



Seattle Center / Uptown Station Community Charrette

Seattle Center's Purpose: To create exceptional events, experiences and environments that delight and inspire the human spirit to build stronger communities.

January 3, 2022



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Introduction

On November 18, 2021, the Seattle Center Foundation and the City of Seattle co-hosted a charrette for resident organizations and neighbors of Seattle Center to collaborate in setting the vision for a light rail station to serve Seattle Center and Uptown.

All organizations on the Seattle Center campus were invited to participate, with the majority accepting the invitation. A total of 66 people participated in the session: 33 community members; 27 City of Seattle staff and consultants; and 5 Sound Transit staff. The City and Sound Transit provided support and took a listening role, and focused on hearing the community perspective.

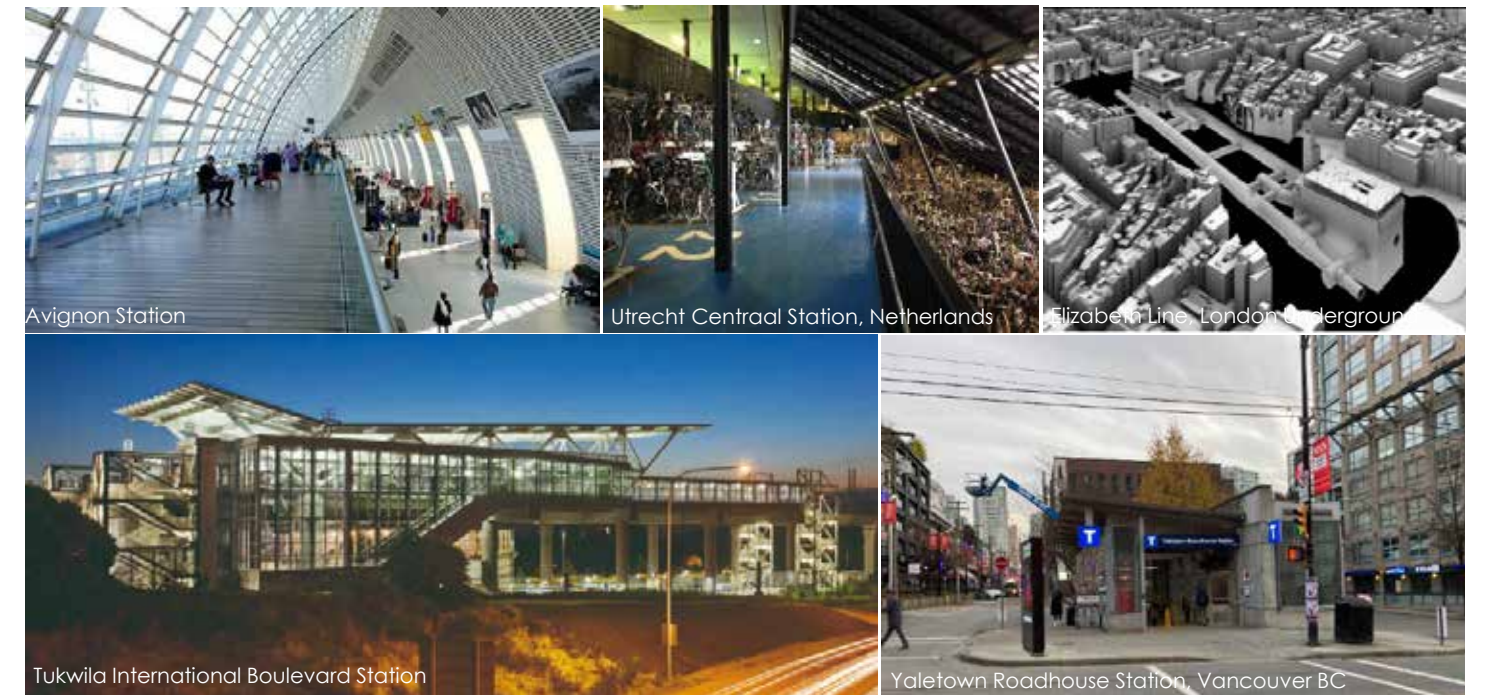
The day began with interactive activities and a brief presentation to establish a shared vocabulary. The bulk of the charrette was then spent in facilitated breakout groups. Participants first discussed hopes for and concerns about the project. Then, they turned their focus toward brainstorming ideas to address their concerns.

The productive working session generated many ideas from community members for further exploration to address construction concerns, to improve the public realm via urban design and to potentially refine the station serving Seattle Center and Uptown. The charrette also laid the groundwork for the public review of Sound Transit's Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) in early 2022.

This report summarizes these key activities, with a more detailed briefing of each table discussion captured in the appendix.



Inspiration: Some of our favorite systems + why we think they're great:

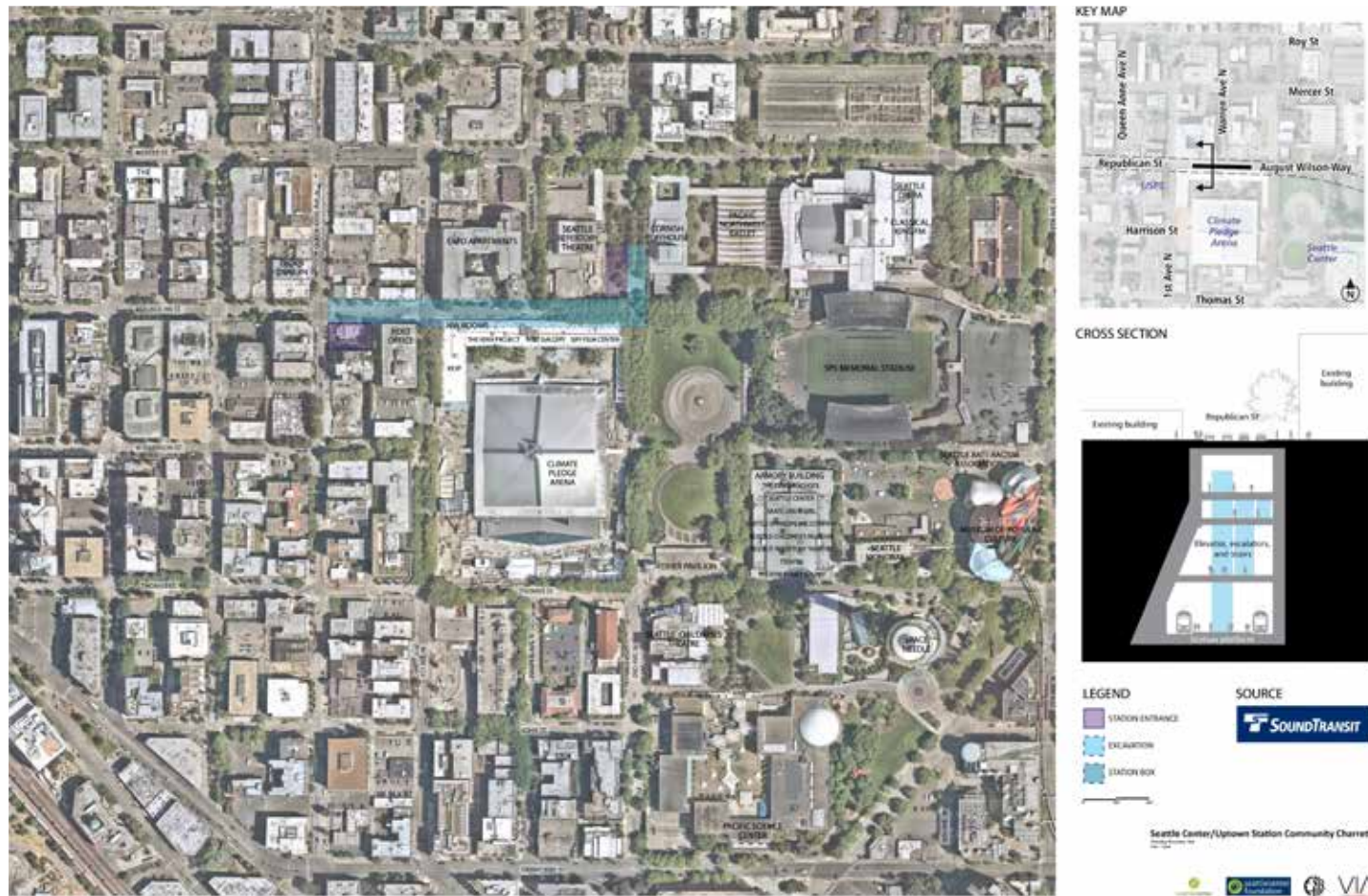


Purpose and Goals

Envision an integrated, successful light rail station for Seattle Center and Uptown

Intended Outcomes

- **Opportunities:** To brainstorm possibilities with the wide range of creative minds and the depth of technical experts in the room
- **Common Priorities:** What shared values and desired outcomes do resident organizations have?
- **Concerns:** What would be untenable to the community, and should inform the Foundation's and the City's comment letter on the Draft EIS during the Draft EIS comment period in early 2022?
- **Shared Vocabulary:** Words matter. Let's establish a common understanding of frequently used terms.



Project Context

The charrette focused on the “preferred alternatives,” including the Seattle Center/Uptown station at Republican Street. The other alternatives were not discussed in depth at this session.



Seattle Center Regional Context

Process and Timeline



Activity 1: “Whose voice are you representing today?”



Represented organizations:

- Seattle Center Foundation
- Seattle Department of Transportation
- Sound Transit
- Office of Planning and Community Development
- Council member Andrew Lewis' office
- Uptown Alliance
- Seattle Rep
- KEXP
- SIFF Film Center
- Climate Pledge Arena
- Ramboll
- Cornish Playhouse
- Pacific Northwest Ballet
- Seattle Opera
- Classical KING FM
- Essex (Expo Apartments)
- Seattle Center Advisory Commission
- Museum of Pop Culture
- Seattle Children's Theatre
- Chihuly Gardens2 and Glass
- Space Needle
- Festál
- Affiliated Engineers Inc
- Seattle Monorail Services
- Seattle Children's Museum
- Memorial Stadium
- A/NT Gallery

Activity 2: “Imagine Seattle Center in 2040...”

What is one thing you hope is still the same?



- Vibrant stadium
- Regional hub for cultured arts
- Openness / ability to see across campus from many directions
- Green space
- Variety of organizations
- International Fountain
- Welcoming, low barrier space for arts, entertainment and cultural events

What is one thing you would like to see change?



- Better parking
- More housing
- New transit that doesn't disrupt existing neighborhood
- Transit connections that connect Seattle Center into the region
- New Memorial Stadium
- One more multipurpose event space (20k sq ft)
- Regain usable gathering space (hardscape and utility)

Unearth Common Concerns

In the weeks leading up to the charrette, the Seattle Center Foundation conducted interviews with resident organizations. The below graphic illustrates common themes that emerged during these interviews. The questions that guided discussion during the breakout group sessions were derived from these themes.



Image Credit: Seattle Center Foundation

Questions:

- What successful outcomes would you like to see for your organization, Seattle Center and the greater community?
- What doubts or reservations do you have about this project?
- How do you stay solvent during construction?
- What could be done differently to help support the outcomes you want to see?

Table Summaries: Key Concerns

Table 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction impacts • Building back better • Surge issues • Ground level footprint
Table 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking during construction • Viability of surrounding organizations • Noise impacts and scheduling • Loss of outdoor community space to station entry
Table 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication during construction • Multimodal support • Crushload management • Project alignment with site
Table 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security during construction • Noise and vibrations (construction and long term) • Construction footprint (closure, alt routes, parking disruptions, smells, road wear) • Maintaining in-person attendance • Solvency of Seattle Rep & Seattle Center organizations

Table 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations being supported throughout process • Timing and visual discomfort of construction • Wayfinding during and after construction • Serving the community and cultural spaces • Diminished capacity for racial equity if NW rooms tenants are displaced
Table 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction timeline/impacts • Long term impact of noise and vibration • Need to update Seattle Center master plan • Safety at Aug Wilson Way
Table 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Viability of resident organizations • Long term vibration impacts • Future condition for Seattle Center campus
Table 8 Key Concerns:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existential threat to sensitive orgs • Navigating different business model for non-profits • Impact of the station disrupting the neighborhood



Ideas and Opportunities

Questions:

- What possible moves – major, big moves, or small nudges could turn those challenges around; convert them into opportunities?
- How would any of these moves help your concerns about the project, either during construction or after the station is built and operating?
- What gets better? What gets more complicated? And what other ideas do you have?



- NHL
 - TRAFFIC VOLUMES LESS THAN EXPECTED
 - CONCERT/EVENT
 - HIGHER TRAFFIC - LESS FAMILIAR USERS
 - REV HEADHOUSE ON MERCER
 * - LOCATION ACCESS TO CAMPUS
 - HEADHOUSE ON MERCER
 - THIN CROWDS
 - PUBLIC SAFETY
 - DRAINAGE + PERMANENT HANDSCAPE BY REP
 - TIMING
 - ASAP
 - MITIGATE SURGE
 CONCERNS: CONSTRUCTION FATIGUE
 * BALANCE SURGE OF RAIL USERS + EVENT PATRONS
 (6) L MITIGATE IMPACT ON EXIST OPERATIONS

Table Summaries: Key Opportunities

Table 1

- Activate August Wilson Way
- Integrate retail
- Consider arrival experience
- Consider alternative construction method
- Build back with pedestrian focus

Table 2

- Communicate and collaborate with resident orgs through process
- Financial support from the city for businesses
- Finding TOD opportunities to activate surrounding area
- Support multi-modalism

Table 3

- Sound Transit partnership w/SC and Resident Organizations
- Relocate east entrance
- Relocate NW room organizations
- Special attention to track
- Long term vibration impacts

Table 4

- Provide messaging to visitors about alt routes and closures
- Consider co-development opportunities
- Affordable and accessible artist housing / work space
- Develop smaller theater / gallery spaces for organizations
- Recognition of tribes/lands

Table 5

- Encourage cooperation with organizations
- Commission artists to help with visual discomfort of construction
- Invest in clear and effective wayfinding
- TOD to support artists, community, and provide flexible housing
- Financial support for organizations

Table 6

- Shift headhouse to Mercer
- Keep August Wilson Way and 2nd Ave intersection clear
- Control/mitigate flow/overflow at high intensity areas
- Balance surge of rail users and event patrons

Table 7

- Economic studies to determine what resident organizations need to survive construction
- Consider relocation for noise/vibration sensitive operations
- Look across next 50 years to determine SC needs

Table 8

- Coordinate concurrent projects to minimize disruption
- Envision an attractive and engaging theatre district
- Build back an environment that is more connected to and supportive of the community
- Broaden cultural arts experience
- "Keep Uptown Funky"

Top Takeaways from Community Feedback

1) Explore refinements to station and entrance locations:

- a. Shift Station east to Memorial Stadium:** explore a coordinated development opportunity with upcoming stadium redevelopment; this may add complexity to the process but would provide access to both sides of campus and mitigate impacts to many resident organizations.
- b. Shift Station west towards Uptown:** enable the cultural core of Seattle Center to remain intact during construction and move surge crowds away from campus; wayfinding challenges and increased pedestrian surges are possible if both station entries are on the same side of the Arena.
- c. Shift Entrance south to NW Rooms:** Consider Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) on and/or adjacent to campus to activate the area; increase density and accommodate uses such as art space, theatre, public space, artist lofts, art/cultural worker housing in addition to providing a new home for existing resident organizations.
- d. Shift Entrance north to Mercer:** move station entrance from 2nd Ave N to Mercer and Warren Ave N, potentially as part of a remodel of the Seattle Rep Theatre. An architecturally significant station entry would create an enhanced campus entry, while activating the street level experience.
- e. Stage Trains to handle surges:** Incorporate special trackwork to allow for staging of trains to handle major event surges for both alternatives.

2) Invest in Design befitting a civic campus and regional destination:

- a. Update Seattle Center Master Plan:** recently completed and forthcoming major infrastructure projects merit a re-envisioning of the Master Plan last updated in 2008.
- b. Craft Station Arrival Experience:** Architecture of entrance should celebrate the character and culture of Uptown/Seattle Center; respect the historical buildings around the site and integrate with the existing neighborhood and park space; enhance access to local businesses and cultural amenities; accommodate visitors and residents
- c. Urban Design Improvements on August Wilson Way:** as a significant internal circulation corridor on the campus that requires wayfinding and lighting enhancements to heighten the sense of safety and be a more welcoming place.

3) Acknowledge construction concerns, and plan ahead to reduce impacts as much as possible.

- a. Collate Lessons Learned from Local Infrastructure Projects:** Build on best practices from completed projects including Mercer Corridor and Climate Pledge Arena.
- b. Noise and Vibration Mitigations:** More information is needed to assess realistic noise and vibration thresholds during construction and operations, and to identify what is needed to allow resident organizations to continue operations through construction.
- c. Construction Schedules and Staging:** To continue operating and accommodating patrons during the lengthy construction process, resident organizations and the Seattle Center must have a direct line of communication with Sound Transit to enable collaboration and information sharing during construction.
- d. Financial Support:** Explore opportunities for financial support of organizations to mitigate construction impacts. Assess on-campus relocation opportunities for resident organizations.
- e. Keep Organizations Solvent:** The proverbial “don’t throw the baby out with the bath water” or “it’s not a successful operation if you kill the patient” phrases came out of almost every table, stressing the need for a comprehensive program to keep orgs solvent during the long construction. One specific suggestion was to explore a strategic leasing program between tenants and the city.
- f. Assess alternative construction approaches** that can mitigate circulation and access issues for Seattle Center campus, resident organizations, and patrons.
- g. Maintain as much access as possible** during construction by keeping Monorail fully operational and complete nearby SDOT projects prior to construction



Next Steps

- Seattle Center Foundation will continue work to prepare a Draft EIS comment letter that reflects input from Seattle Center resident organizations.
- City of Seattle staff will take charrette ideas and collate, review and share with Sound Transit in a detailed debrief. A summary report of the charrette will be made available to all participants. The Seattle Center department will continue to engage with its resident organizations through the DEIS process and station area planning.
- Sound Transit, in partnership with the City and community organizations, will coordinate further engagement and informational opportunities following DEIS publication.
- Resident organizations will take charrette experiences back to their staffs and stakeholders



HOPE'S

- TO FEELS SAFE
 - WELL LIT
 - ACCESSIBLE
 - NOTE (E) CONDITION IS AMONG DARKEST SPOTS ON CAMPUS
 - FEEL OPEN/OPENESS
- KEEP SEA. LTR. FEEL OF OPENESS
 - SIGHTLINES
 - ORIENTATION
- INCREASE "FLOW" TO SEA CTR
- EASY MONORAIL ACCESS
 - MONORAIL TO CONTINUE TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO/FR SEA CTR EVEN AFTER LIGHT RAIL OPENS AT SEA CTR - UTILITY REMAINS
- INTERSECTION A.W. WAY + REPUBLICAN AVENUE + 2ND INTERSECTION MUST BE KEPT CLEAR *
 - ACCOMMODATE SURGE ELSEWHERE

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