Creek Boulevard Corridor Subarea. The City Council directed the PAC to evaluate the following scenarios for the subarea:

- » No changes to zoning in the subarea;
- » Potential intensified land uses (upzoning) in 30% of the subarea; and
- » Potential intensified land uses (upzoning) in 50% of the subarea.

The PAC met nine times throughout the planning process to review public input, analyze data, prepare and evaluate alternative planning scenarios for the Subarea and make recommendations on potential land uses and infrastructure.

The outcome of these meetings is presented in this section of the plan—ten recommendations to guide the preparation of a Mill Creek Boulevard Subarea Plan that will be considered as a part of the City of Mill Creek Comprehensive Plan update. This mandatory update must be completed by December 31, 2024. The basis of the PAC recommendations was their review of economic data showing that mixed use zoning with high density residential use is necessary if the desire is to have the property redeveloped.

In their recommendations, the PAC determined that approximately one third (approximately 34 percent) of the subarea, generally the properties along the west and north sides of Mill Creek Boulevard, should be considered for this increased land use intensity. The selected location along the North Creek corridor provides amenities and open space for future residents, and the parcels there would be more likely to redevelop over the next 20 years or more. See **Figure 6.1**.



This increased activity would result in new businesses and provide more customers for existing businesses in the vicinity, and generate significant revenues for the City. These revenues would provide a funding source for improving infrastructure in the subarea, improving the aesthetics of the corridor/gateway, public spaces along North Creek Trail, and improving water quality entering North Creek through the construction of new stormwater facilities as a part of new development. *The PAC recommendations are presented below and on the following pages.*

1. ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS THROUGHOUT THE PLANNING PROCESS.

Continue to engage the Mill Creek community, business interests, property owners, and other stakeholders to gather input on future planning and design projects in the subarea.

The Rationale for this Recommendation:

The Mill Creek Boulevard Subarea is in the heart of the community, and the public and stakeholders have a vested interest in how this area may change and support community needs over time.

The community desires to continue the success of Mill Creek Town Center—its sense of place, character, and desirability as a great place to live, work, shop, dine, and celebrate. Therefore, the community will be interested in providing input about how the future transformation of the Mill Creek Boulevard Subarea would complement and add to the success of the Town Center and become a solid asset to the community.



2. ALLOW A MIX OF USES FOR REDEVELOPMENT.

Allow for mixed-use redevelopment by revising the Comprehensive Plan Land Use and Zoning Maps for the west and north sides of Mill Creek Boulevard between 164th and the Maple Leaf Square shopping center. (See [Figure 5.2](#) with the proposed parcels outlined in the bold orange line.) Mixed-use would include commercial development with residential and/or office uses above. These revisions would constitute the Mill Creek Subarea Plan and be considered part of the 2024 Comprehensive Plan update required by the Growth Management Act.

The Rationale for this Recommendation:

This change would allow mixed-use development (including commercial and residential development) in up to approximately 34 percent of the developable lands of the subarea, focusing on the mixed-use development along the west side of Mill Creek Boulevard.

The mixed-use development would be strategically placed adjacent to the North Creek Corridor, buffering the area of change. Additionally, it provides density near the city's core to respect/protect single-family neighborhoods and offer new and existing commercial tenants public amenities.

Based on analysis by the consultant team, the following outcomes could potentially occur with redevelopment of the area shown in [Figure 5.2](#) (approximately 34 percent):

- » Over 200,000 additional square feet of commercial/business space could be provided in the subarea.
- » Up to 1,500 additional dwelling units (approximately 3,000 residents/customers) could be provided in the subarea.
- » Additional residents in the core of downtown Mill Creek would help support existing and new businesses.
- » Redevelopment within the subarea could potentially generate over \$20,000,000 in impact mitigation fees.
- » Over 25 years, an additional \$16,500,000 of additional property and sales tax could potentially be generated for the city.
- » Targeting the area of change to the west and north sides of Mill Creek Boulevard represents a realistic perspective on the level of change that might realistically happen within the next twenty years or more.
- » Although Parcel #20 (Mill Creek Plaza shopping center) has the potential for redevelopment, the long-term leases related to commercial anchors limit redevelopment potential for many years. The property owner of Parcel #20 supports a recommendation that does not include this parcel, assuming that this parcel could also be designated for amended zoning at a later date.



3. ALLOW ADDITIONAL BUILDING HEIGHT.

Prepare Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulation amendments that allow mixed-use buildings of up to six stories in height (base height level) in the area identified to allow mixed-use. In addition, include an opportunity for an additional story (up to seven stories total), only permitted with the provision of additional public amenities.

The Rationale for this Recommendation:

- » This building form and construction is the most realistic for mixed-use with residential (or office) above active ground-floor uses and is commonly seen throughout the region as feasible and marketable. Under current conditions in the regional market, there is a much greater demand for residential construction.
- » This type of building form and density is necessary to provide the financial incentive to redevelop existing buildings.
- » This type of redevelopment could result in a range of housing options to serve the community.
- » Including an incentive program that allows an additional building height and/or additional density can be an effective tool for gaining public and community benefits as part of redevelopment projects.

4. PROVIDE ILLUSTRATIVE DEVELOPMENT DESIGN STANDARDS.

Development Regulations should be developed to include illustrative development standards and design guidelines that will support and guide the character of redevelopment to ensure it is consistent with the visioning illustrations presented.

The Rationale for this Recommendation:

- » Development standards and design guidelines ensure that development is of high quality aesthetically and meets the community's expectations.
- » Clarity in design regulations communicates to developers the City's expectations for future development.
- » The City has successfully employed development design standards in Town Center and the East Gateway Urban Village, which have guided high-quality development that meets the community's expectations.



5. REQUIRE PUBLIC SPACES AND AMENITIES WITH REDEVELOPMENT.

Require enhanced public spaces and inspire placemaking through public and private investment. These investments should ensure that the subarea functions as part of the civic core of Mill Creek. For example, enhancing the North Creek Trail corridor as part of this recommendation will improve its value as a community asset for the entire Mill Creek community.

The Rationale for this Recommendation:

- » Placemaking and the creation of additional public spaces and amenities will help support an environment that attracts people as a place to work, live, shop, dine, gather, and celebrate community.
- » Enhancing the public realm—open spaces, plazas, streetscapes, and other elements – can help to catalyze redevelopment.
- » Improving public spaces and pedestrian areas along Mill Creek Boulevard and the North Creek corridor will help to extend the presence and aesthetics of Main Street and Mill Creek Town Center.

6. REQUIRE THAT THE STREETScape IN THE SUBAREA BE DESIGNED TO SUPPORT THE SAFE MOVEMENT OF PEDESTRIANS, BICYCLISTS, AND AUTOMOBILES.

Create a more walkable, pedestrian-oriented, and bicycle-friendly place similar to the Mill Creek Town Center. In addition, the redevelopment of properties and public improvements in the subarea should provide more efficient and safer pedestrian and bicycle connections to the two Bus Rapid Transit lines and the North Creek Trail corridor.

The Rationale for this Recommendation:

- » Creating a pedestrian-friendly environment extends the desirable sense of place and function of Town Center southward.
- » Supporting pedestrian and bicycle improvements will connect people to the places they want to go, such as the Swift BRT system, which will connect to the light rail line in the I-5 corridor and allow people to travel throughout the region via transit. This helps to support the investment the region is making in transit.
- » Focusing on enhancing safety for walking and bicycling improves safety and security for everyone.



7. CHANGE THE FUNCTION OF MILL CREEK BOULEVARD TO SERVE THE PROPERTIES IN THE CORRIDOR; NOT TO BE A CUT-THROUGH TO SR 527.

Change the function of Mill Creek Boulevard to serve the adjacent businesses and land uses in the corridor rather than as a cut-through between 164th Street SE and SR 527. Strategies to accomplish this include expanding on-street parking along the corridor and adopting revisions to the existing policies and strategies in the Transportation Element of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

The Rationale for this Recommendation:

- » Ensuring Mill Creek Boulevard's function stays focused on local business and community needs is best for supporting the local economy rather than as a pass-through connection.
- » Expanded on-street parking will serve the demand of businesses by supporting customer access and slowing down traffic.

8. SEEK PARTNERSHIPS TO MAKE STRATEGIC STREET-SCAPE IMPROVEMENTS WHILE PREPARING TO IMPLEMENT THE PLAN—SOONER RATHER THAN LATER.

Consider near-term investments needed to upgrade Mill Creek Boulevard. Seek opportunities to invest in public improvements to Mill Creek Boulevard (through City investment, grant funding, and/or private partnerships). Require that future improvements to Mill Creek Boulevard in the subarea include facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and on-street parking as appropriate to serve the properties being redeveloped. A flexible streetscape design approach that can be adjusted to align with actual redevelopment projects is required.

Rationale for this Recommendation:

- » Enhancing Mill Creek Boulevard and associated streetscapes can help to incentivize redevelopment.
- » As a public agency, the City has the capability to leverage grants and funding opportunities for street and trail improvements, intersections, and connections that private developers do not.
- » Improving Mill Creek Boulevard will help extend the presence and aesthetics of Main Street in the Mill Creek Town Center.
- » Improving the corridor will enhance safety for all modes of traffic, which will in turn, enhance public access to businesses and transit.
- » Initial streetscape projects can be adjusted as part of a future development if appropriate for the use (such as to allow for on-street parking or to provide additional public space).



9. CONSIDER A SUBREGIONAL STRATEGY FOR STORMWATER MANAGEMENT.

The City should explore the feasibility of a subregional approach to stormwater management for the subarea. A subregional approach to stormwater management can incentivize redevelopment and improve the quality of the water discharged into North Creek. Part of this task would be to pursue grant funding that may be available from the Washington Department of Ecology (DOE) to explore the feasibility of and, if appropriate, develop a subregional stormwater plan.

The Rationale for this Recommendation:

- » As a public agency, the City has the capability to leverage grants and funding opportunities for stormwater management and facilities that private developers do not have.
- » Specific grant funding is available from the DOE for retrofitting suburban areas.
- » Stormwater management investments in the Mill Creek Boulevard Subarea would improve the habitat and environmental conditions of North Creek and the downstream waters of the Sammamish River and Lake Washington.
- » Combining funding sources can leverage more significant facility upgrades and improve stormwater facilities, which can enhance public amenities and help incentivize redevelopment.
- » A subregional system can incentivize and catalyze redevelopment by reducing the amount of land needed for stormwater capacity on individual sites (providing more net developable area) and increasing the predictability of project permitting and approvals.

10. EVALUATE THE LAND USES DESIRED IN THE CORRIDOR.

Review the list of land uses currently allowed in all zones of the subarea and recommend changes to ensure that desired uses are permitted, and undesired uses are not. (Existing uses would continue as non-conforming uses).

The Rationale for this Recommendation:

- » Implementing this recommendation will ensure that future uses are compatible with the desired community character for the subarea, establishing a foundation for future development.
- » While existing uses would continue to be allowed as non-conforming, creating a list of desired uses will help promote the desired form of redevelopment for the subarea and eliminate the potential for undesired uses.



Next Steps and Action Plan



8

NEXT STEPS RELATED TO PLANNING AND ZONING

With the completion of this subarea plan, the next step will be for the City to work with the Planning Commission and the City Council through the 2024 Mill Creek Comprehensive Plan update process to determine the future direction for the subarea. The Comprehensive Plan update process will begin in early 2023 and will be completed by the end of 2024. The public will be engaged during this process. Planning Commission and City Council meetings are open to the public, and decision-making will be transparent.

Through the Comprehensive Plan update process, there will be opportunities to consider the recommendations from the PAC and integrate the subarea plan into the Comprehensive Plan. The intent will be to guide future redevelopment in alignment with the vision and goals for the subarea. Ongoing public engagement will be important and is a specific recommendation from the PAC (*1—Engage the Community throughout the Planning Process*) as discussed in Section 6 of this subarea plan.

There may also need to be amendments to the City's municipal code provisions. Specifically a new zoning classification may be created for the portion of the subarea that may be upzoned (PAC recommendations *2—Allow a Mix of Land Uses for Redevelopment*, *3—Allow Additional Building Height*, *5—Require Public Spaces and Amenities with Redevelopment*; and *10—Evaluate the Land Uses Desired in the Corridor*). Design standards also may be developed to supplement the code amendments. (PAC recommendation *4—Provide Illustrative Design Standards for Redevelopment*).



As part of updating the Comprehensive Plan and supporting zoning and code provisions, the PAC recommended that the City review the list of land uses currently allowed in all zones of the subarea and recommend changes to ensure that desired uses are permitted, and undesired uses are not. (Existing uses would continue as non-conforming uses).

Examples of district- or place-specific zoning classifications that have been created elsewhere in Mill Creek include Planned Community Business (PCB) for Mill Creek Town Center and East Gateway Planned Urban Village (EGPUV) for East Gateway.

The purpose of creating illustrative design standards for redevelopment would be to direct and guide redevelopment projects so that the architectural character, streetscaping and landscaping, and other design elements are consistent with Mill Creek community character and the desired high quality character for the subarea, located directly south of the high quality character of Town Center.



NEXT STEPS RELATED TO POTENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

In addition to the planning and zoning related steps above, the City may determine to move forward with specific improvements in the subarea, including upgrading the Mill Creek Boulevard corridor and intersection improvements at 164th Street, 161st Street, Main and SR 527 and repair of aging surface water management infrastructure failures identified in a 2018 study. These improvements may include additional water quality treatment as required under current Department of Ecology standards, as well as pavement preservation measures and potential improvements to support better pedestrian and bicycle access to Community Transit's Swift bus rapid transit lines.

These improvements would be consistent with the PAC recommendations **6—Require that the Streetscape in the Subarea be Designed to Support the Safe Movement of Pedestrians, Bicyclists, and Automobiles**; **7—Change the Function of Mill Creek Boulevard to Serve the Properties in the Corridor and Not to be a Cut-Through to SR 527**; **8—Seek Public Improvement Partnerships to Make Strategic Streetscape Improvements While Preparing to Implement the Plan**; and **9—Consider a Regional Strategy for Stormwater Management**.



Changing the function of Mill Creek Boulevard to primarily serve the adjacent businesses and land uses in the corridor rather than as a cut-through between 164th Street SE and SR 527 was a key action that the PAC supported, which will require updating existing policies and strategies in the City's Comprehensive Plan. Expanding on-street parking along the corridor would be a strategy to help ensure that Mill Creek Boulevard's function stays focused on local business and community needs and supporting the local economy. Whereas having the boulevard function more as a pass-through or short-cut connection between 164th and SR 527 would not be consistent with or supportive to local business and community needs.

The PAC recognized that enhancing Mill Creek Boulevard and associated streetscapes can help to incentivize redevelopment. Transportation grants and funds available through various governmental programs can be leveraged to support capital improvement projects in the corridor. As a public agency, the City has the capability to leverage grants and funding opportunities for street and trail improvements, intersections, and connections that private developers do not. Other desirable outcomes that align with community interests include the potential for improvements to Mill Creek Boulevard to extend the presence and aesthetics of Main Street in the Mill Creek Town Center and to enhance safety for all modes of traffic, which will, in turn, enhance public access to businesses and transit.

Another potential next step would be for the City to explore the feasibility of a regional or subregional approach to stormwater management for the subarea. Such an approach to stormwater management can incentivize redevelopment and improve the quality of the water discharged into North Creek. The City could pursue grant funding that may be available from the Washington Department of Ecology to explore the feasibility of and, if appropriate, develop a subregional stormwater plan, incorporating suburban retrofit actions with this approach.

Just as with street improvements, the City as a public agency has the capability to leverage grants and funding opportunities for stormwater management and facilities that private developers do not have, and specific grant funding is available from the DOE for retrofitting suburban areas. Stormwater management investments in the Mill Creek Boulevard Subarea would improve the habitat and environmental conditions of North Creek, and the downstream waters of the Sammamish River and Lake Washington.

Other municipalities throughout the region have found that combining funding sources can leverage more significant facility upgrades and improve stormwater facilities, which can enhance public amenities and help incentivize redevelopment. A subregional system can incentivize and catalyze redevelopment by reducing the amount of land needed for stormwater capacity on individual sites (providing more net developable area) and increasing the predictability of project permitting and approvals.



ACTION PLAN

Considering the recommended steps described on the previous pages, the following action plan prioritizes potential action items for the City over the course of the next few years to move this plan forward toward implementation.

- A. Continue public involvement efforts as part of the actions listed below,** ensuring that the community is engaged in the process and is provided with meaningful opportunities to offer input and feedback.
- B. Consider revisions to land use designations and changes needed to the City's Comprehensive Plan** (including the plan's land use map), as well as policies and strategies that may need to be updated in the 2024 Comprehensive Plan to align with the PAC recommendations. This would include making updates to the Transportation, Land Use, Housing, and other relevant elements of the Comprehensive Plan.
- C. Provide State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) compliance** as part of the Comprehensive Plan update process, which may include additional, more detailed analysis of environmental elements to support potential changes.
- D. Complete Mill Creek Municipal Code amendments,** including zoning and code provisions to support the City's updated Comprehensive Plan (2024)
- E. Prepare illustrative design standards,** adopted by reference in the Municipal Code to support and guide subarea redevelopment so that it is consistent with the desired character and aesthetics for the subarea, and so that it enhances the overall character of Mill Creek and the subarea's function as a gateway to the community.
- F. Move forward with already programmed capital improvement projects in the subarea,** taking into consideration how improvements may relate to and support future redevelopment and enhancements recommended in the subarea plan.
- G. Develop a funding strategy for and design and implement Mill Creek Boulevard corridor improvements,** which could be completed in phases: design development, preparation of construction documents, and construction.
- H. Develop a funding strategy for, study, design, and implement surface water management improvements,** which could include regional or subregional facilities and water quality treatment to support future redevelopment. These actions would improve habitat and environmental conditions of North Creek, as well as the downstream waters of the Sammamish River and Lake Washington.
- I. Consider opportunities to enhance public and civic spaces in the subarea.** As an important and busy hub of the community, the City will continue to evaluate opportunities to enhance the public spaces and civic functions of the subarea. The community offered a variety of ideas during the planning process, such as: improving access to the North Creek Trail; providing more public gathering spaces in the vicinity of City Hall and other public areas; adding more public art installations; enhancing streetscapes and creating shared/festival street areas; and creating a better public experience around the City pond.



