

Seattle South Lake Union

Founded in 1869, the City of Seattle is the leading commercial, cultural and advanced technology center of the U.S. Pacific Northwest, and a major port city for trans-Pacific and European trade. With a 2010 population of more than 608,000, the city is the region’s largest and most diverse in terms of population, economic activity, and transportation options. The city has designated six regional growth centers—Downtown, First Hill/Capitol Hill, Northgate, South Lake Union, Uptown Queen Anne, and the University Community—to accept significant planned population and employment growth. Four of the city’s regional growth centers – Downtown, First Hill/Capitol Hill, South Lake Union, and Uptown Queen Anne - are contiguous and form a core that adjoins with both the Duwamish and Ballard-Interbay manufacturing industrial centers. At less than four square miles, the concentration of regional growth centers form a dense core that contains significant concentration of current development and capacity for future growth.

Seattle’s South Lake Union regional growth center is located between Downtown and Lake Union, bounded by I-5 to the east and SR-99 to the west. Until recently, the area was primarily characterized by low-scale warehouse uses, but new housing and commercial development have quickly transformed the center. Recent development includes expansions to the Fred Hutch Campus, the UW Medical Center, the Gates Foundation campus, headquarters of Amazon, and new mid-rise housing. The city has provided new facilities to support this growth, including the South Lake Union Streetcar, Lake Union Park at the south end of the lake, and improvements to the Mercer Corridor.

Acreage, Density & Mix of Activity

Seattle South Lake Union is a smaller regional growth center in terms of total gross acreage (359 acres) with a net developable acreage of 206 acres (57% of gross acres). In terms of its role in the city overall, Seattle South Lake Union contains 1 percent of the city’s land area, 1 percent of the population, 1 percent of the housing, and 4 percent of the employment. Compared to centers as a whole, Seattle South Lake Union has a medium number of total activity units (24,292), with predominantly employment-oriented activity (83% jobs/17% residents) and a high density of activity (67.7 units per gross acre).

Urban Form

Seattle South Lake Union’s average parcel size is 0.5 acres, which is smaller than the 1.1-acre average size for growth centers. Seattle South Lake Union provides a walkable pedestrian environment, with a complete network of sidewalks (100% coverage) and very small blocks with a 3.0-acre average size.

2010 Summary Statistics

Land Use	
Gross acreage	359
Average block size (acres)	3.0
Average parcel size (acres)	0.5
Mix of Uses	
Population/Employee ratio	.21 : 1
Population+Employee/acre	67.7
Population	
Total population	4,234
Population density/acre	11.8
Change (2000–2010)	1,911
Housing	
Total housing units	3,107
Housing unit density/acre	8.7
Change (2000–2010)	1,915
Employment	
Total employment	20,058
Employment density/acre	55.8
Change (2000–2010)	-3,150
Transportation	
Housing access to transit	99%
Employee access to transit	99%
Work-based mode share	
SOV / HOV	56% • 8%
Walk & Bike / Transit	18% • 18%

Urban Amenities

Food & Drink	
Restaurants	28
Grocery	2
Cafes & Bars	9
Home Supplies & Services	
Pet Supplies	-
Laundry & Haircuts	1
Home supplies	1
Clothing & Shoes	2
Banks	5
Arts & Recreation	
Spectator Sports	-
Fitness & Outdoors	7
Electronics & Toys	6
Bookstores & Libraries	-
Arts & Culture	6
Public & Civic Services	
Social Services	6
Schools & Childcare	5
Police, Fire, Postal, City Hall	-
Pharmacy	-
Healthcare	10
Residential Care Centers	2

The presence of amenities is an important aspect of urban form. Seattle South Lake Union has a somewhat limited set of urban amenities (90 total amenities / 0.25 amenities per gross acre). Food/Drink (48%) and Public/Civic Services (23%) represent the largest amenity categories, with specific concentrations in Restaurants, Healthcare and Cafes/Bars.



Land Use

The major land uses in Seattle South Lake Union are commercial (43%) and industrial (19%). About 69 percent of the center’s 206 net acres are in employment-related use, including mixed-use buildings. Approximately three percent of the land in the center can be identified as exclusively residential uses.

Demographics

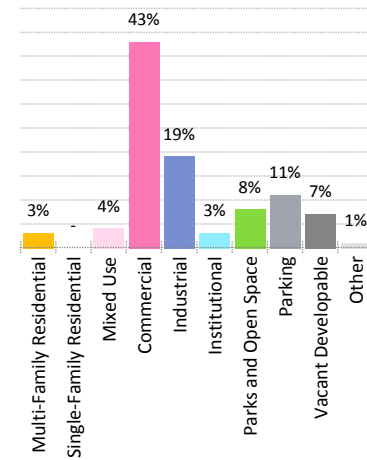
The total population in Seattle South Lake Union is 4,234, and it has grown by 1,911 residents over the past 10 years. The center has more working age residents than the region as a whole, with small shares of youth (4%) and seniors (11%). The age of residents is predominantly 18-34, followed by 35-64 (86% for both age groups combined). At 29 percent, Seattle South Lake Union's racial diversity is comparable to the region's 27 percent share of non-white residents. The groups with the highest shares in Seattle South Lake Union are White (71%), Asian (12%), and then African American/Black (10%). Six percent of residents identify as Hispanic.

Employment

The total employment in Seattle South Lake Union is 20,058, decreasing by 3,150 jobs over the past 10 years. The major industry sectors are Services (75%) and Construction & Resources (7%). Some of the largest employers in this center are Amazon.com and Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center.

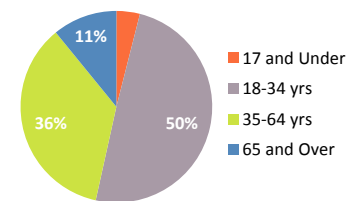
Current Land Use

(206 net acres)



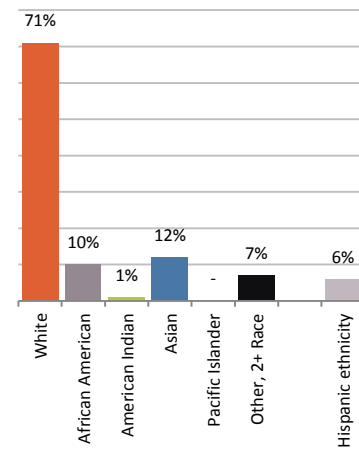
Age of Residents

(4,234 residents)



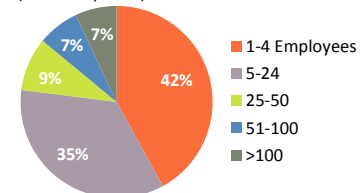
Racial/Ethnic Composition

(4,234 residents)



Size of Businesses

(492 workplaces)



Housing

Seattle South Lake Union has 3,107 total housing units, with a density of 8.7 housing units per gross acre. Over the past 10 years, housing has grown by an impressive 1,915 units (161% increase). Based on Census Block Group data, Seattle South Lake Union has a very small share (10%) of units in either single family or 2- to 4- unit multifamily and a dominant share of units in 5- to 19- and 20+ unit multifamily (90%).

In terms of unit affordability, Seattle South Lake Union's owner-occupied housing tends to be slightly more expensive than the region as a whole (based on 2010 Census Block Group data). The center's share of units under \$300,000 is 18 percent, whereas the region's share is 38 percent. The center's share of units over \$500,000 is 23 percent, whereas the region's is 25 percent.

Transportation

For work-based trips, the Seattle South Lake Union regional center's travel characteristics are very different from the region as a whole, with significantly fewer single-occupant vehicle (SOV) and more transit and walk/bike trips. The region's SOV share is 76 percent, while the center's share is 56 percent. The region's non-SOV mode share is 24 percent, with 10 percent in transit and 5 percent in walk/bike. The center's non-SOV share is 44 percent, with 18 percent in transit and 18 percent in walk/bike. The total daily trips from Seattle South Lake Union are very highly focused on destinations in regional centers (44% of all trips); this includes trips that stay within the center (10%) and trips that go to other centers (34%).

In terms of employee access to transit, Seattle South Lake Union has complete access, with 99 percent of employees within a 1/4 mile walk to a transit stop. For residential, Seattle South Lake Union has complete access, with 99 percent of housing units within a 1/4 mile walk.

Plan Overview

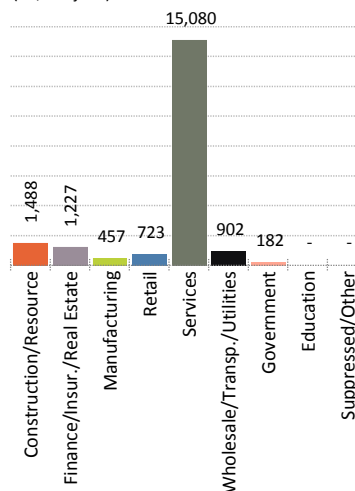
Seattle addresses the South Lake Union regional growth center in a section of the Neighborhood element of its comprehensive plan. Through its neighborhood planning process, Seattle has developed neighborhood plans for each of its regional growth centers. Though the plans were recognized as the vision and goals of neighborhoods, only the subset of policies adopted in the Neighborhood element of its comprehensive plan are considered adopted city policy. Policies included in the element are based on *South Lake Union Urban Center Neighborhood Plan* adopted in 2007.

Comparison to Center Plan Checklist

The city's primary center planning document was reviewed to evaluate the extent to which the plan addresses topics in the PSRC Regional Center Plan Checklist. Both the Urban Village element and the relevant section of the Neighborhood element were reviewed for this

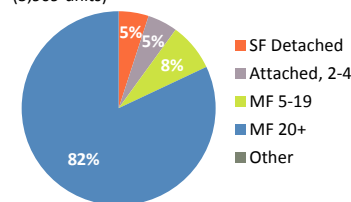
Jobs by Sector

(20,058 jobs)



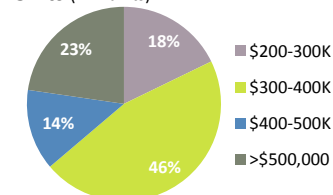
Housing Units by Type

(5,909 units)

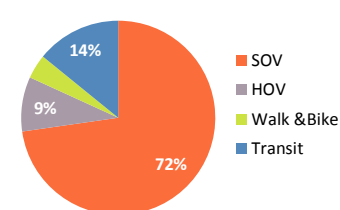


Value of Owner-Occupied Units

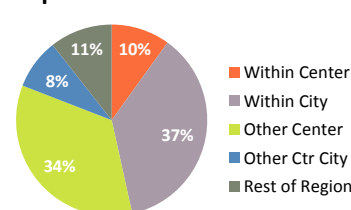
(724 units)



Mode Shares



Trip Destinations



analysis. This policy-level review of the current plan is intended both to provide preliminary assessment of consistency of the plan with center guidelines and to evaluate the Regional Centers Checklist for any potential improvements.

Seattle has a framework in place to guide development in the city's multiple center types. Goals and policies established in the Urban Village element in Seattle's comprehensive plan are applicable to all six of Seattle's regional growth centers. Urban Village policies address a number of aspects of the Regional Growth Center Plan Checklist. The element describes the centers in a regional context. Policies call for compact mixed-use places and transportation improvements to support walking, transit and demand management. The element calls for directing compact growth in centers and accommodating a range of economic activity. Policies focus on directing new investments in infrastructure and services to areas expected to receive additional growth and providing housing choices, accessible open space and employment opportunities. Urban centers are characterized by the presence of public facilities and human services; parks, open spaces, street designs and recreational facilities; and neighborhood design guidelines. Mode split goals, employment and residential growth targets, and a description of capital facilities for each regional growth center are described elsewhere in the comprehensive plan.

The Neighborhood element – South Lake Union section addresses many aspects of the Regional Growth Center Plan Checklist. A vision for the center is described through neighborhood goals, striving to be an active neighborhood with both housing and employment opportunities, availability of transit and nonmotorized access and amenities. The element describes the economic and residential role of the city within the region and describes the importance of the high-tech, biotech and maritime industries for the center. Housing policies are included that support a variety of housing types, affordability and special needs. Low-impact development is encouraged. Transportation 2040 Physical Design Guidelines are well addressed, along with policies emphasizing development of an integrated multimodal transportation network, working with local transit agencies, addressing the safety and mobility of all users of the transportation system and encouraging "green streets" treatments.

The plan meets many of the existing expectations of the Regional Growth Center Plan Checklist, though there are aspects that the plan does not address or that could be strengthened in future updates. A stronger emphasis on the environment could be incorporated in the plan, including policies addressing air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Though the plan includes general policies about housing, additional detail could be provided on implementation strategies. The plan does not yet include a market analysis of the center's development potential. Given the element's policy focus, it provides a limited amount of information on the existing conditions, such as the mix, distribution, and location of existing uses in the center.

Planning Challenges

Seattle has employed strategies to address challenges and plan for the success of its centers. These include incentive zoning, ongoing zoning amendments to increase development capacities, no minimum parking requirements, flexibility in mixing of uses, and transit oriented communities planning.