

BDS

PLANNING & URBAN DESIGN

To: Department of Community and Economic Development, City of SeaTac

From: BDS Planning & Urban Design

Re: Summary of Stakeholder Engagement for SeaTac City Center Visioning

Date: November 8, 2019

Introduction

To support the development of a vision and urban design framework for SeaTac City Center, BDS Planning & Urban Design engaged a cross-section of City Center stakeholders to better understand their current perspectives and priorities for the district. This memo summarizes the input received by the consultants during this engagement process.

Between July and November, 2019, BDS Planning engaged City Center residents, workers, property owners, and other stakeholders in a variety of formats, including: one-on-one interviews (in-person and phone); on-site focus groups; and a public Open House meeting at McMicken Elementary School. These consultant-led engagement efforts have been augmented by City-led engagement with Tye High School students; an online questionnaire; and briefings for City Commissions (Planning and Hotel/Motel).

Interviews

To get a candid assessment of City Center's current strengths and weaknesses, and future opportunities, BDS Planning interviewed more than 15 stakeholders who own property, operate businesses, or have other interest in City Center. While the content of these individual interviews is confidential, some key themes emerged from the group overall:

- Generate **Tax Revenue** (Sales & Land Value)
- Limit **Congestion & Maximize Mobility** (all modes, including air)
- Reflect **Airport to the West & Neighborhood to the East**
- Support local **food** opportunities both in **shopping & enterprise** for Workers & Residents
- Support **Housing Affordability** for Workers and Residents
- Protect **Adaptability** to Future Technology (e.g. Autonomous Vehicles)

Vision concepts most universally supported by the stakeholders interviewed included a Seattle "**South End Office and Employment Center**," emphasizing an emerging Class A office cluster or "**Aerotropolis**," a district whose future development intentionally leverages proximity to the airport as an organizing principle.

Focus Groups / Open House

Across all community engagement groups several **themes** and **areas of consensus** emerged:

- **Identity.** The term “City Center” does not resonate with the vast majority of people who live or work in the district; in fact, there is very little sense of a cohesive neighborhood *across* individual property developments.
- **Access.** People overwhelmingly value the proximity to transportation resources (bus, light rail, and airport); but desire improvements to pedestrian experience to access them (i.e. more sidewalks, crosswalks & pedestrian enhancements; especially along the Int’l Blvd and 32nd Ave S).
- **Lighting.** The darkness of much of the district after sunset is contributing to a public safety concern and preventing many community members from choosing to spend time outside without a vehicle.
- **Affordability.** The naturally occurring affordability of the area is a matter of critical concern to residents; displacement is one of the top concerns.
- **Pride.** Enhancements to the look and feel of highly public areas where residents and travelers overlap (especially along major thoroughfares like S 188th St., S 176th St., and the Int’l Blvd) would be a welcomed source of pride for the district.

The following maps show responses from all community engagement activities consolidated together.

Where could **sidewalks** be added or improved to make walking easier?



Where would you like to be able to **eat**?



Where would you like to be able to **shop** (retail/convenience)?



The following sections report on input from each of the individual engagement activities in more detail.

Airport Workers

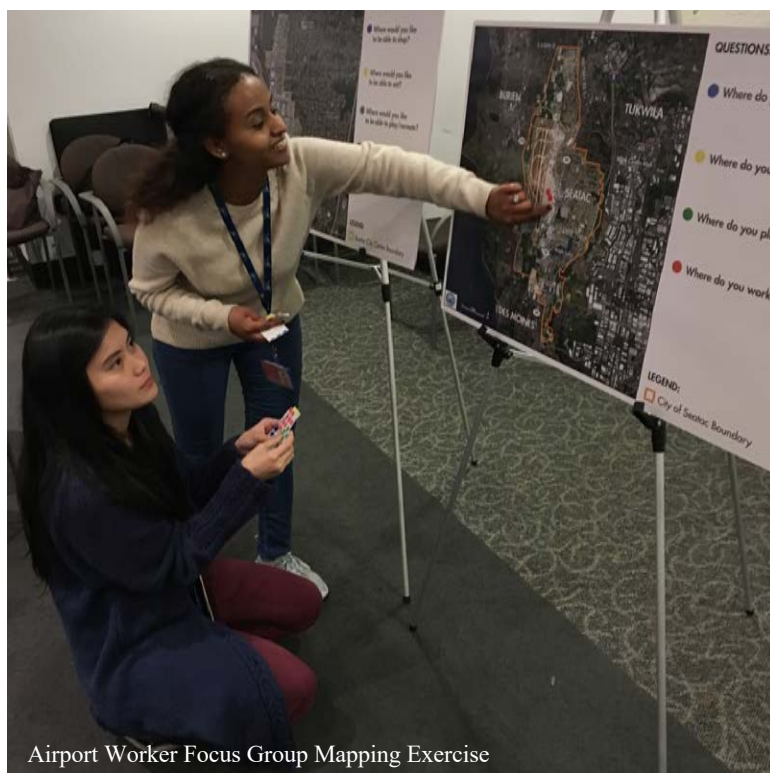


Participants in the Airport Worker Focus Group

A focus group of individuals who work at SeaTac Airport was convened at the airport on September 27th. Participants ranged from recently hired to longer-term employees. Participants were asked to share their perspectives about what they and their co-workers personally value about the City Center area, their fears for the district, and their top priorities for its improvement.

With respect to participants' most valued aspects of City Center, conversation centered around two main topics: 1) **proximity to major transportation** (freeways, light rail, and airport); and 2) **access to cultural, food, and educational assets** just north on Highway 99 in Tukwila (such as Saars Market and the Tukwila Library).

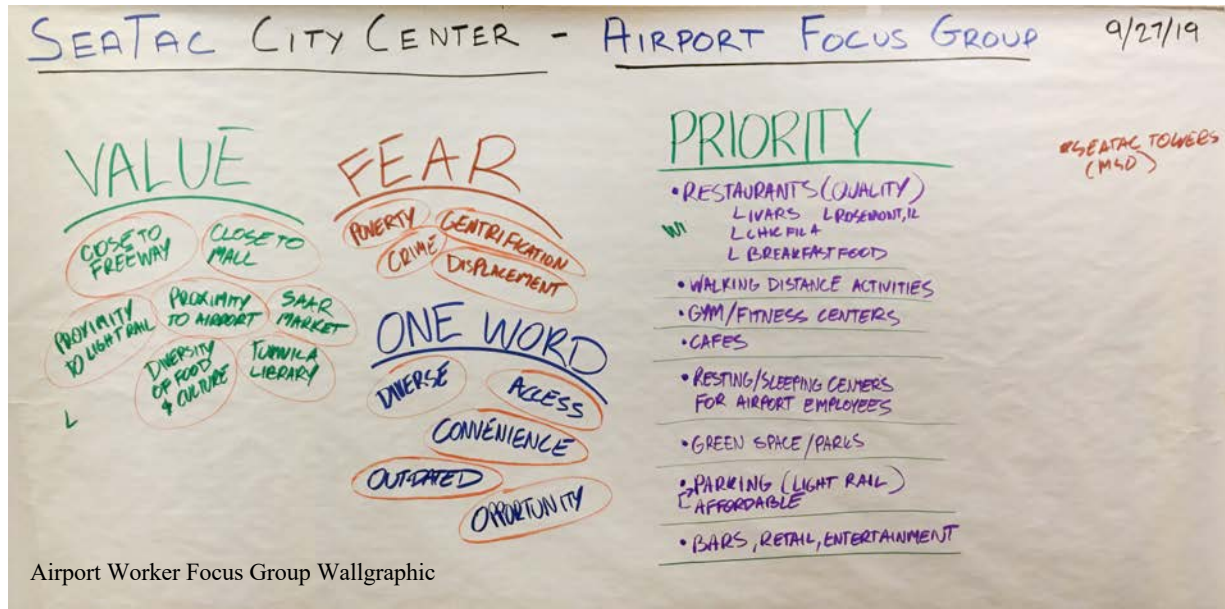
Conversely, airport workers' greatest fears for the district mostly had to do with the twin concerns of **displacement** and **gentrification** on one hand and **poverty** and **crime** on the other. Participants agreed that the look and feel of the City Center area was "outdated" and not commensurate with what first time visitors arriving from out of state typically expect of this



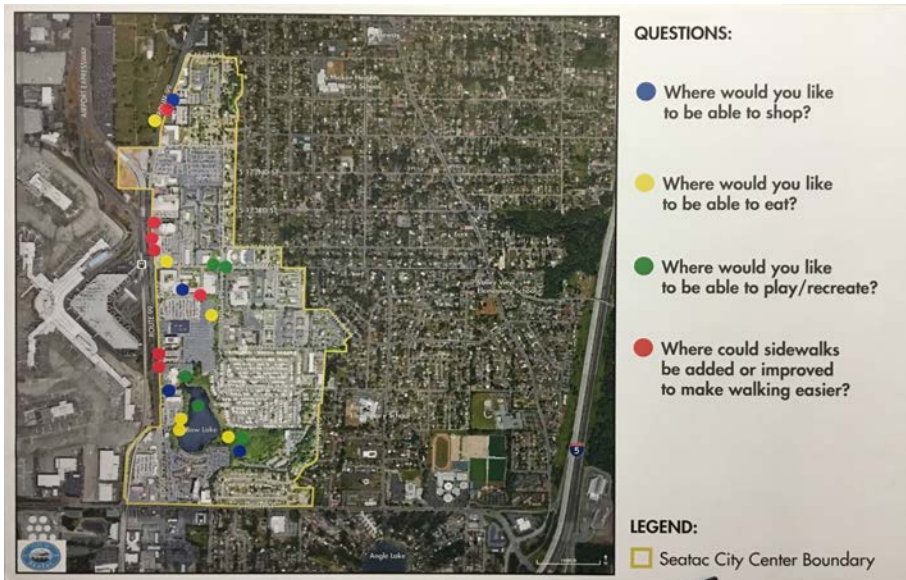
Airport Worker Focus Group Mapping Exercise

major metropolitan area.

Citing its incredible access to transportation and regional retail, participants described City Center in a single word as “**opportunity**.” One participant cited the transformation of Rosemont, IL, next to O’Hare airport, as an example of a mixed-use, airport-serving entertainment district with corporate facilities and office workers.



Top priorities expressed by this group focused primarily around activities they would like to be able to **walk to before, after, or between shifts** at their airport jobs. These included: quality **chain cafés and restaurants** (Ivar’s, Chick-fil-A, etc.), **gyms or fitness centers**, as well as **bars, retail**, or other forms of entertainment. Participants also expressed a desire for certain things at the airport itself, such as more affordable em-



ployee parking and secure places to sleep. An interactive mapping exercise revealed that airport workers primarily would like to see pedestrian improvements along Highway 99. It also suggests that participants see 176th Street and Bow Lake as potentially desirable places to play, shop, and eat.

Windsor Heights

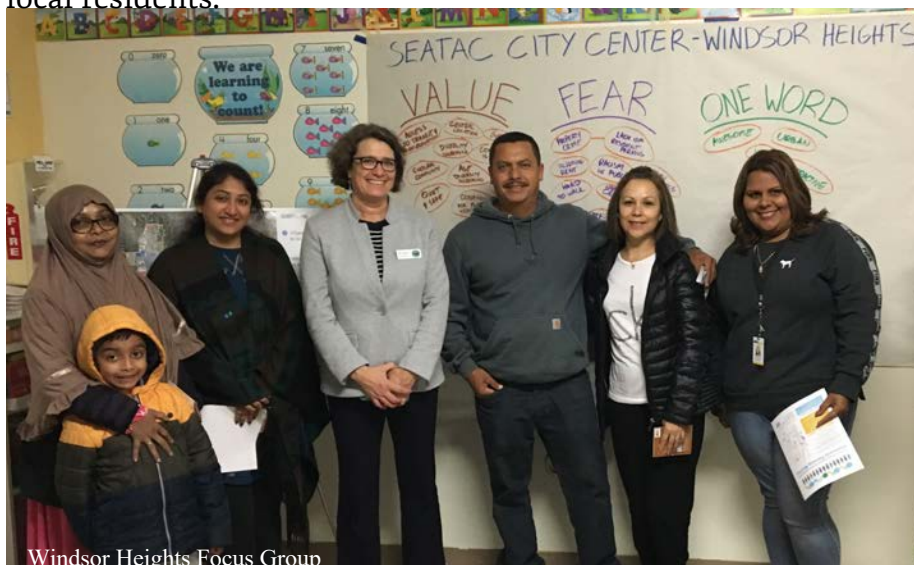
The first of two resident-oriented focus groups in City Center was held with residents at the Windsor Heights apartment complex on October 9. The group ranged in age from young people, to young families, to parents with adult children. Tenure of residence in City Center was similarly diverse, ranging from five years to over 20.

Asked about elements of City Center they most valued today answers fell primarily into two themes: 1) Proximity and ease of **access to transportation** resources and 2) an increasingly diverse (with respect to ethnicity and age) **cultural community** in the district.

Conversely, when asked about fears for City Center, focus group participants cited a perception of increased **property crime and theft**, increasing rent, lack of consistently available **parking**, and difficulty of walking due to **poor or absent sidewalks**. More than one participant expressed the parking issue in terms of economics and personal safety, explaining that the need to park far from home resulted in lost time searching for parking many blocks away and then needing to walk 15 or 20 minutes back to their home, often in the dark and without consistent sidewalks.

One focus group participant cited a stark fear of more open, brazen, and even violent **racism** in the district. This same individual described a recent incident in which their middle-aged domestic partner and father of two was physically assaulted right outside of their home, apparently for no other reason than because of the partner's ethnic identity. Police responded, but the perpetrator was never apprehended.

Focus Group participants top priorities for improving City Center are deeply informed by these values and fears. Some expressed a desire for **more diverse food options** (i.e. Halal) like the Saar's Market in Tukwila. Others were most concerned with the improvement of their personal safety through **better sidewalk infrastructure** and **more well-lit streets** and public spaces. Several participants described their priority as improvements to Highway 99 to make the area more **beautiful** and a **source of pride** for local residents.



Windsor Heights Focus Group



Windsor Heights Focus Group Mapping Exercise

Bow Lake

A large facilitated discussion and listening session was held at the Bow Lake clubhouse on November 5 at the Home Owner Association's regular meeting. Over 40 Bow Lake residents participated in the visioning exercise, providing their values, fears, priorities, and a one-word description of SeaTac City Center.



Bow Lake Facilitated Discussion

Participants most valued **access to amenities and transportation, diversity of development types/uses**, and the **walking proximity to services** within SeaTac City Center. Bow Lake residents feared the **loss of their home and displacement** from new development; **violent crime** and gang activity; **negative impacts** from the constant flow of **travelers**; and accuracy of information from city plans and staff.

Participants were provided with sticky notes to provide their priorities in a more comfortable setting. Priorities centered around the development of **pedestrian oriented infrastructure** including more **sidewalks and lighting**; keeping Bow Lake **affordable** and avoiding re-zoning/displacement; and **community-centric development on S 188th & Pacific Hwy S**.

When asked to describe SeaTac city center in one word, participants used “disjointed”, “cars”, “traffic”, “parking”, “confusion”, “congestion”, “developing”, and “overbuilt”. The overall theme of this exercise highlights the **auto-centric nature** of the built environment in City Center.

Participants were asked to interact with the City Center map by placing geographically specific color-coded stickers. Bow Lake residents wanted to shop along Pacific Hwy S, on S 188th St, and eat around S 188th and 38th Ave. They wanted sidewalk improvements along 38th Ave S, 32nd Ave S, and the Bow Lake Elementary School.

Open House

A community Open House was held at McMicken Heights Elementary School on October 23. Participants were asked to provide their values, fears, priorities, and a one-word description of the City Center. They were also able to provide feedback through the interactive mapping exercise, and city-led mapping stations focused on vehicular and pedestrian constraints and opportunities.

Participants most valued aspects surrounding City Center converged amongst four themes: 1) **Access to transit/light rail**; 2) An **inviting environment** for travelers and visitors; 3) A variety of **shopping opportunities**; and 4) a focus on **community** and its residents.

Conversely, participants feared **displacement of residents and businesses** due to zoning changes that would allow more airport centric services like parking. Participants also highlighted **rising crime**, an increase in **traffic congestion**, and more **noise** associated with the airport.

Top priorities for participants included **balancing the needs of both residents and visitors**. This included a focus on the development of the airport industry, convenience for both tourists and those living in SeaTac, as well as building upon a **welcoming attractive place** that reflects its **diverse population**. Participants also prioritized multi-purpose trails for **biking and walking**, **family-oriented shops**, and the **preservation** of senior living facilities like Bow Lake.

Participants used the words “under-developed”, “incohesive”, and “multi-cultural” in the one-word engagement exercise.

The interactive mapping exercise revealed that most participants shop in four nodes including Burien, Southwest Renton, South Center Mall, and North SeaTac along S 160th St/Pacific Hwy S.

Participants frequented the businesses along Pacific Hwy S, in Des Moines, and Burien. They recreated at Angle Lake Park and along the Puget Sound north of Des Moines. Some Participants worked within SeaTac, while the majority worked between Tukwila and Renton.

When participants were asked to identify where they “would like to be able to” shop and eat, they focused activity around the intersection of S 176th St./Pacific Hwy S, stretching east along S 176th St. Other areas included S 170th St./Pacific Hwy S and S 188th St./Pacific Hwy S. Participants wanted more recreational opportunities Southeast of Bow Lake, and improvements in sidewalks throughout the City Center subarea.



SeaTac Open House
Mapping Exercise



SeaTac Open House Mapping Exercise



SeaTac Open House Engagement



SeaTac Open House Mapping Exercise



SeaTac Open House Interactive Wallgraphic