

# community control?

re-framing transit-oriented  
development in mt. baker

NEIGHBORHOOD RESILIENCE SERIES

03

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## What tools do you need?

Mt. Baker is poised to experience a lot of change in the coming months and years. Without input and active organizing from the existing community, and support from the city, changes in the neighborhood can promote gentrification and displacement rather than supporting the future health and resilience of Mt. Baker.

This guide is intended to explore some tools community members can use to shape the landscape around them in order to support people vulnerable to real estate speculation and rising property values. This research represents only a fraction of the available resources on Mt. Baker, land use, development in the area, and philosophies and approaches to community control.

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## Preface



**Our idea of community control is situated firmly in supporting communities of color, low-income people, and folks who have historically been marginalized and vulnerable to market forces.**

**If you are thinking about organizing for community control, think carefully about who you are, if you have historically had the right to property ownership and equitable participation, and whether your community control excludes those who are more in need than you.**

## What are existing approaches to shaping the land around you?

When we say 'community control', we mean the freedom to influence and shape the place you need so that your needs can be provided for.

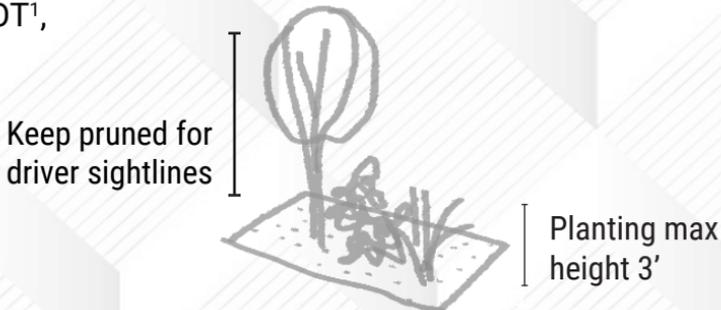
Urban agriculture is one of many ways in which you can have control in your community. You can grow food in parking strips, raise animals, tend to a plot in a P-Patch community garden, or meet other people and learn new skills through an existing and robust garden community such as the Beacon Food Forest.

The following pages highlight the most salient aspects of what city municipal code allows and doesn't allow in regards to parking strips and urban livestock, with additional resources at the end of this zine.



# Growing Food in Planting Strips

Planting strips are the unpaved area between the sidewalk and the street. In these areas, according to SDOT<sup>1</sup>,



**\* You can plant vegetables and berries (but not fruit trees)**

**\* You can plant trees and install raised beds & other structures  
(\*with a free Street Use permit)**

Urban soils could be contaminated with lead and other chemicals. For help getting a **free soil test**, call the Garden Hotline at (206) 633-0224  
Language interpretation is available.

<sup>1</sup> SDOT Gardening in Planting Strips, <http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/SDOT/CAMs/cam2305.pdf>

# Urban Livestock

In August 2010, Seattle City Council changed municipal land use code to expand urban agriculture opportunities<sup>1</sup>. As a result, you may have up to:

**8** chickens or other fowl (but no roosters)

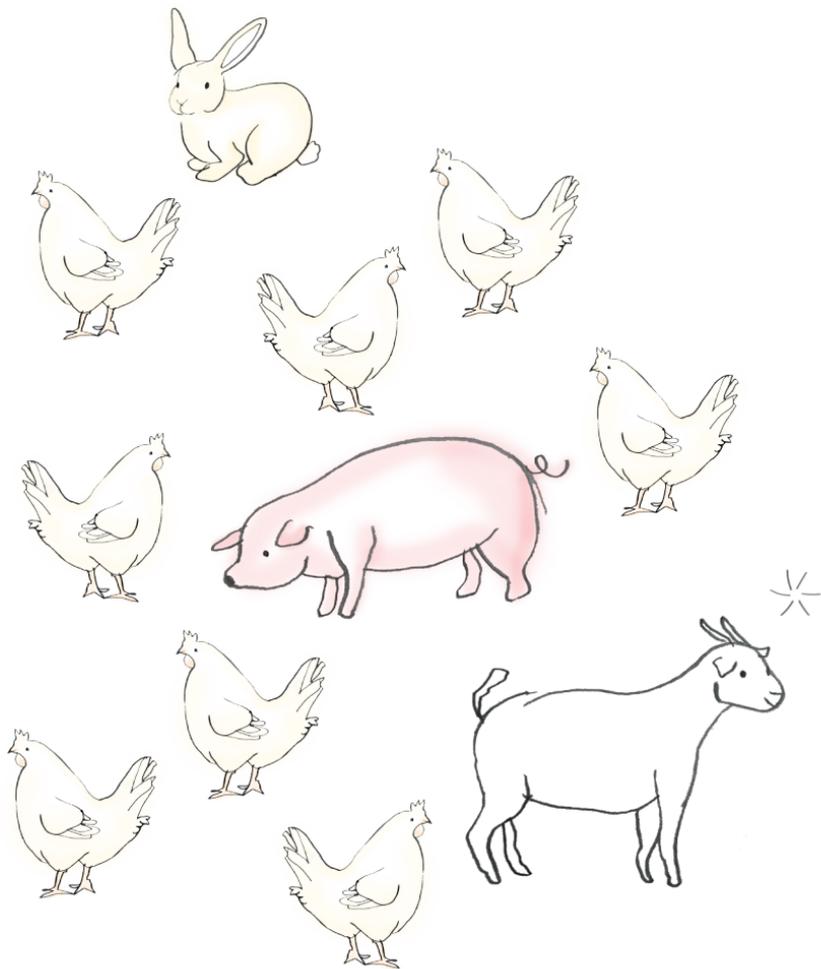
**3** small animals (cats, dogs, rabbits, mini pot belly pig, mini goat)

**4** beehives (register them with the Department of Agriculture)

\* Farm animals (cows, sheep, horses, etc) are only permitted on lots greater than 20,000 ft<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections Tip 244, <http://www.seattle.gov/DPD/Publications/CAM/cam244.pdf>



# P-Patch Program

P-Patch Community Gardens are managed by the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods. There is no fee to garden in a P-Patch, but you do need to contribute 8 volunteer hours yearly.

To put yourself on a waiting list for up to two gardens, you can call (206) 684-0264, email [p-patch.don@seattle.gov](mailto:p-patch.don@seattle.gov), or fill out an online form<sup>1</sup>. You'll need to provide your name, address, zip code, phone number, and email.

Nearby gardens:

Estelle Street: 19 plots, 1-2 years wait time

Courtland Place: 23 plots, 0-6 months

Hillside Garden: 0-6 months, slated for relocation\*

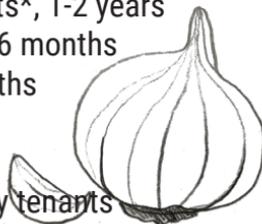
Rainier Vista Sunrise Garden: 24 plots\*, 1-2 years

Rainier Vista Snoqualmie Garden: 18 plots\*, 1-2 years

Rainier Vista Dakota Garden: 36 plots, 0-6 months

Bradner Gardens Park: 60 plots, 0-6 months

Colman Park: 40 plots, 1-2 years



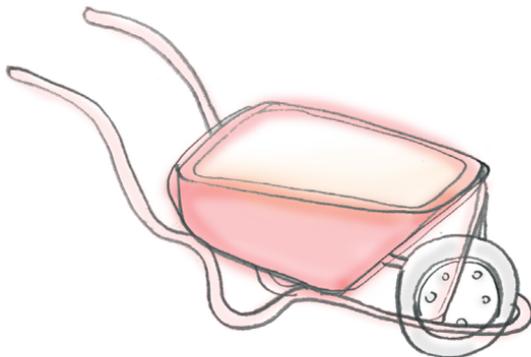
\*Plots reserved for Seattle Housing Authority tenants

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<sup>1</sup> P-Patch Community Gardening, <https://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/programs-and-services/p-patch-community-gardening/how-to-sign-up>

# Beacon Food Forest

If you're interested in gardening with community but the P-Patch model isn't the right fit for you, you may be interested in getting involved with the Beacon Food Forest.



The Beacon Food Forest is a 5+ acre edible urban forest garden near Jefferson Park. The land is owned by Seattle Public Utilities and stewarded by community members. The BFF relies on donations and grants, which are all written and submitted by volunteers. Anyone can volunteer and participate at the garden. And anyone can pick things grown there!<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://beaconfoodforest.org>



**So...**

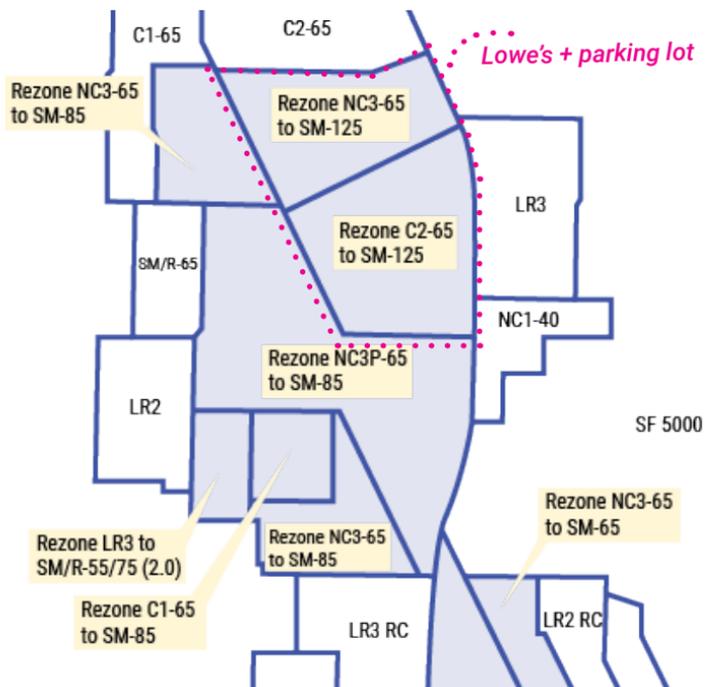
**We have a lot of small strategies for community control. But how can those ideas scale up to something a little bigger?**

# Introducing the Lowe's Site

After years of difficult debates, the City Council's planning committee approved upzoning in the Mount Baker transit hub area in 2014.



The proposal rezoned several parcels of land near the Light Rail station, increasing height limits.



# The Lowe's Site

The most controversial change was for 2 parcels that are the current site of a Lowe's and adjoining parking lot, which were rezoned from accommodating 6 stories to 12.<sup>1</sup> The heights, in particular, have troubled residents – the tallest buildings at the nearby North Beacon Hill station are 65 feet. A building at the Lowe's site can now be 125 feet tall (labelled as SM-125 on the zoning map on the previous page).

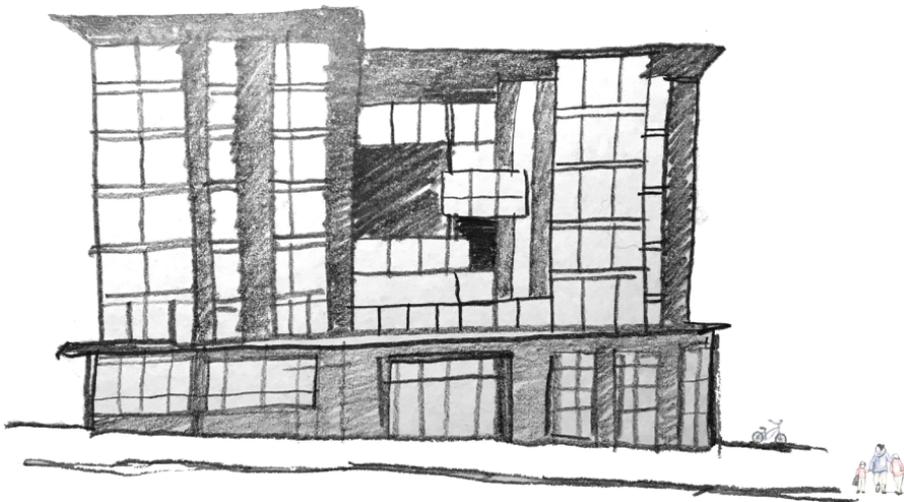
As a **huge** parcel (**13 acres!**) in close proximity to public transit, any development there has the potential to radically change Mt. Baker's future and identity.

But if Lowe's has a long-term lease, then why the re-zone?

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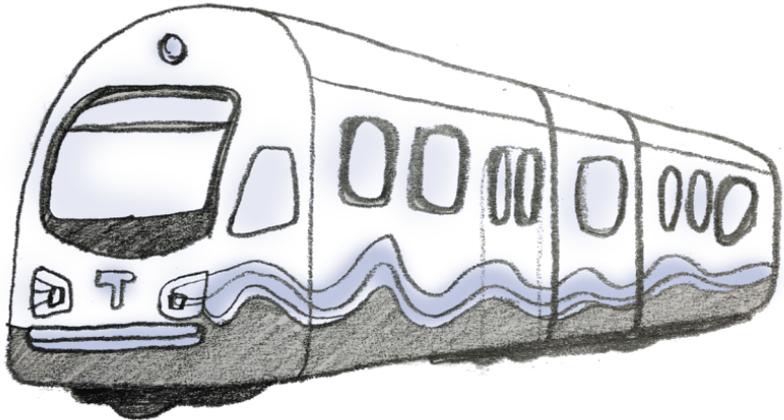
1 <https://www.seattlemet.com/articles/2014/5/6/mount-baker-upzone-draws-critics-applause-may-2014>

The primary goal for re-zoning Lowes is to promote transit-oriented development in Mt. Baker, creating a 'town center' or 'heart' of the neighborhood around the light rail station.



# What is Transit Oriented Development?

Sound Transit defines Transit Oriented Development (TOD) as “planning and building a mix of housing, business and other amenities close to transit stations.”



“When clustered around a station, this development increases ridership by making it easier to people to use transit, supports local businesses and make neighborhoods better places to live, work and spend time.”<sup>1</sup>

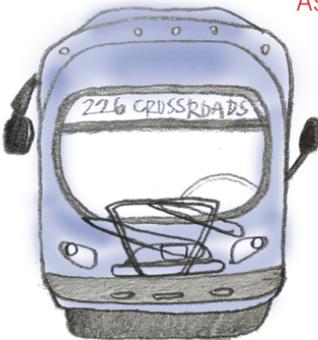
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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.soundtransit.org/tod>



*“TOD near stations can create important community, environmental, and economic benefits by providing new job and housing opportunities; efficient land use; and lower energy consumption, particularly in underserved areas.”*

“Implementing Transit Oriented Development in Seattle: Assessment and Recommendations for Action”  
(Seattle DPD Final Report, August 2013)



***But is that the whole story?***

Without safeguards in place, the implementation of TOD can cause displacement. Housing and land values around new transit often increase, pushing out low-income residents and small businesses.<sup>1</sup>



In nearby Columbia City, property values skyrocketed in the aftermath of introducing Sound Transit light rail and dense, walkable, business corridors in proximity to transit. In the past year alone, property values have increased 16.4%<sup>2</sup>, and are projected to continue rising.

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1 Seattle Social Equity Tools for Transit Communities

2 Zillow



A rendering of what the site could look like developed to the new maximum heights

One of the many goals expressed by city officials is “to create a campus-like atmosphere with a large employer or college as an anchor tenant.”<sup>1</sup>

## **Mike O'Brien**

Planning, Land Use, and Sustainability Committee Chair

*“It would be really exciting if the next Google wanted to locate there.”*

*“We want to do everything we can to attract private investors to that neighborhood.”*



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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.seattlemet.com/articles/2014/5/6/mount-baker-upzone-draws-critics-applause-may-2014>

# Existing Proposals

The Lowe's site upzone is part of the "North Rainier Hub Urban Village" plan, developed by the Office of Community Planning & Development. The plan's guidelines are generally focused on the neighborhood changing through new private development.

## North Rainier



We plan to create a new town center at the Mount Baker light rail station.

## Urban Village Plan Excerpts

“New development sites should be broken up with shared-use, mid-block connections wherever feasible...for example the Lowe’s site, which has nearly 1,000 feet of continuous frontage on both Rainier Ave and MLK Jr Way.”

“Taller buildings would be particularly appropriate for sites at the core of the Town Center, such as the Lowe’s site.”

“For the Lowe’s site, a mid-block pedestrian connection on McClellan St would be particularly beneficial.”



# Equitable TOD

It's true that Transit-Oriented Development can inflate property values, and Mandatory Housing Affordability can expire before transit projects (which can last decades) are complete. Fortunately there are a lot of approaches to equitable TOD to look to for inspiration.

One notable approach is through the use of Community Land Trusts. In some instances, cities can support the creation of Community Land Trusts with Affordable Housing Trust Funds, in which municipalities purchase land to remove it from the market.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mitod.org/communitylandtrusts>

# SouthCORE

South Communities Organizing for Racial & Regional Equity, a coalition of South Seattle and South King County-based organizations have publicly supported upzoning the Lowe's site. The group's mission is "to be an organized voice for community-controlled and inspired development," and they support local community-owned businesses, cultural institutions and affordable housing.

SouthCORE is also supporting approaches to equitable transit-oriented development near the upcoming Graham St. light rail station. The group has won legislation for Mandatory Housing Affordability Residential (MHA-R), and worked to include racial equity measures in Seattle's 2035 Comprehensive Plan. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://pugetsoundsage.org/programs/community-leadership/southcore/>

Community Land Trusts preserve permanent affordability of land and property in proximity to transit and new development surrounding it. A recent study found that CLTs carry out a range of economic development functions in communities, including:

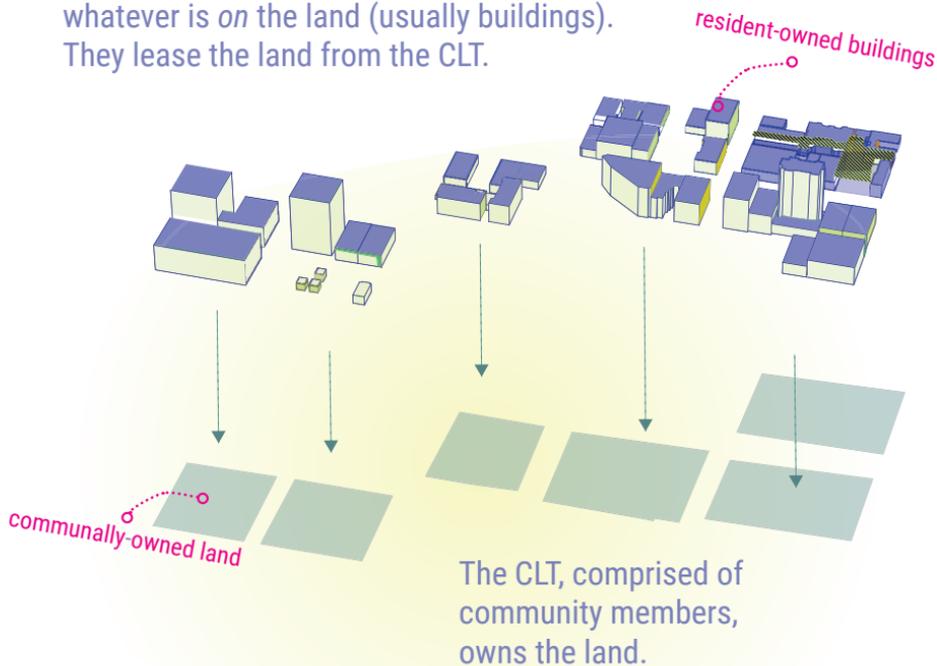
**Land acquisition, project development, and property management**

**Spearheading community engagement and advocacy efforts**

**Creating new commercial enterprises**

# What is a community land trust?

A homeowner, cooperative, or non-profit owns whatever is *on* the land (usually buildings). They lease the land from the CLT.



## Case Study:

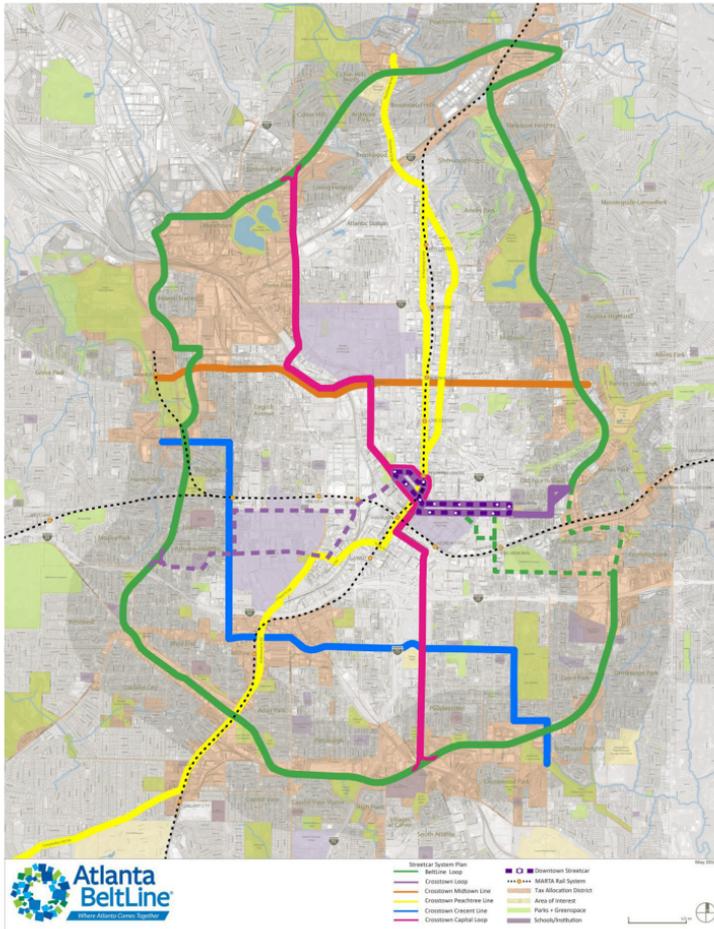
### Atlanta Land Trust Collaborative (ALTC) Atlanta, Georgia

ALTC is a collaboration between The Atlanta BeltLine Partnership, the Atlanta Housing Association of Neighborhood-based Developers and the Annie E. Casey Foundation – Atlanta Civic Site, and a group of more than 30 public, private, nonprofit and community organizations. They are spearheading the creation of Community Land Trusts to promote equitable TOD alongside the ongoing development of the Atlanta BeltLine<sup>1</sup>

ALTC functions as both a citywide land trust and as a “central server” to neighborhood organizations stewarding their own properties.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://beltline.org>



# MOBILIZATION + STRATEGIES

**How can community organizing and mobilization create strategies and spaces to resist commercial displacement and build the local economy?**

**Organizing begins with imagining futures -- what do you picture in a 13-acre site? What do you picture the future of your neighborhood looking like?**



**TO GET A SENSE OF SCALE**

**13 ACRES = 3,496 PARKING SPACES**

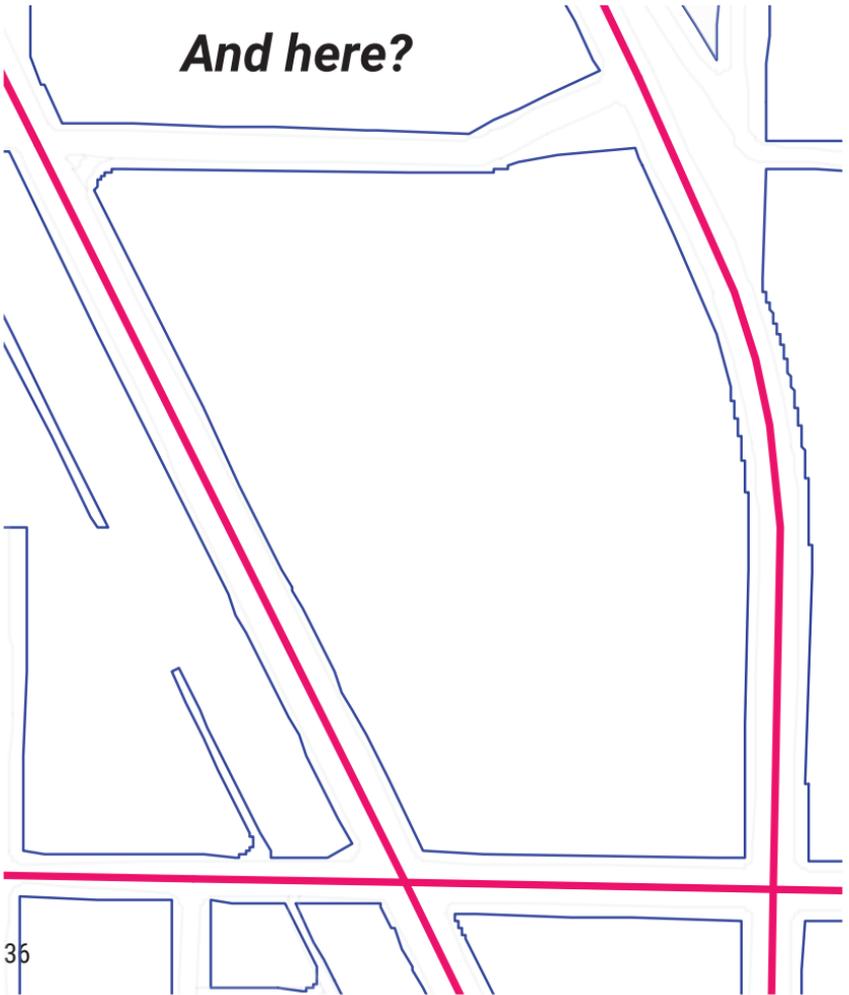


***Now, what could you see here?***



***And here?***

***And here?***



## SOME CONTACTS + RESOURCES

### Principal Urban Designer

Lyle Bicknell  
(206) 684-0763  
lyle.bicknell@seattle.gov



### Design Review Board

Lisa Rutzick, Program Manager  
lisa.rutzick@seattle.gov  
(206) 386-9049



### Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections

<http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/>

### Seattle Department of Neighborhoods

<http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods>

### Seattle Department of Transportation

<http://www.seattle.gov/transportation>

### Seattle Public Utilities

<http://www.seattle.gov/util>

## FOOD AND GARDENING RESOURCES

Seattle Public Utilities: Growing Food in Planting Strips

<http://www.seattle.gov/util/environmentconservation/mylawngarden/foodgardening/plantingstrips/>

Seattle Public Utilities: Growing Healthy Soil

<http://www.seattle.gov/util/EnvironmentConservation/MyLawn-Garden/CompostSoil/GrowingHealthySoil/index.htm>

City of Seattle: Growing Food in the City (19 languages available)

[http://www.seattle.gov/util/cs/groups/public/@spu/@conservation/documents/webcontent/02\\_013331.pdf](http://www.seattle.gov/util/cs/groups/public/@spu/@conservation/documents/webcontent/02_013331.pdf)

King Conservation District Soil Testing Program

<http://kingcd.org/programs-farm-management-soil-testing.htm>

Seattle Department of Neighborhoods: P-Patch Community Gardening

<https://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/programs-and-services/p-patch-community-gardening/how-to-sign-up>



