



AGENDA
DES MOINES CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE AND
STUDY SESSION JOINT MEETING WITH PLANNING COMMISSION

City Council Chambers
21630 11th Avenue S, Suite C
Des Moines, Washington
Thursday, September 3, 2026 - 5:00 PM

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

5:00 p.m. - 5:50 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE ITEMS

- Item 1. **Des Moines Creek Estuary - 30% Update** – 50 Minutes
Staff Presentation: Alex Johnson, Civil Engineer

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

6:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Comments from the public must be limited to the items of business on the Study Session Agenda. Please sign in prior to the meeting and limit your comments to three (3) minutes.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

- Item 1. **Downtown Planning Scenarios & Zoning Workshop**
Staff Presentation: Rebecca Deming, Community Development Director

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NEXT MEETING DATE

September 10, 2026 City Council Workshop

ADJOURNMENT

Members of the public who wish to provide comment during the meeting via Zoom must register in advance. To register, please email cityclerk@desmoineswa.gov by 12:00 p.m. (noon) on the Wednesday before the meeting.

City Council meeting can be viewed live on the City's website, Comcast Channel 21/321, on the City's [YouTube](#) channel or via [Zoom](#).

[Projected Future Agenda Items](#)

**City Council
AGENDA ITEM**

**BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL
City of Des Moines, WA**

SUBJECT: Des Moines Creek Estuary - 30% Update

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Estuary 30% Update PowerPoint

FOR AGENDA OF:

September 3, 2026

DEPT OF ORIGIN:

Public Works

DATE SUBMITTED:

August 24, 2026

CLEARANCES:

Public Works

Purpose and Recommendation

The purpose of this agenda item is to provide the City Council and the public with a project update at the thirty percent design milestone. This item is presented for information only; no motion is required.

Strategic Plan Priority

Natural and Built Environment

Background

The Des Moines Creek drainage basin provides habitat for coho salmon, chum salmon, steelhead, and cutthroat trout, all of which have been historically identified in the lower reaches of Des Moines Creek. The basin covers 5.8 square miles. Des Moines Creek is 3.5 miles long and flows from an elevation of approximately 350 feet to Puget Sound at Des Moines Beach Park. The upper watershed is heavily urbanized and includes a mix of residential and commercial land, as well as a portion of Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. The lower reaches of the creek near Des Moines Beach Park provide some of the most heavily used fish habitat within the watershed, due primarily to their proximity and accessibility to Puget Sound.

The Salmon Habitat Plan for the Green/Duwamish and Central Puget Sound Watershed (Water Resource Inventory Area 9, or WRIA 9) identifies the Des Moines Creek Estuary Project as a salmon-recovery capital project that aligns with regional Chinook salmon recovery goals. Project goals within the estuary include restoring and securing access to the stream, creating safe fish passage, removing rock armoring from the streambank, and creating a pocket estuary.

Initial scoping considerations for the project include improving riparian vegetation, removing approximately 500 feet of hard armoring and fill, increasing nearshore habitat, and creating a pocket estuary at the stream mouth. The project also seeks to address flooding at Des Moines Beach Park, which has been subject to historical flooding as a result of sediment deposition and narrow hard armoring. The project will identify potential improvements to address these flooding impacts while bolstering both shoreline and estuary habitat.

The City applied for a King County Flood Reduction Grant in the summer of 2022, and the Des Moines Creek Estuary Project was awarded \$250,000. The Agreement for Award of Flood Reduction Grant Funds was approved by the City Council at its April 13, 2023, meeting. This funding supported the first phase of the project, consisting of site assessment and ten percent preliminary engineering design. These funds have been fully expended to complete the initial site assessment and advance the project to the alternatives analysis phase.

With the support of WRIA 9, the City applied for Cooperative Watershed Management (CWM) grant funding in the spring of 2023. The King County Flood Control District voted unanimously to award the project the requested amount of \$250,000. The Agreement for Award of CWM Grant Funds was approved by the City Council at its December 14, 2023, meeting.

The City has since applied for and been awarded an additional \$360,000 through subsequent Flood Reduction and CWM grant programs. The associated agreements were approved by the City Council at its January 22, 2026, meeting. This funding carries the project through sixty percent design.

Discussion

The thirty percent design milestone largely defines the space allocated to each element of a design. The goal of this presentation is to show the City Council and the public the project limits and the extent of the proposed changes at Des Moines Beach Park. Staff will also review the project's public outreach plan.



Des Moines
WATERLAND CITY

Des Moines Creek Estuary Restoration

Preferred Alternative 30% Design Update

Presented by:

Alex Johnson (Staff)
Paul Fendt, PE (Parametrix)
Nikki Redden, PE (Parametrix)
September 3rd, 2026

Presentation Goals

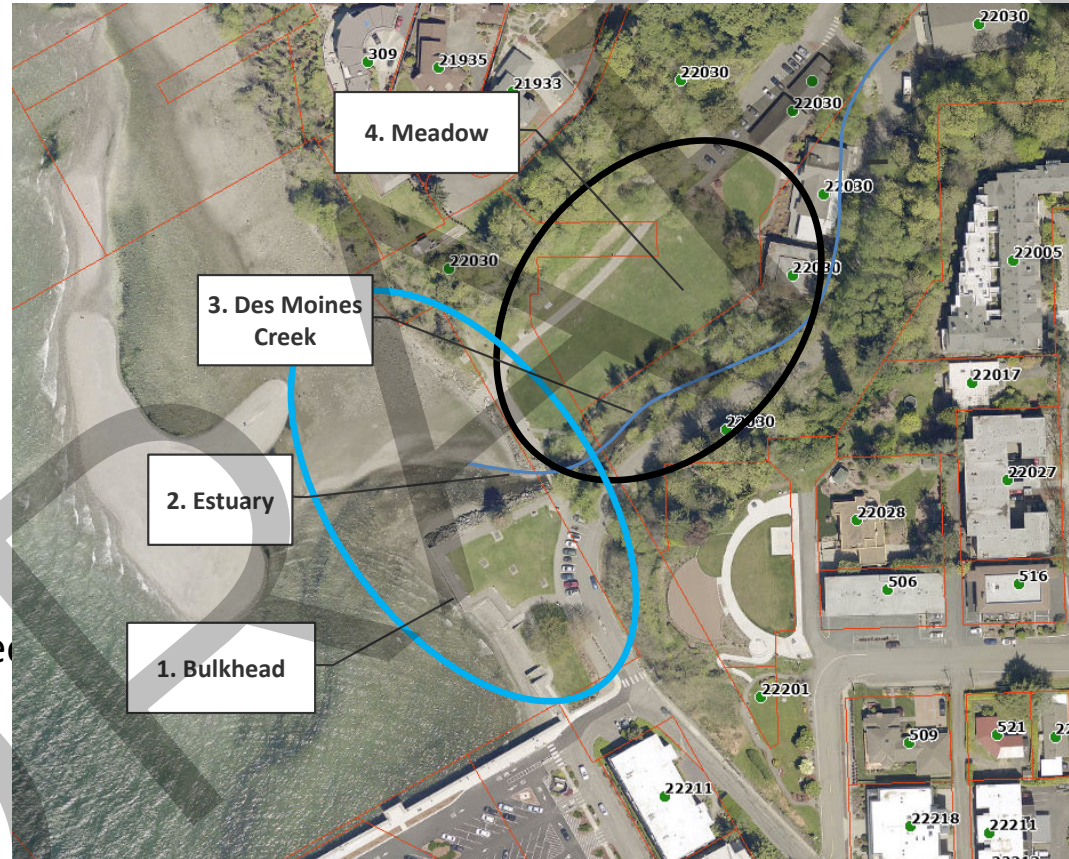
- Informational update to Council on project status
 - Council has requested more frequent design updates on key City projects
- Design Team and City Staff will present 30% updated renderings and explain changes from 10%
- Public Outreach/Engagement Plan will also be reviewed
 - Staff welcomes Council feedback on the plan



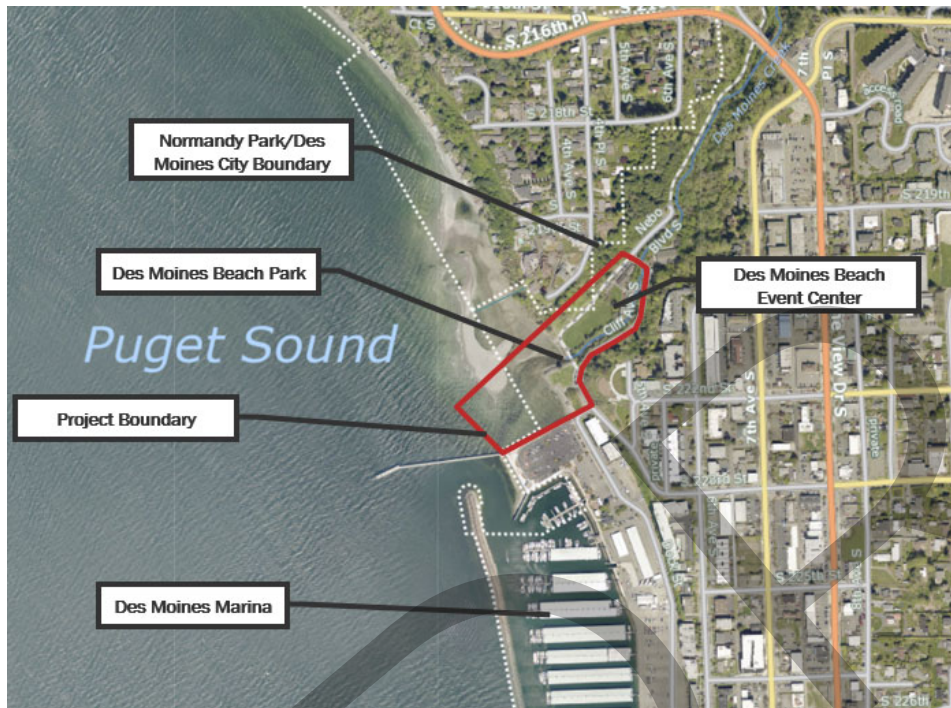
Project Background

Recap

- January 9th, 2025 – Presented project alternatives to the Environmental Committee and moved to 10% design based on Council's preferred alternative
 - Design has progressed based on preferred alternative decided on 1/9/25
- February 13th, 2025 - Updated Environmental Committee and Council on 10% design with renderings and fly-through video
- **Today** - 30% design update of preferred alternative



Project Background



Site Flooding at High Tides



Bulkhead Failure



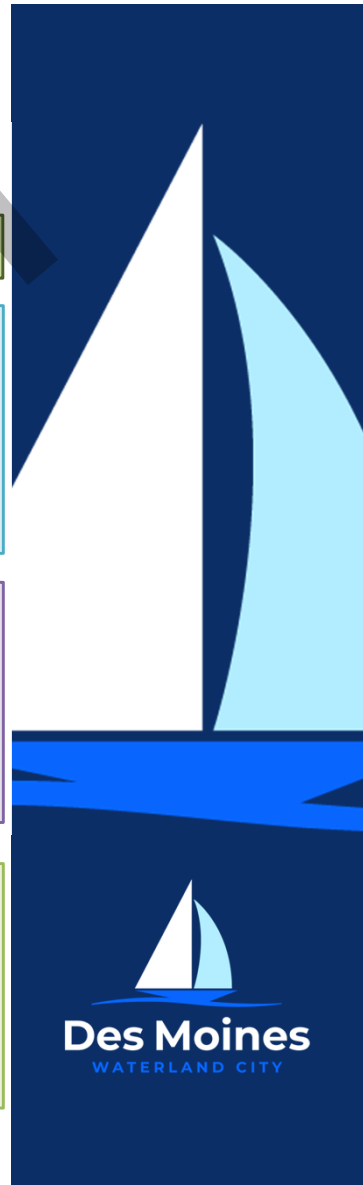
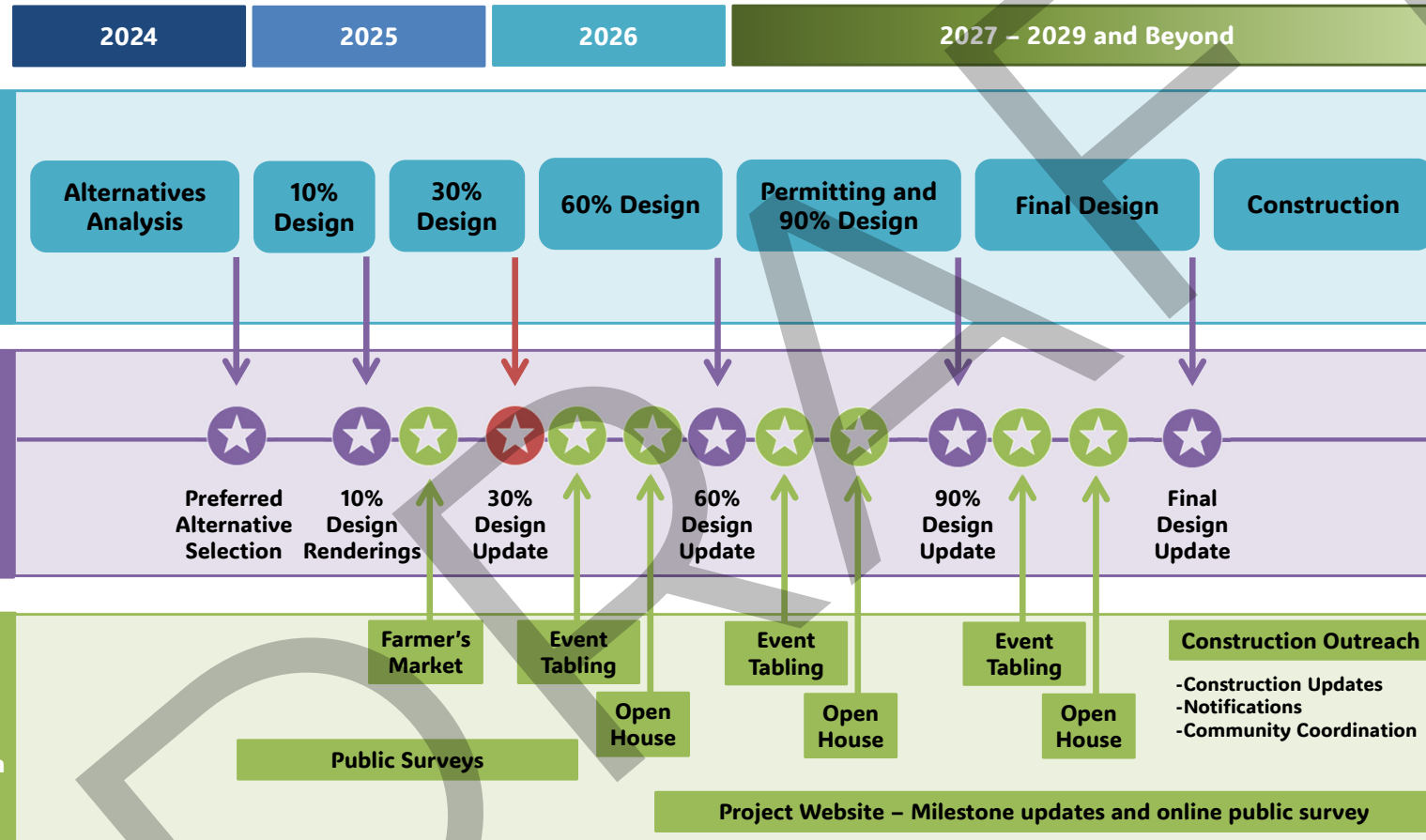
Project Goals and Funding

Goals	
	Habitat Restoration
	Flood Reduction / Failing Infrastructure
	Park Usage and Public Access

Funding
Design funded through 90% design via: – King County Salmon Recovery Grant – King County Flood Control District Grant – Actively seeking additional grant funding for the rest of design costs
Construction funding – \$1M set aside from Park Levy Fund – Will be seeking additional grant funding for the rest of construction costs



Project Timeline



Preferred Alternative 30% Update

Existing Estuary and Beach



Preferred Alternative 30% Update

Proposed Estuary and Beach



Preferred Alternative 30% Update

Existing Meadow View



Preferred Alternative 30% Update

Proposed Meadow View



Preferred Alternative 30% Update

Existing Bulkhead Park View



Preferred Alternative 30% Update

Proposed Bulkhead Park View



Flythrough



Beach Park Impacts

Areas:

Existing Meadow Area – 37,000 sf

Proposed Meadow Area – 31,000 sf

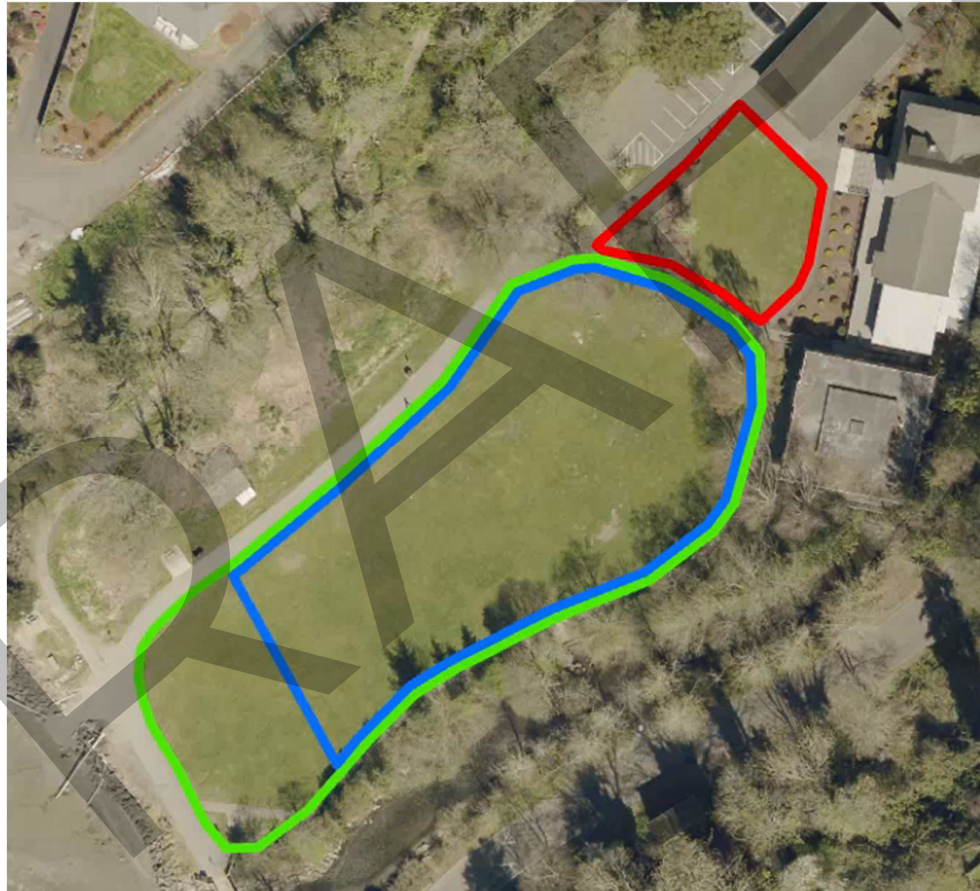
Lawn Area Connection – 5,000 sf

Change:

- Proposed Meadow Area Net Change: -6,000 sf (-16%)
- Proposed + Connection Net Change: -1,000 sf (-3%)

Construction Impacts:

- Beach Park will be closed during construction
 - Revenue will be lost, however, this presents an opportunity to make additional improvements
 - Trail and road access will be maintained during construction

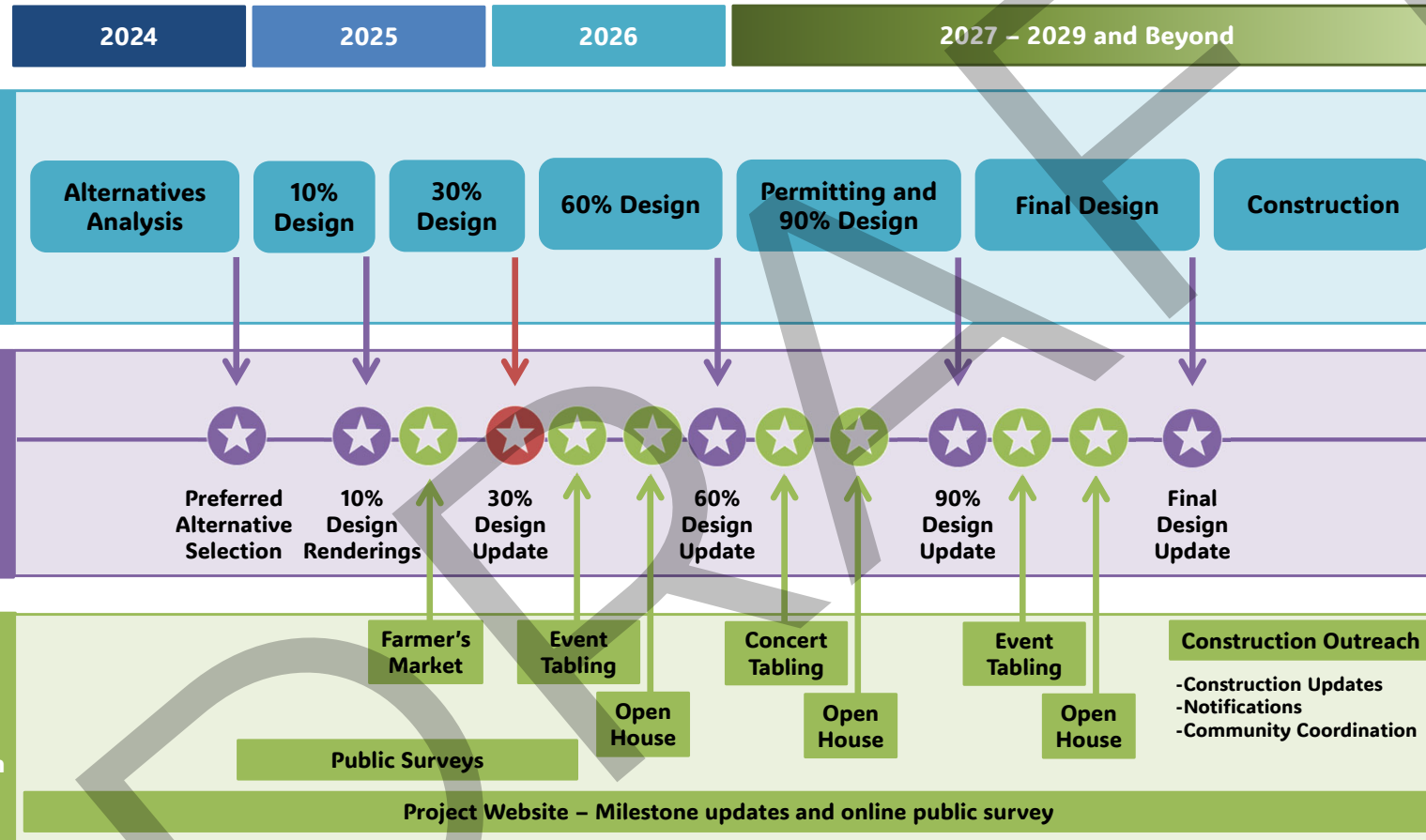


Future Council Discussions / Decisions

- Historic buildings
- Multi-use facilities
- Recreation amenities
- Connection to Cliff Ave
- Interpretive features
- Design updates



Next Steps and Public Outreach





**City Council
AGENDA ITEM**

**BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL
City of Des Moines, WA**

SUBJECT: Downtown Planning Scenarios & Zoning Workshop

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Des Moines Downtown Assessment
PowerPoint

FOR AGENDA OF:

September 3, 2026

DEPT OF ORIGIN:

Community Development

DATE SUBMITTED:

August 24, 2026

CLEARANCES:

Purpose and Recommendation

The purpose of item is to hold a joint Planning Commission and City Council Workshop to discuss Des Moines downtown.

Strategic Plan Priority

Economic Vitality

Background

At the June 25, 2026, City Council meeting, staff introduced several implementation strategies for the City's adopted Strategic Plan in support of the Economic Vitality goal. Economic development and growth scenarios were among the topics presented, including the engagement of ECONorthwest to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of downtown development opportunities and future growth scenarios. Unlike a traditional market study, this work is intended to help the City better understand what different futures for downtown could look like and the tradeoffs associated with each approach. The project will develop and evaluate multiple growth scenarios, analyzing factors such as housing and employment capacity, development feasibility, market demand, infrastructure considerations, economic activity, fiscal impacts, and the types of amenities and services that may be supported under different development patterns.

The work is intended to help answer important questions regarding the type, scale, and intensity of development that may be necessary to support a vibrant and economically sustainable downtown. The resulting analysis will provide the City Council and Planning Commission with objective, data-driven information to inform future discussions regarding land use policy, zoning, density, development standards, and long-term community investment strategies. The intent is not to predetermine outcomes, but to

ensure that future decisions are informed by a clear understanding of opportunities, constraints, costs, and benefits.

Discussion

This joint Planning Commission and City Council Workshop is just the first kick-off to provide input and help guide the development and evaluation of scenarios. EConorthwest will be presenting:

- Downtown History
- Zoning Review
- Land Base
- Market Analysis
- Fiscal Context



Des Moines Downtown Assessment

SEPTEMBER 3, 2026



Complexity made clear.

Public policy research for better human outcomes

ECOnorthwest's interdisciplinary research insights help communities across the United States make informed decisions about housing, land use, natural resources, education, and the social safety net.

Economic questions are everywhere.

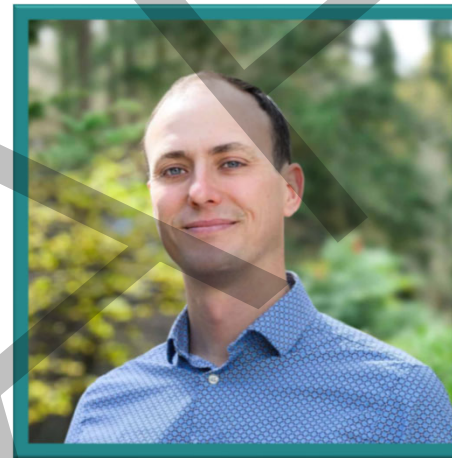
Insight across disciplines.

The outcome matters.

Our Team



Morgan Shook
Partner & Senior
Policy Advisor



Ian Crozier, AICP
Senior Project
Manager

Tonight's Agenda

6:00 pm	About this project
6:10 pm	Downtown diagnostic
6:45 pm	Questions – 15 minutes
7:00 pm	<i>BREAK</i>
7:10 pm	Discussion groups
7:40 pm	Full group discussion
8:30 pm	Close

About this project

This project is a structured process for:

- Being clear about goals for downtown
- Diagnosing issues that have gotten in the way
- Identifying realistic options
- Deciding on a course of action

What this project isn't:

- A subarea planning process
- A study to sit on the shelf

Key questions for this project:

- What are we trying to achieve?
- What does it mean to re-zone an area?
- What are potential effects of this type of change?
- What is the process ahead of us?



Downtown Diagnostic

SEPTEMBER 3, 2026



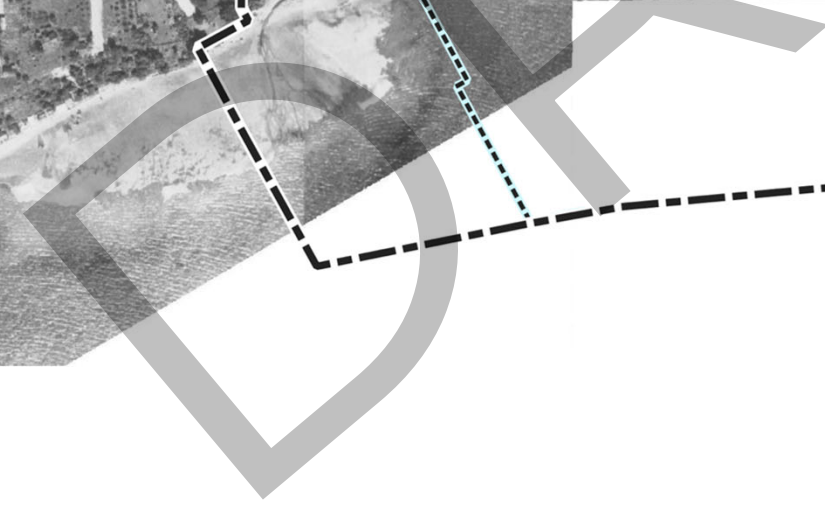
Downtown



A horizontal number line with tick marks at 0, 500, and 1,000 ft.

Development History

Des Moin



DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

Limited development Pre-WWII

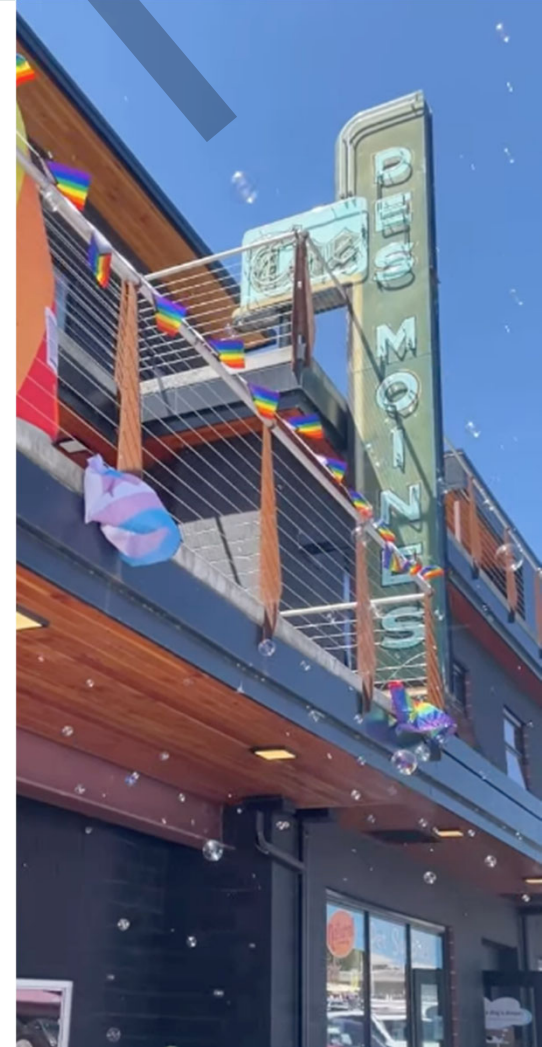
- Farms, ferry dock, Masonic Lodge
- 1930's WPA projects including Field House

Most development dates from 1950-1980

- Marina developed through urban renewal
- Several tax-exempt senior housing and medical rehabilitation developments

Recent years

- The Adriana senior apartments built in 2018, largest development downtown
- Des Moines Theater, first privately funded redevelopment, 2025

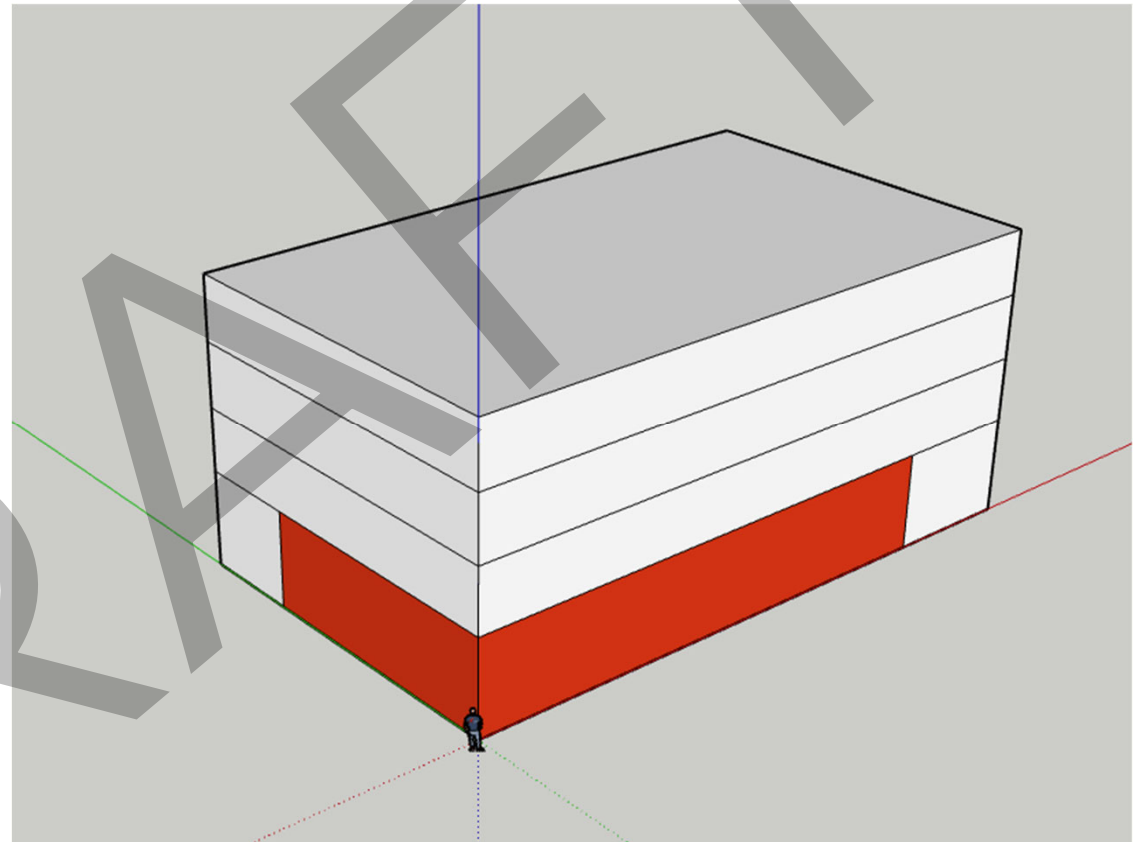


ZONING REVIEW

DRAFT

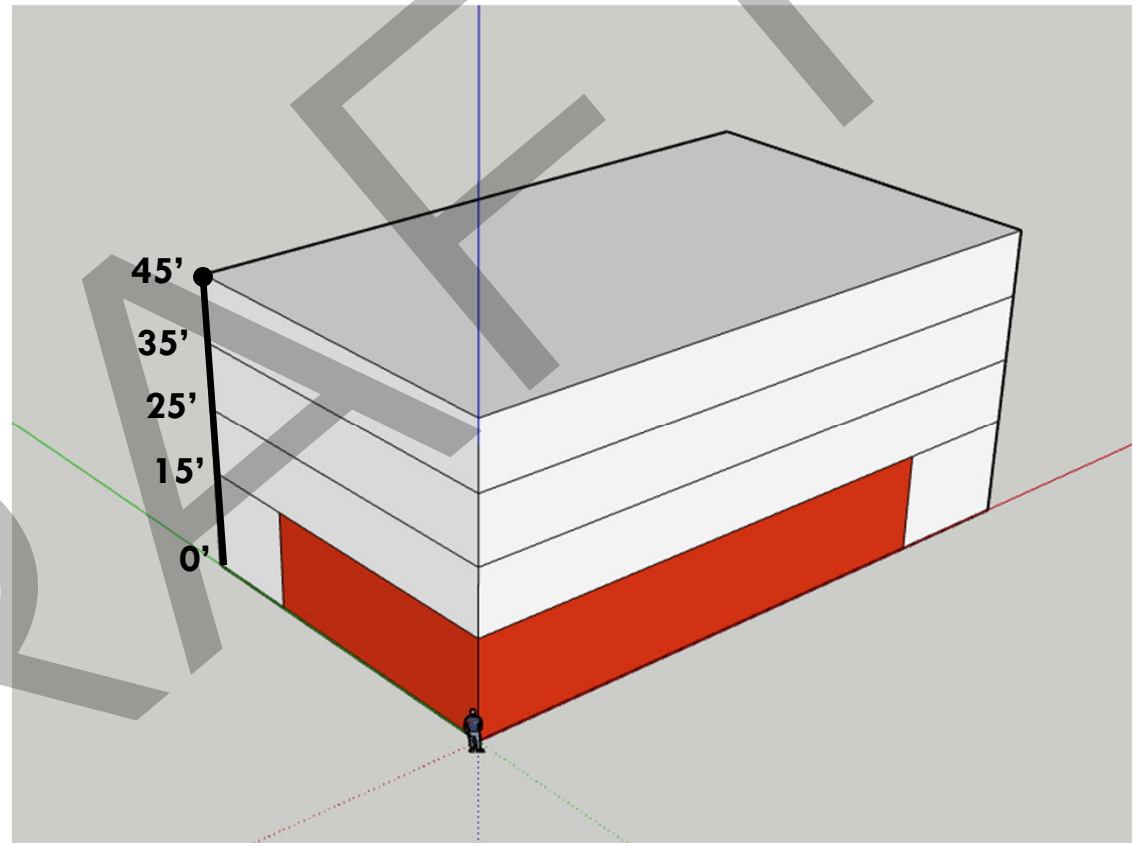
Zoning Concepts

- Ground-floor commercial
- Height limits
- Coverage
- Floor-area-ratio (FAR)
- Setbacks



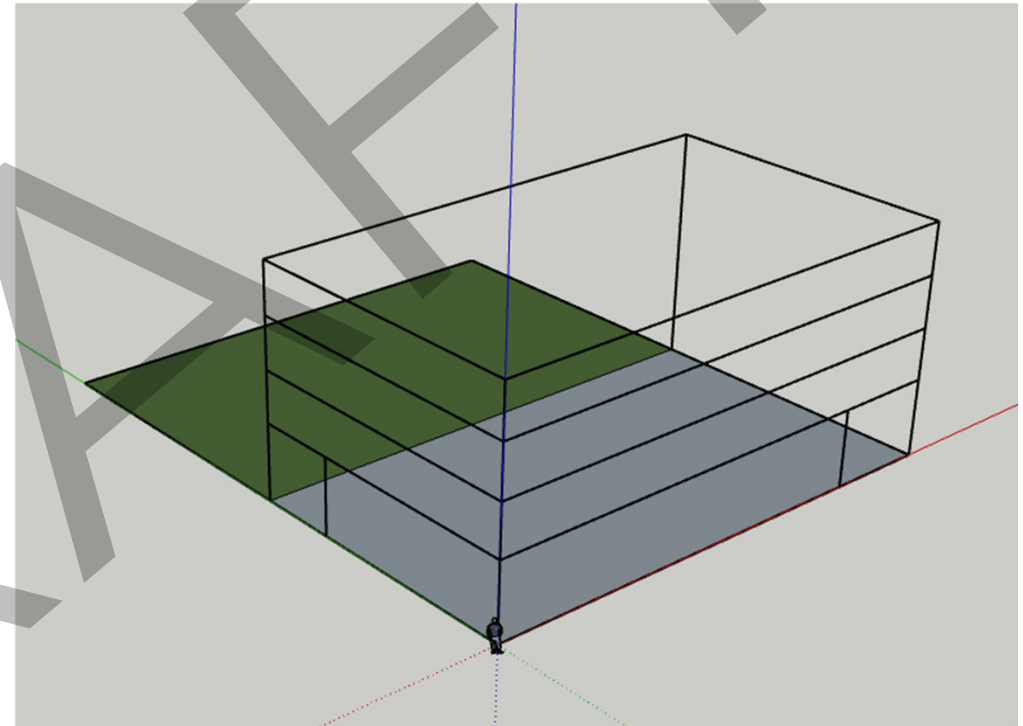
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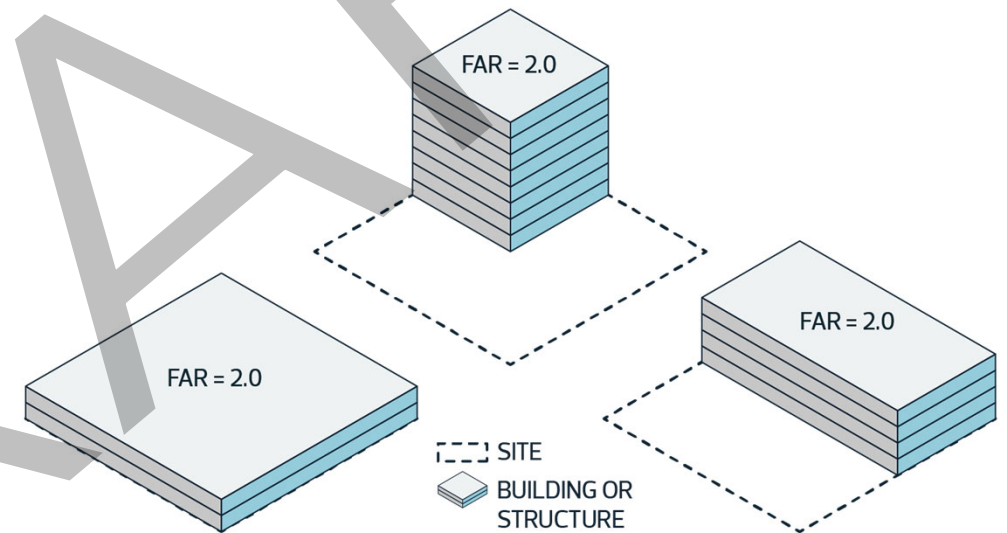
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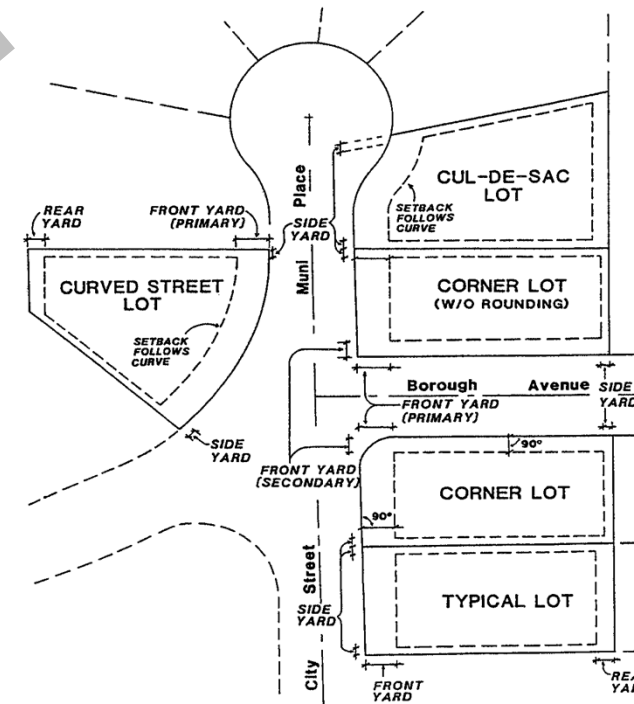
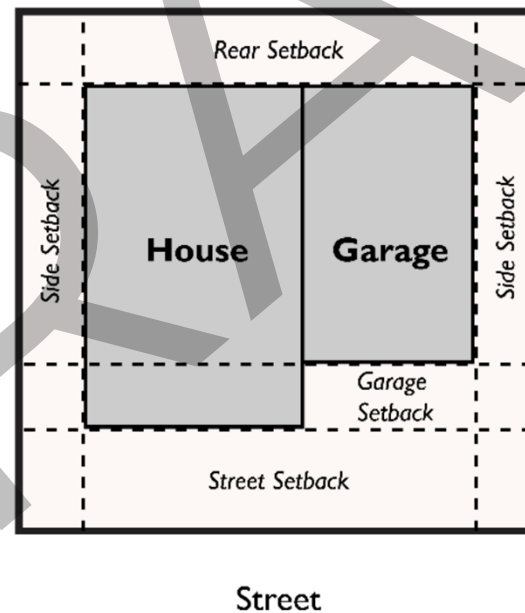
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Zoning Concepts

- Ground-floor commercial
- Height limits
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- Setbacks



Downtown Commercial Zone Standards

Use restrictions

Broad commercial use permissions.
Ground floor commercial requirements:

- 60% of ground level floorplate
- 75% of ground floor street frontage
- 55' depth
- more flexibility on 7th Ave

Height limit

35'-55' depending on location.

Floor-area-ratio (FAR)

2.5-3.5 depending on location.
Bonus FAR available for public benefits.

Lot coverage limit

No limit

Density

No limit

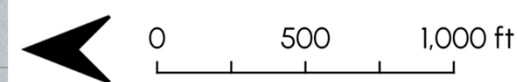
Setbacks

10' from residentially zones lots

The map displays the 11th Avenue S area in Minneapolis, with four designated areas for development. The areas are labeled as follows:

- AREA 1**: 35 FT wide, located in the northern part of the area.
- AREA 2**: 45 FT wide, located in the central part of the area.
- AREA 3**: 55 FT wide, located in the western part of the area.
- AREA 4**: 35 FT wide, located in the southern part of the area.

The map also shows various streets and landmarks, including 11th Ave S, 10th Pl S, 9th Ave S, 8th Ave S, 7th Pl S, 6th Ave S, 5th Ave S, 4th Ave S, 3rd Ave S, 2nd Ave S, 1st Ave S, and 12th Ave S. A dashed line indicates the boundary of the 11th Avenue S area.



RM-900 & 900A Zone Standards

	RM-900	RM-900A
Use restrictions	Mostly residential. Retail and restaurants prohibited. Hotels allowed.	Exclusively residential. Townhouses prohibited.
Height limit	35'	35'
Floor-area-ratio (FAR)	2.0	1.0
Lot coverage limit	60%	60%
Max. Density	~48 du/acre (900 sf lot area per unit)	~48 du/acre (900 sf lot area per unit)
Setbacks	Front: 20' Side: 5'	Front: 20' Side: 5' first story / 10' second / 15' third Rear: 20'

Zoning Issues

- Narrow use categories: D-C does not allow stand-alone residential, while RM-900 essentially requires it.
- Restrictive and complex height limits
- Complex bonus FAR for public benefits system
- Mixed-use requirements are very high and conflict with SB 6026 (effective July 2027)
- Expensive balcony requirement
- Restrictive FAR and setback standards in RM-900A (6th Ave)
- Code review currently underway

Allowed building type examples by zone:

D-C

Single-story retail,
office building,
mixed-use multifamily
with ground-floor retail



RM-900

Three-story apartment
building, townhouses



RM-900A

Three-story
apartment building



Development Examples

Mid-rise mixed-use

- "five over one"
- Ground-floor commercial or other active use
- Moderately expensive construction cost
- Density 60-200 units per acre
- Usually garage parking



Development Examples

Four-story apartments

- "woody walk-up"
- Less expensive construction cost
- Density 20-45 units per acre
- Surface parking



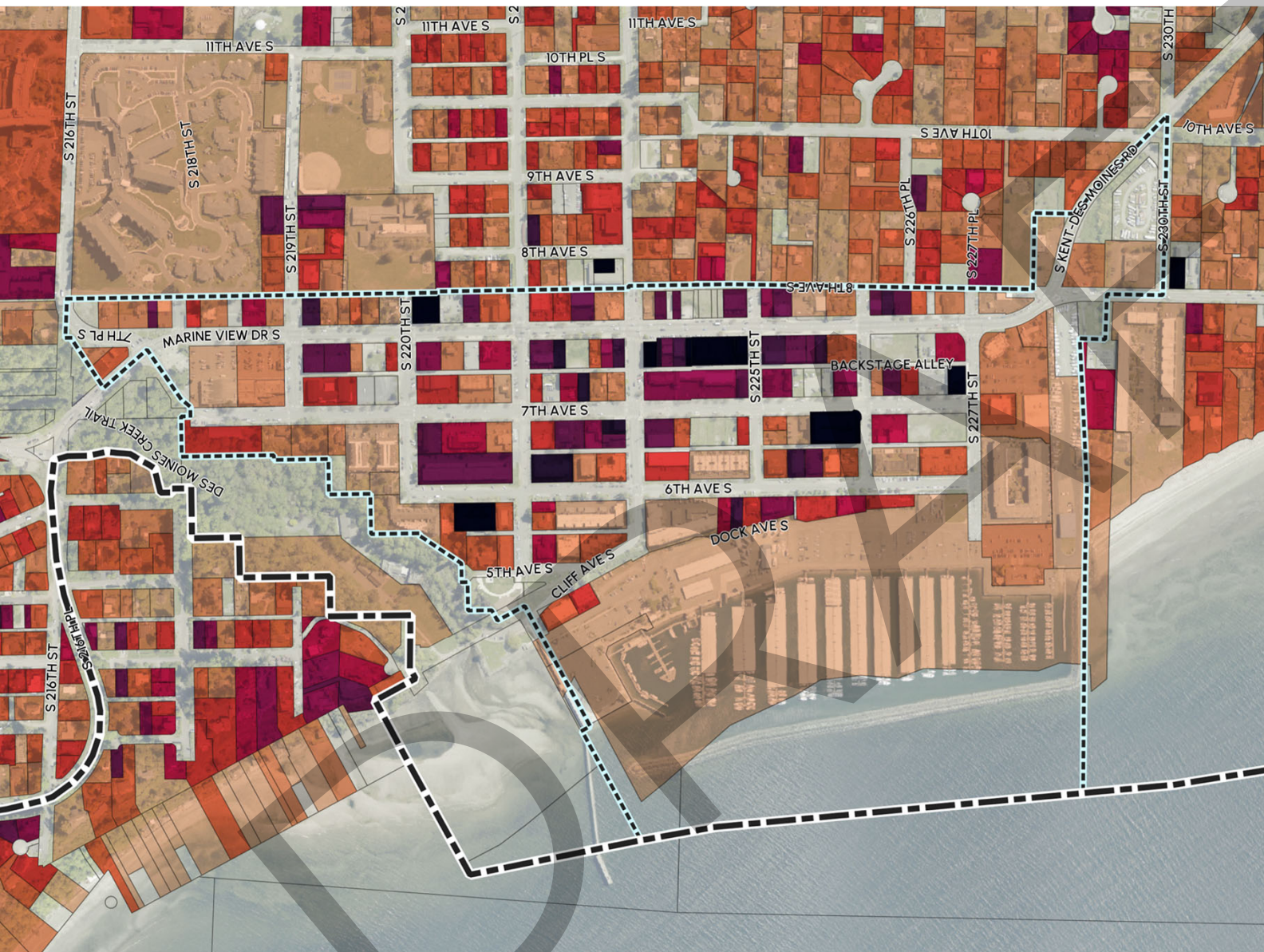
Development Examples

Townhouses

- Less expensive construction cost
- Density 20-45 units per acre
- Ownership-oriented



Land Base



Improvements value

Improvements value per sf

<\$1

\$1 - \$15

\$15 - \$30

\$30 - \$45

\$45 - \$60

\$60 - \$75

\$75 - \$100

\$100 - \$150

\$150 - \$200

\$200 - \$250

>\$250



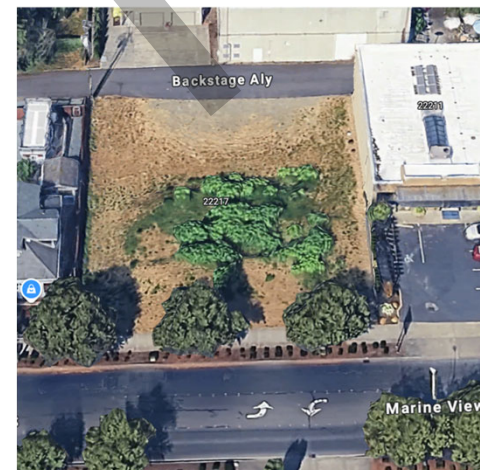
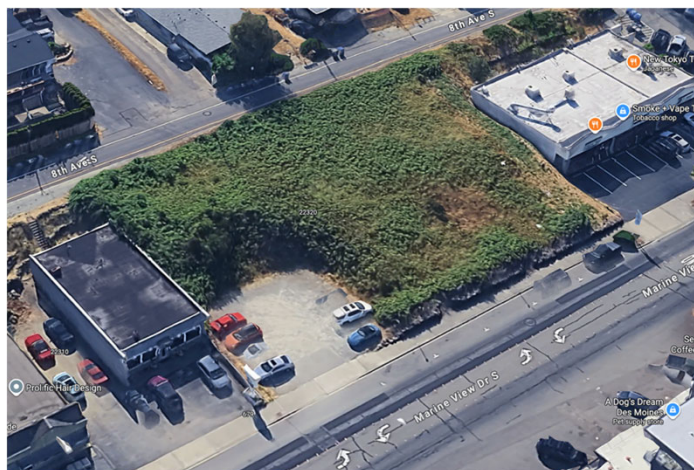
Des Moines city limits

Downtown study area



0 500 1,000 ft

Vacant Sites



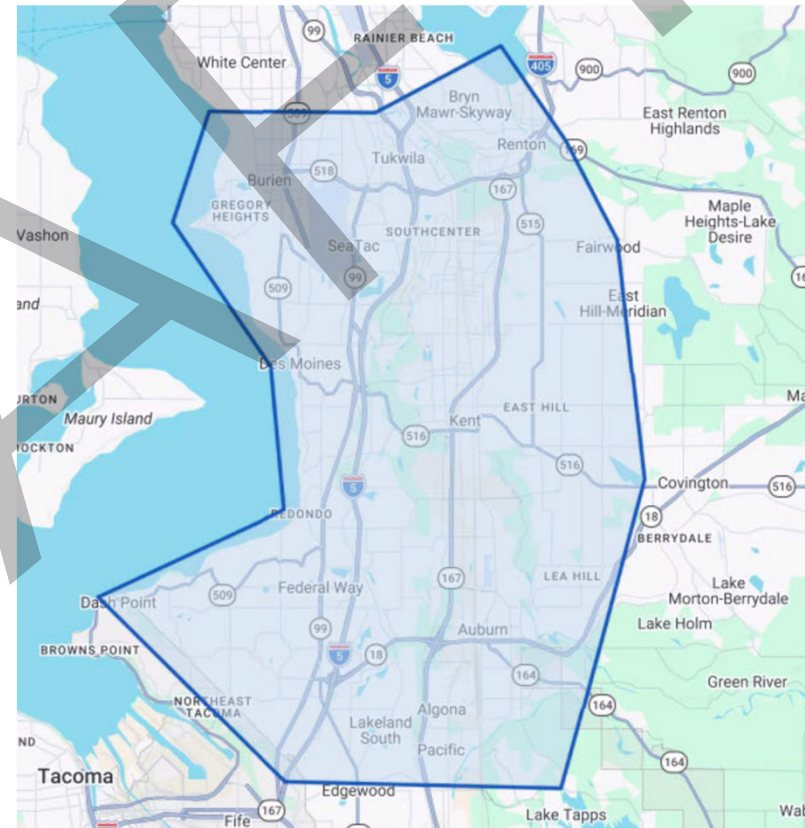
Market Analysis

35

Market Analysis

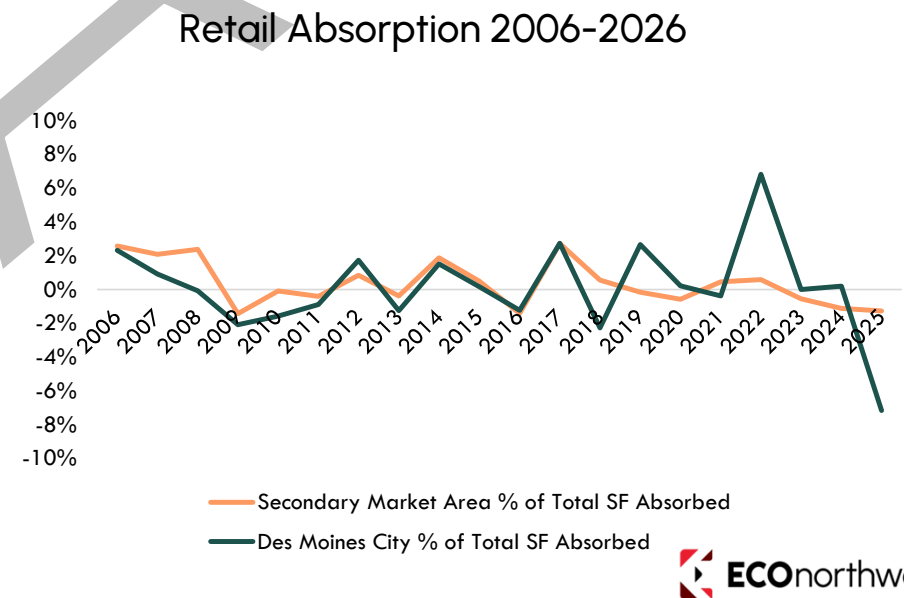
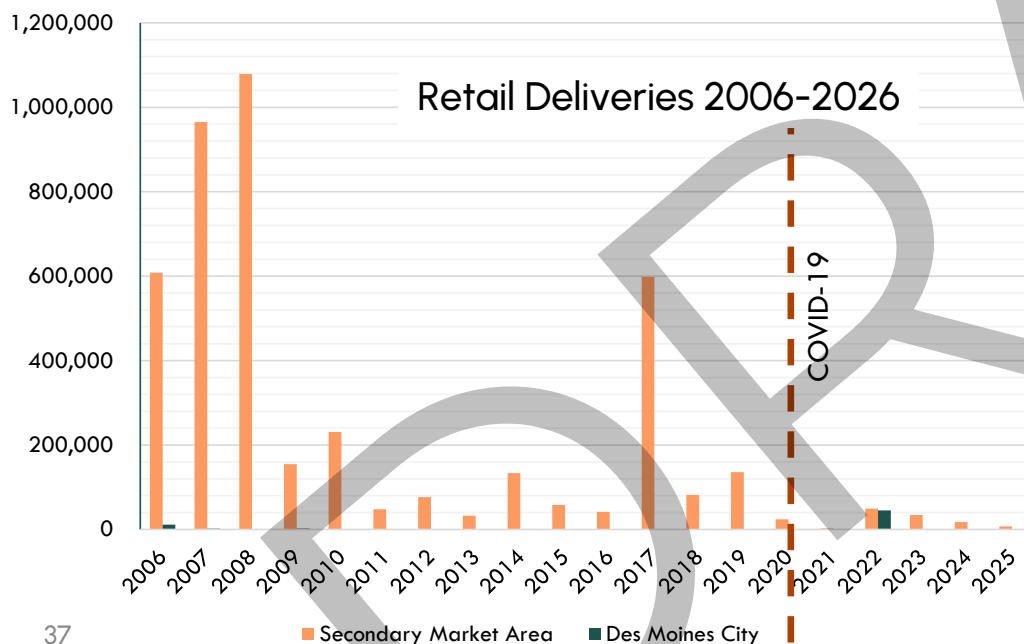
Review of CoStar data for trends in multifamily, retail, office, hotel development.

Des Moines compared to a larger "secondary area" encompassing most of south King County.



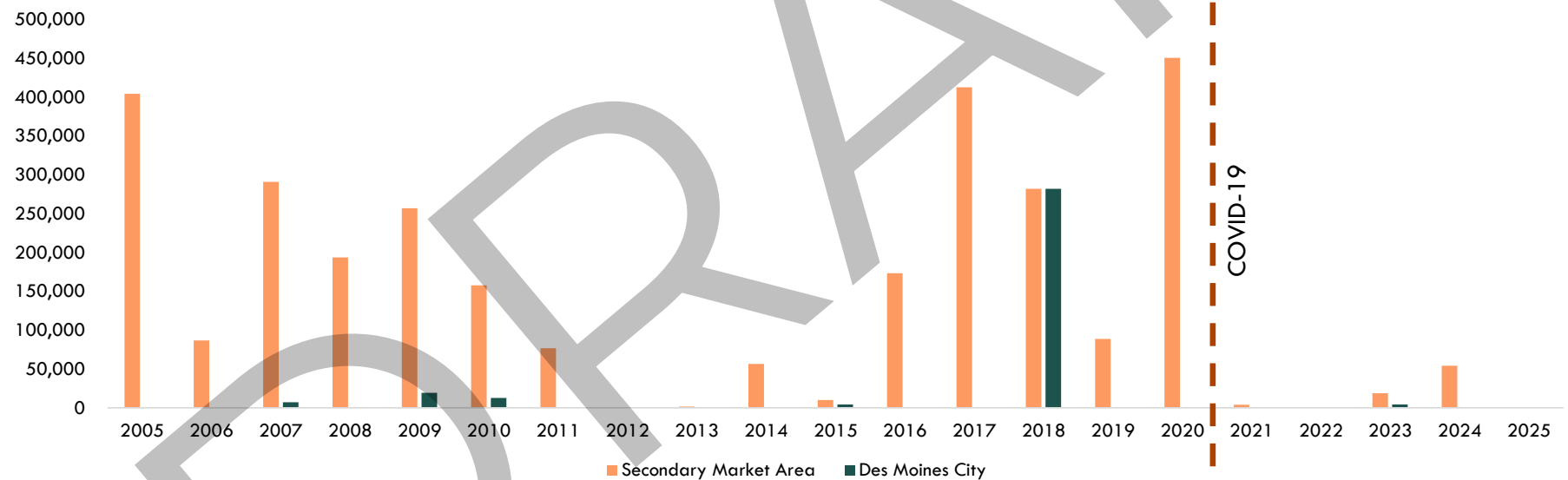
Market Analysis

Retail square footage is generally flat or declining in south King County and Des Moines since 2020.

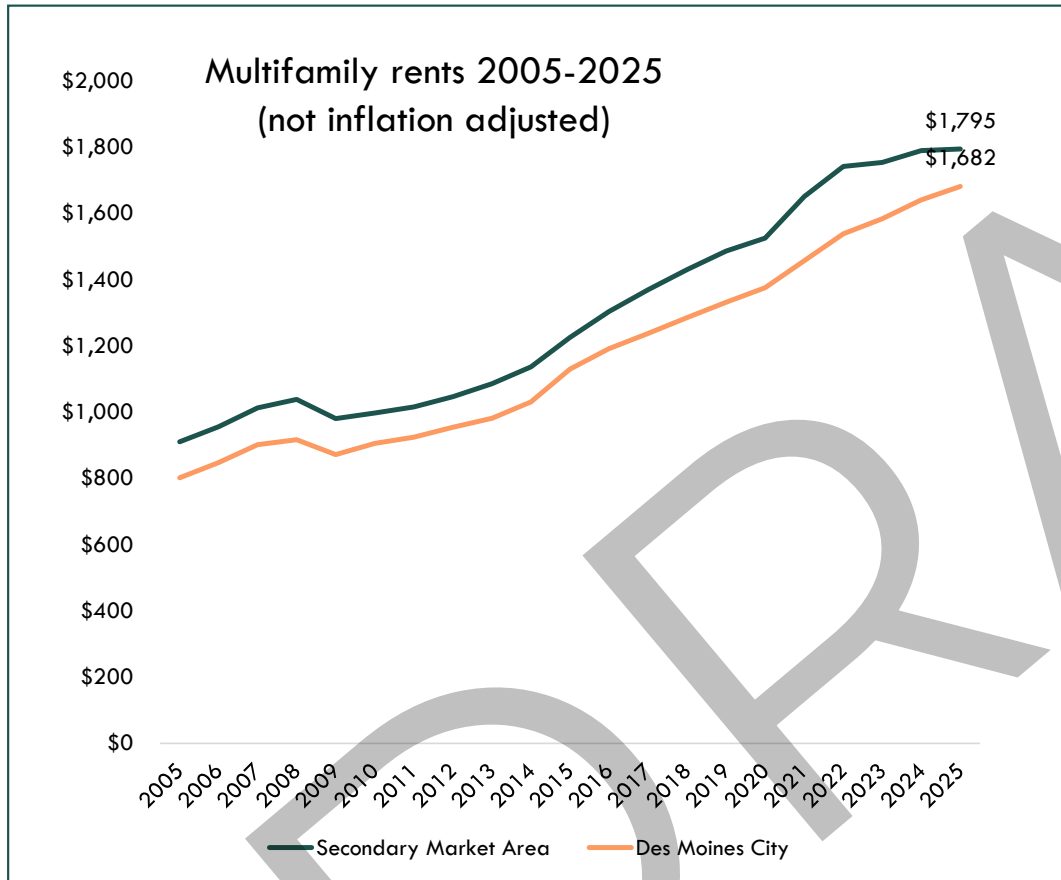


Office development is at a virtual standstill post-pandemic.

Office development 2005-2025



MARKET ANALYSIS



Multifamily rents are about 7% lower in Des Moines than in South King County as a whole.

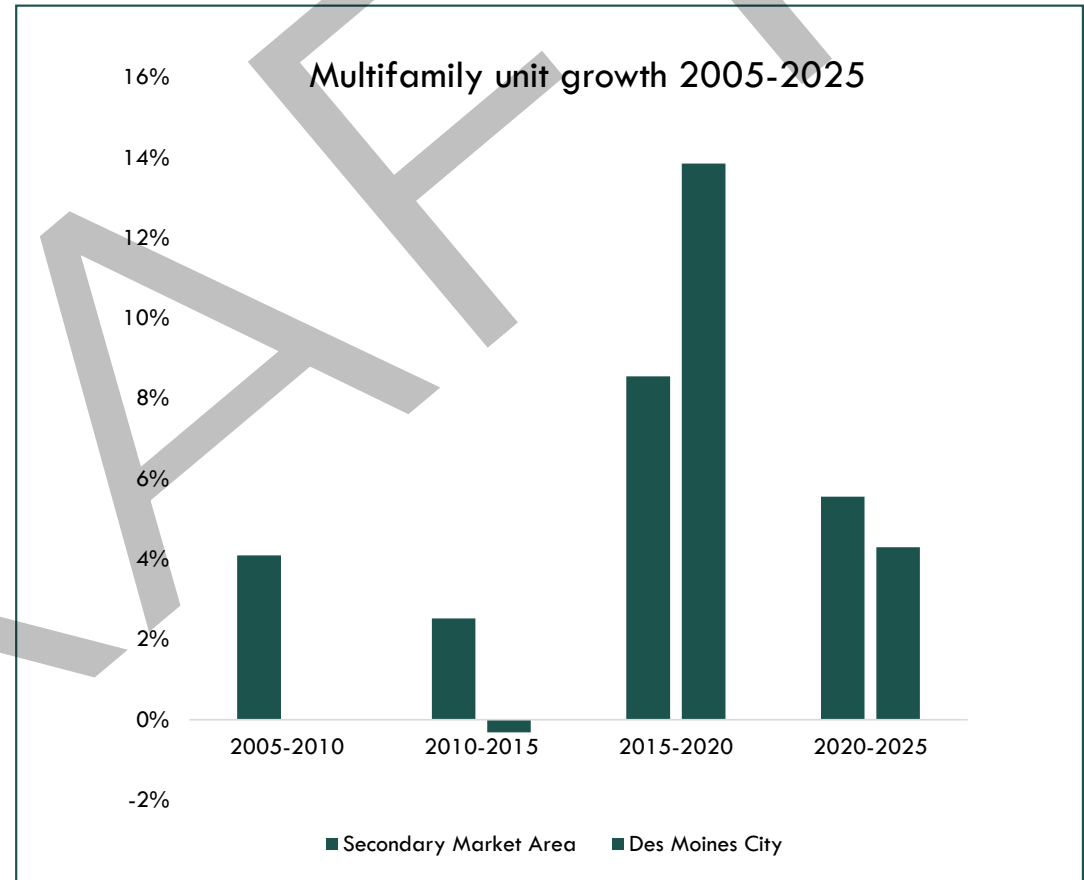
This may be due to generally older housing stock.

Multifamily rents in Des Moines have risen 109% since 2006 (compared to 66% inflation).

MARKET ANALYSIS

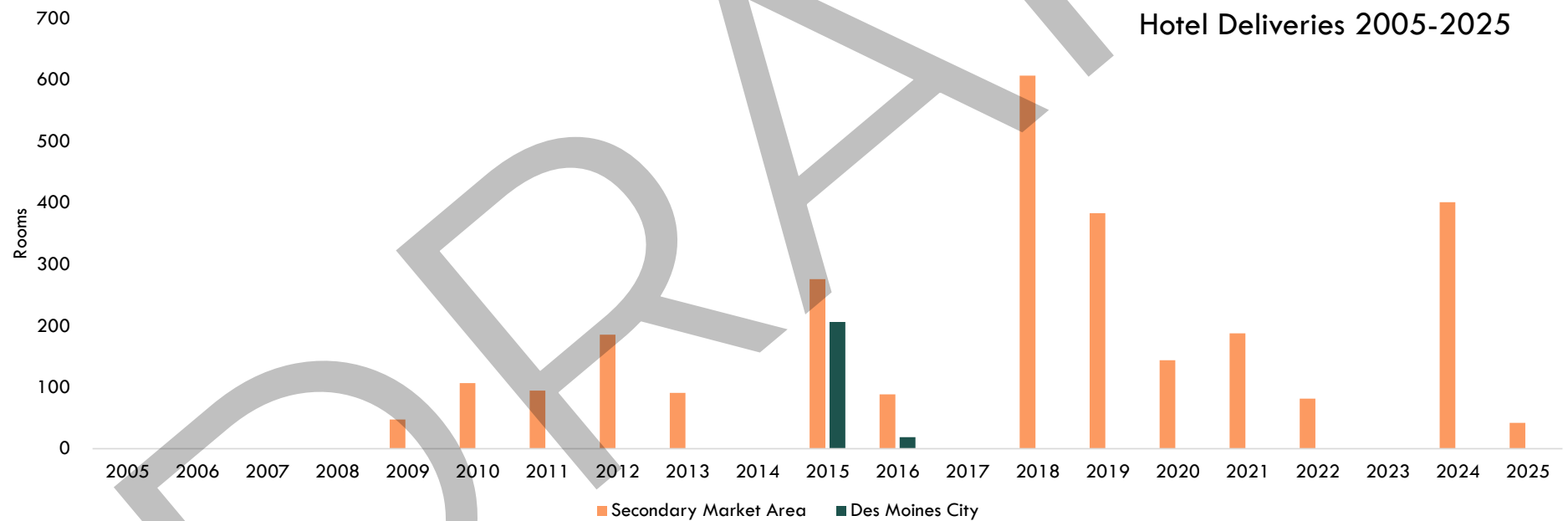
Des Moines has been adding multifamily units at pace with other South King county cities.

Construction has slowed due to difficult financing and high construction costs, but demand remains strong.



Market Analysis

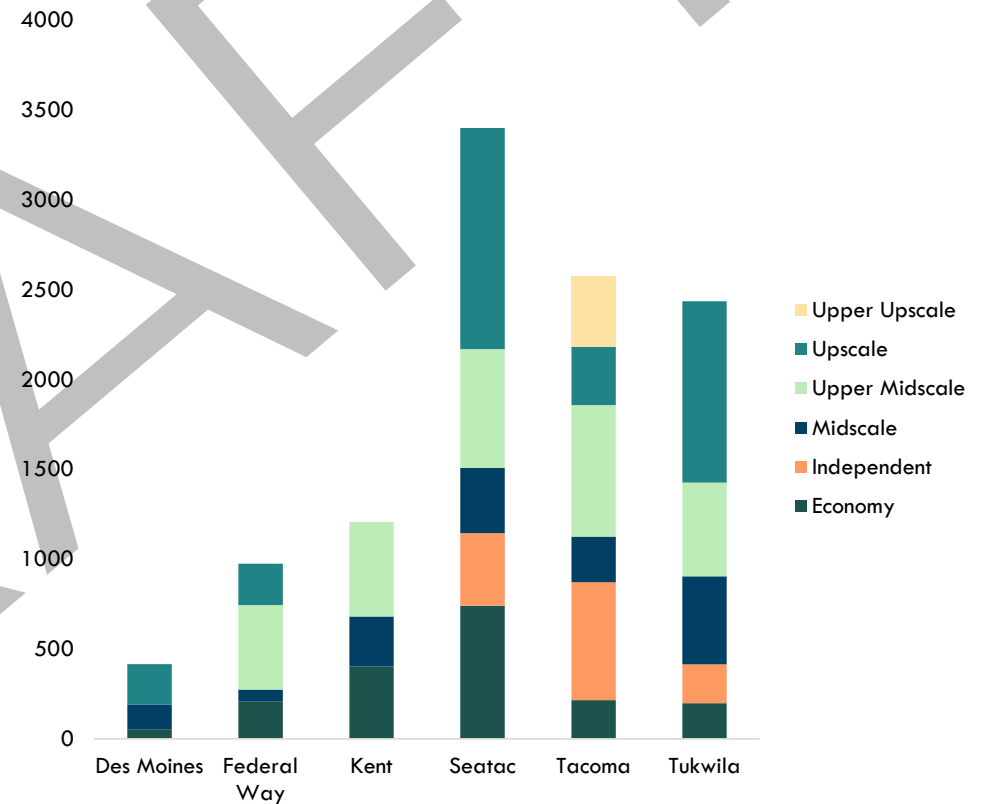
Hotel development is basically consistent with pre-pandemic trends.



Market Analysis

Des Moines has few hotel rooms compared to some nearby cities.

South King County Hotels (2022)

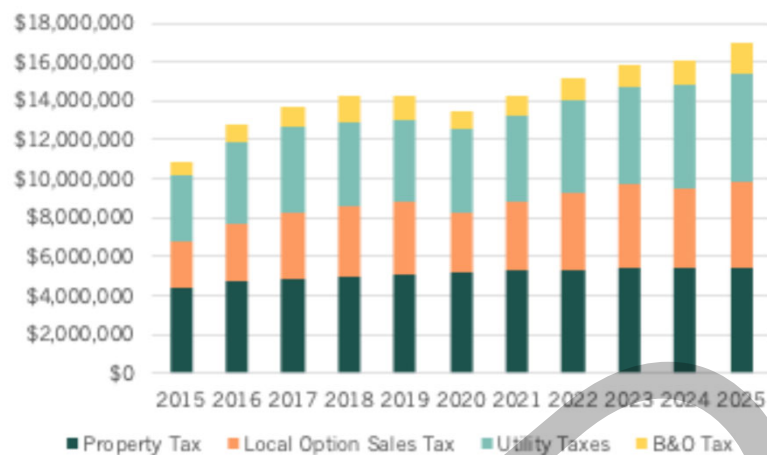


Lodging Name	Rooms	Year Built	Class
Four Points by Sheraton Seattle Airport South	225	2015	Upscale
Red Lion Inn & Suites Des Moines	51	2000	Midscale
The Marina Inn	42	1984	Midscale
Value Inn Sea Tac	45	1979	Midscale
Legend Motel	32	1959	Economy
West View Motel	22	1953	Economy

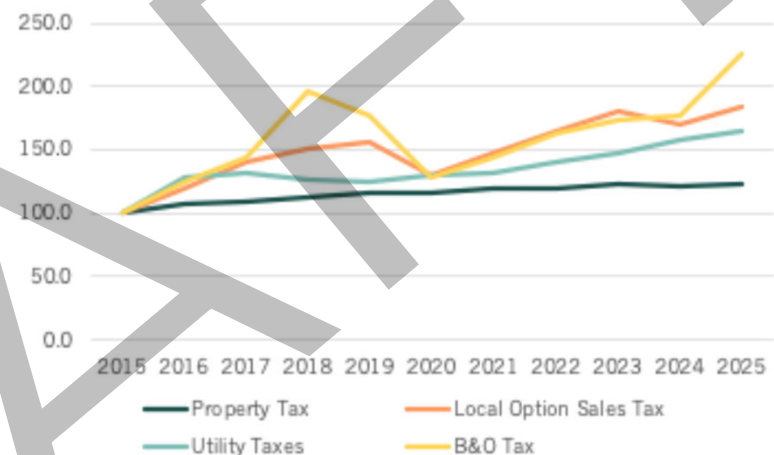
Fiscal Context

Slow property tax growth is pushing the city toward utility, B&O, and sales taxes

Tax revenue by source, 2015–2025



Growth by source, indexed (2015 = 100)

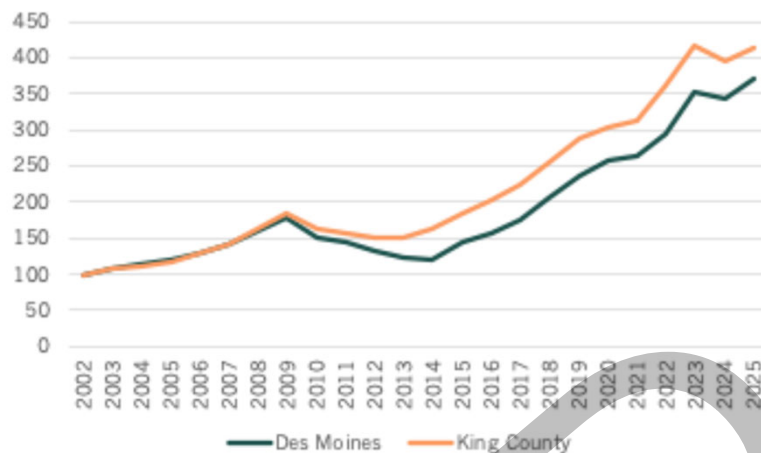


Growth is real — but property tax is not driving it

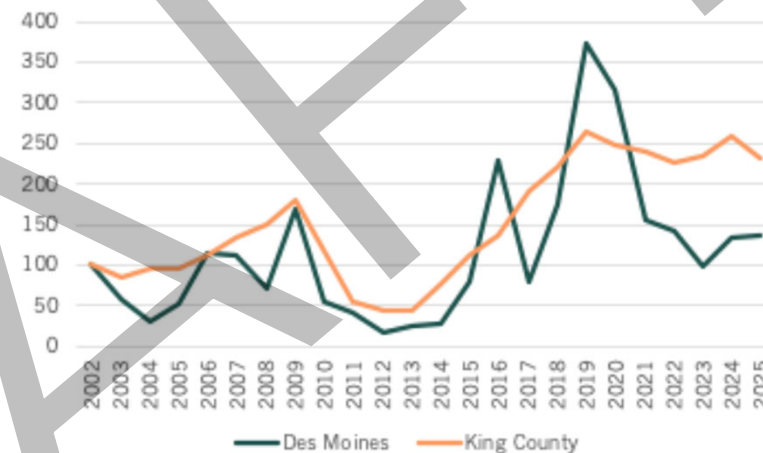
- Total tax revenue grew from roughly \$11M in 2015 to about \$17M in 2025 — up close to 50%.
- Property tax has risen only about 25% over the decade, the slowest of any source and below the pace of inflation and service costs.
- Utility taxes (+60%), local option sales tax (+85%), and B&O tax (+125%) have carried the growth — shifting the mix toward more economy-sensitive, volatile revenues.

Des Moines is losing pace on property value—and further behind on new construction

Assessed value growth, indexed (2002 = 100)



New construction value, indexed (2002 = 100)



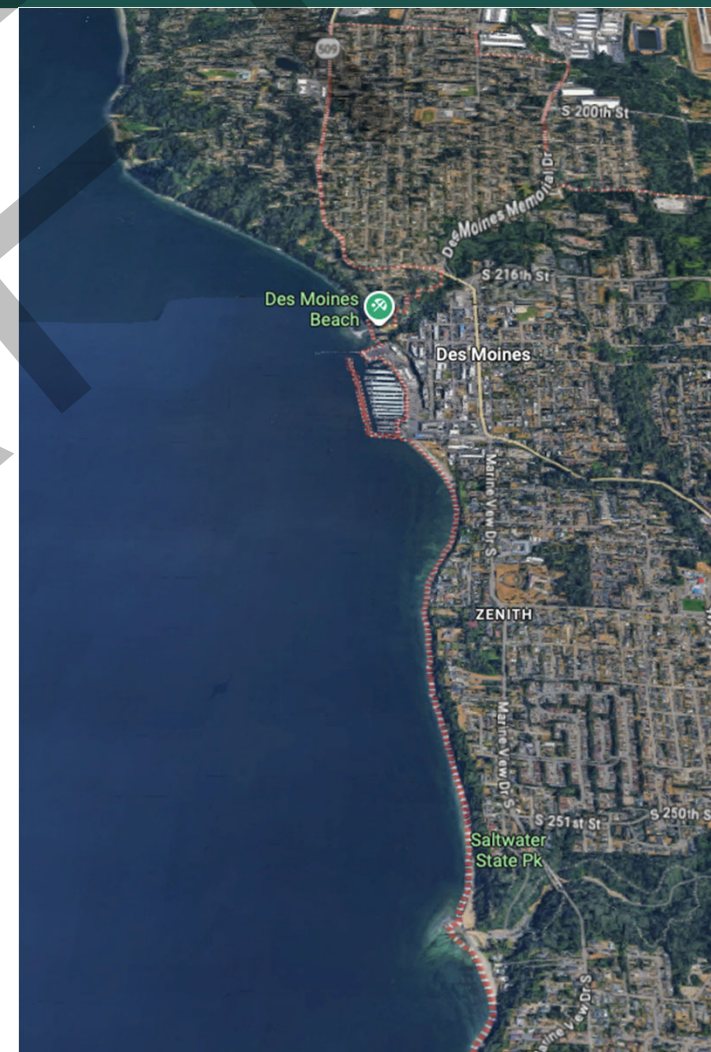
A thinner tax base — and a weaker pipeline to grow it

- Assessed value has grown steadily since 2002, but Des Moines has tracked below King County since 2010 and the gap has widened.
- New construction is the bigger challenge: after a 2019 spike, Des Moines has fallen back to roughly 140 on the index while the county sits near 235.
- New construction is the main exception to the 1% levy cap — a weak building pipeline directly limits the city's ability to grow property tax revenue.

Strengths / Challenges / Opportunities / Threats

Strengths

- Unique waterfront location
- Views of sound and mountains
- Farmers market, events, and community energy
- Walkable grid
- Proximity to airport
- Des Moines Beach Park, Des Moines Creek Trail
- Infrastructure investments
- Access to two light rail stations



Strengths

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Des Moines Waterfront Farmers Market

Strengths

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Marina District, Des Moines, 98198

Commute to **Downtown Des Moines**

60+ min 60+ min 60+ min [View Routes](#)

Favorite

Map

Nearby Des Moines Apartments on Redf

[More about 22303 Marine View Drive South](#)

Walk Score
86

Very Walkable

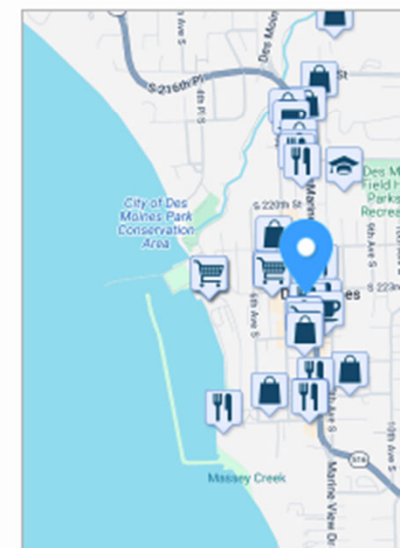
Most errands can be accomplished on foot.

Bike Score
37

Somewhat Bikeable

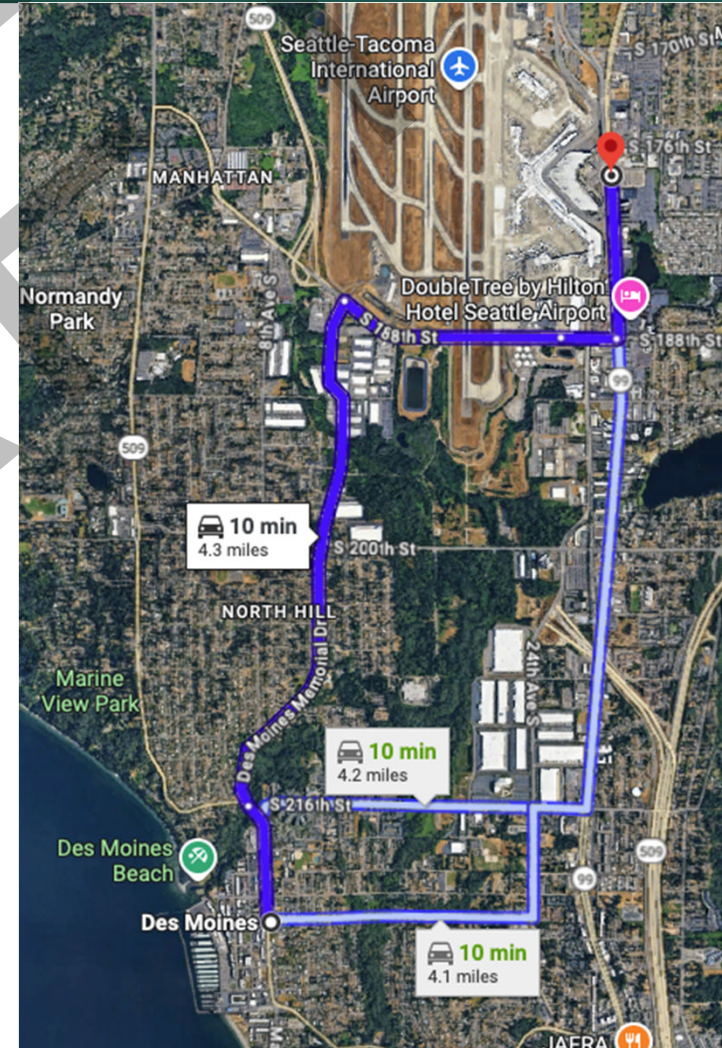
Minimal bike infrastructure.

[About your score](#)



Strengths

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- Des Moines Beach Park, Des Moines Creek Trail
- Infrastructure investments
- Access to two light rail stations



Strengths

- Unique waterfront location
- Views of sound and mountains
- Farmers market, events, and community energy
- Walkable grid
- Proximity to airport
- Des Moines Beach Park, Des Moines Creek Trail
- Infrastructure investments
- **Access to two light rail stations**



Challenges

- Restrictive, outdated zoning
- Lack of external connectivity
- Flight path noise
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- Separation from waterfront
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CONDITIONS

Ch 18.52 PERMITTED USES

§ 18.52.005 Permitted uses.

§ 18.52.010A Residential use chart.

§ 18.52.010B Commercial use chart.

Ch 18.55 SINGLE-FAMILY

RESIDENTIAL ZONE

Ch 18.57 MIDDLE HOUSING

PROVISIONS AND STANDARDS

Ch 18.58 CO-LIVING HOUSING

Ch 18.60 RA-3,600 RESIDENTIAL:

ATTACHED TOWNHOUSE AND

DUPLEX 3,600 ZONE

Ch 18.65 RM-2,400 RESIDENTIAL:

MULTIFAMILY 2,400 ZONE

Ch 18.70 RM-1,800 RESIDENTIAL:

MULTIFAMILY 1,800 ZONE

Ch 18.75 RM-900 RESIDENTIAL:

MULTIFAMILY 900 ZONE

Ch 18.80 RM-900A AND RM-900B

RESIDENTIAL: MULTIFAMILY

ZONE

§ 18.80.010 Title.

§ 18.80.020 Application.

§ 18.80.030 Purpose.

§ 18.80.040 Authority.

§ 18.80.050 General design requirements.

§ 18.80.060 Lot area in the RM-900A Zone.

§ 18.80.070 Lot area in the RM-900B Zone.

§ 18.80.080 Lot area per dwelling unit.

§ 18.80.090 Lot width.

☐ § 18.80.090 Lot width.

In RM-900A and RM-900B Zones every lot shall have a width of not less than 60 feet.

(Ord. 1591 § 208, 2014)

☐ § 18.80.100 Front yard.

In an RM-900A and RM-900B Zone every lot shall have a front yard with a depth not less than 20 feet.

(Ord. 1591 § 209, 2014)

☐ § 18.80.110 Side yard.

In an RM-900A and RM-900B Zone every lot shall have a side yard on each side of the lot which side yard shall have a width of not less than 15 feet. Exceptions:

(1) Structures two stories in height may have side yards of 10 feet in width;

(2) Structures one story in height may have a side yard of five feet from one side and 10 feet from the other side.

(Ord. 1591 § 210, 2014)

☐ § 18.80.120 Rear yard.

In an RM-900A and RM-900B Zone every lot shall have a rear yard with a depth of not less than 20 feet.

(Ord. 1591 § 211, 2014)

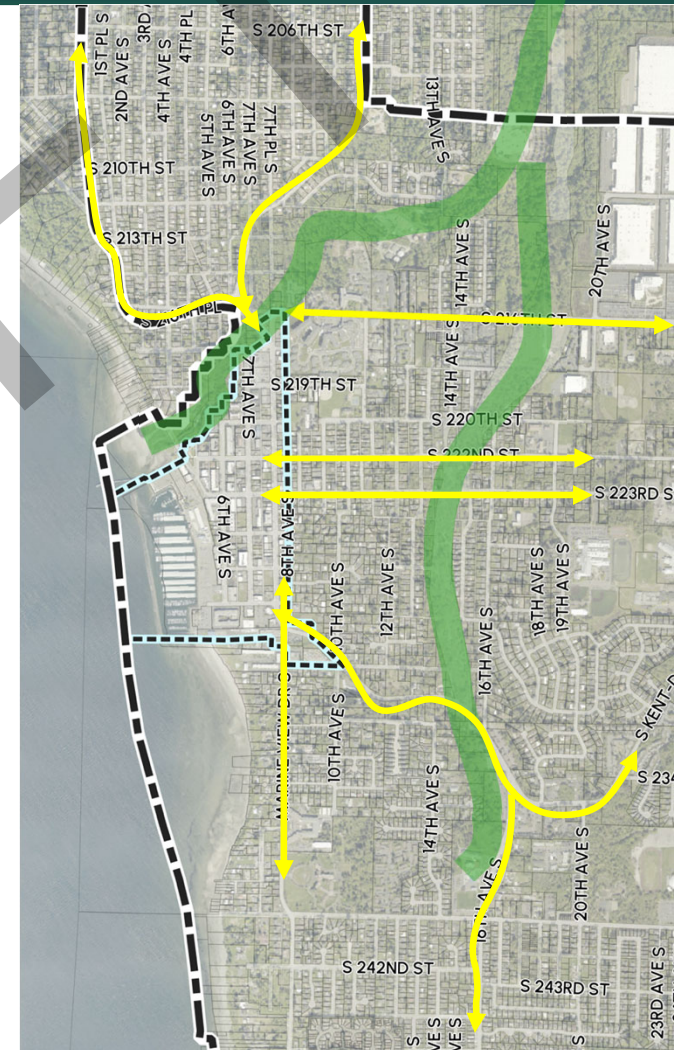
☐ § 18.80.130 Height.

In RM-900A and RM-900B Zones no building or structure shall exceed a height of 35 feet.

(Ord. 1591 § 212, 2014)

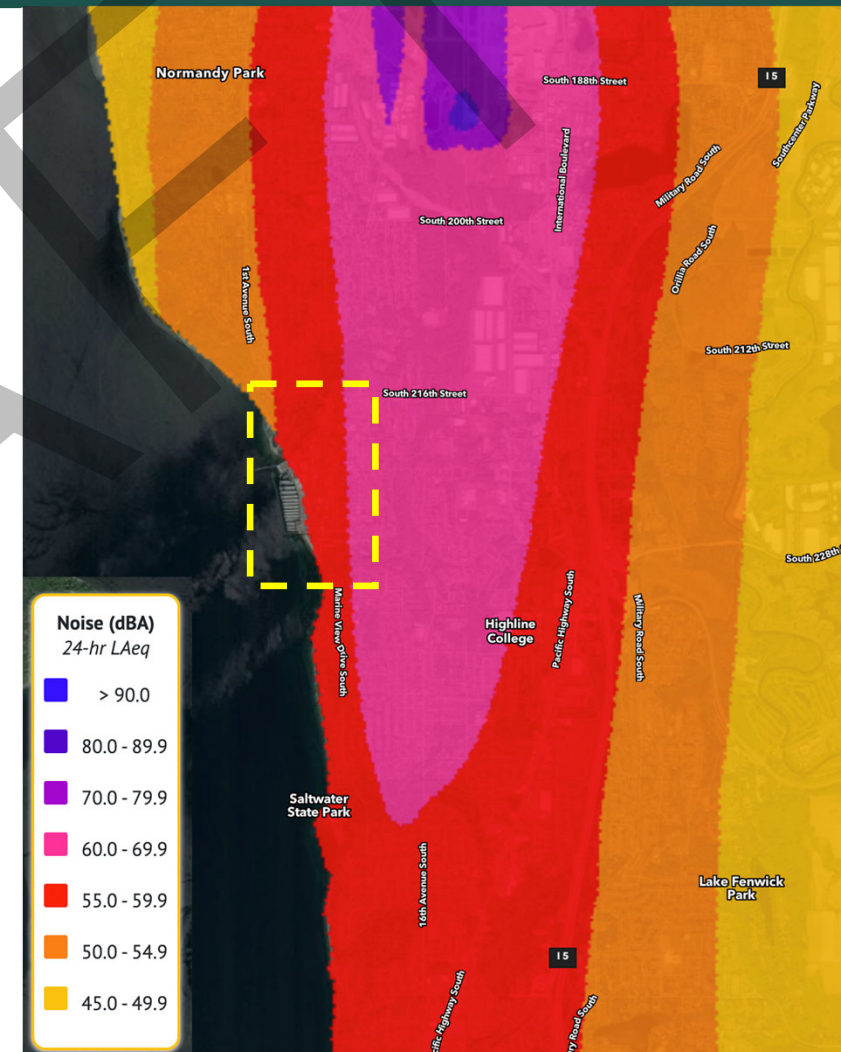
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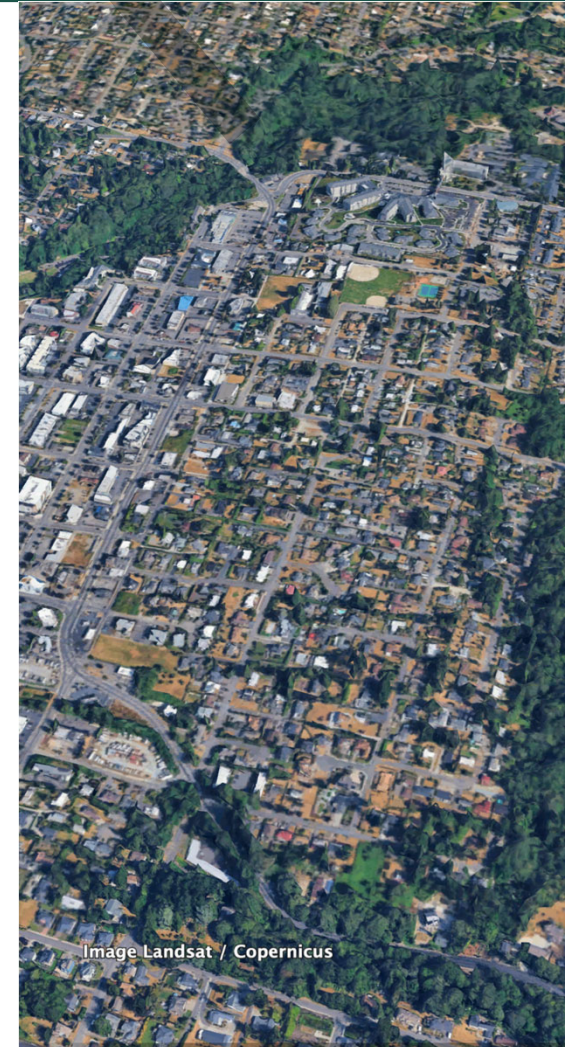
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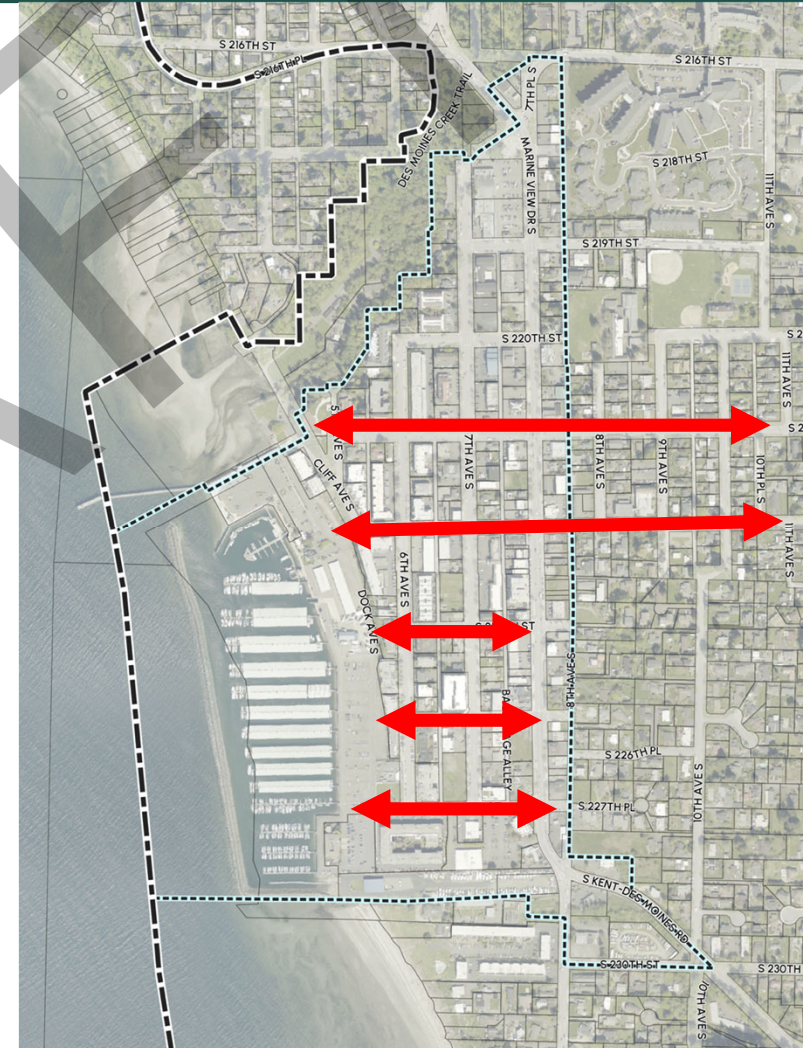


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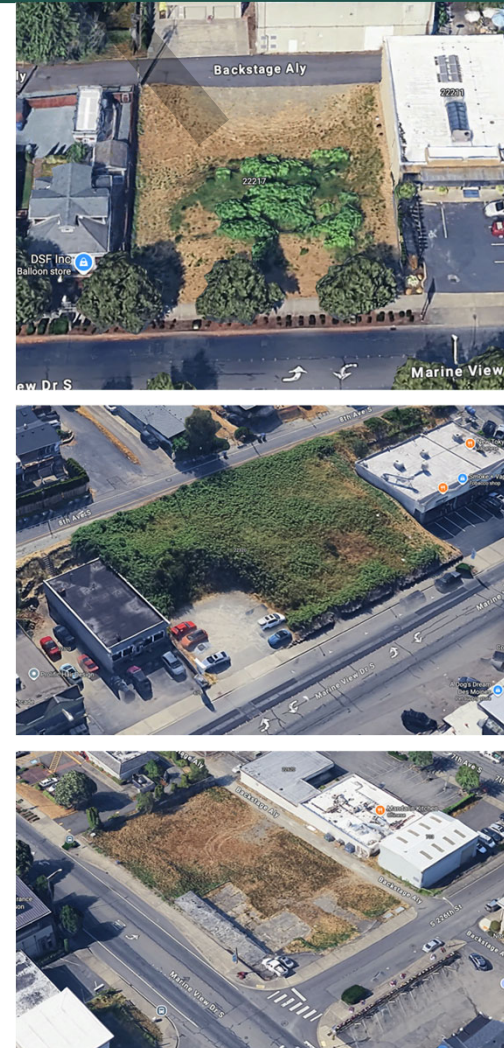


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Opportunities

- Vacant parcels
- Marina Steps project
- Marine View Dr (SR 509) transfer to City and potential streetscape changes
- Demand for market-rate housing remains strong
- Public marina infrastructure investments



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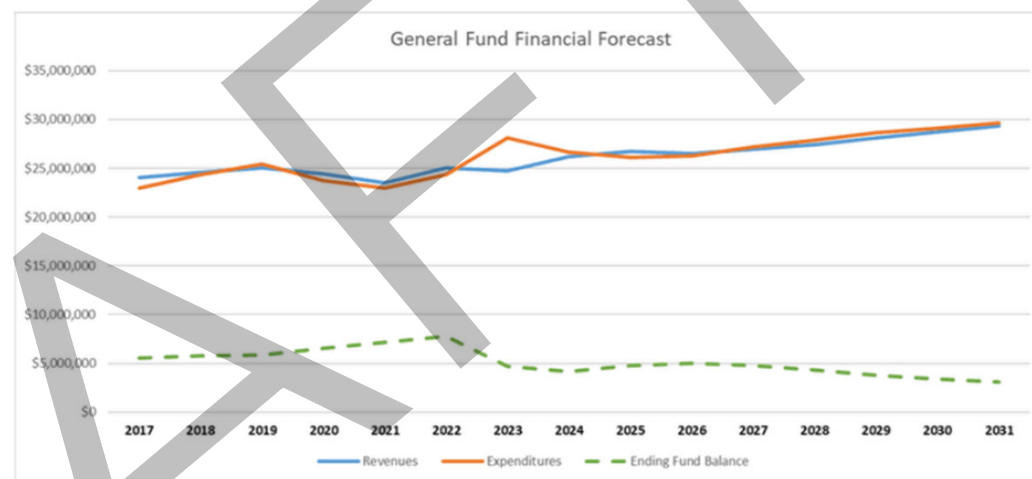
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Threats

- Deteriorating fiscal situation
- Increased airport activity
- Building stock is aging

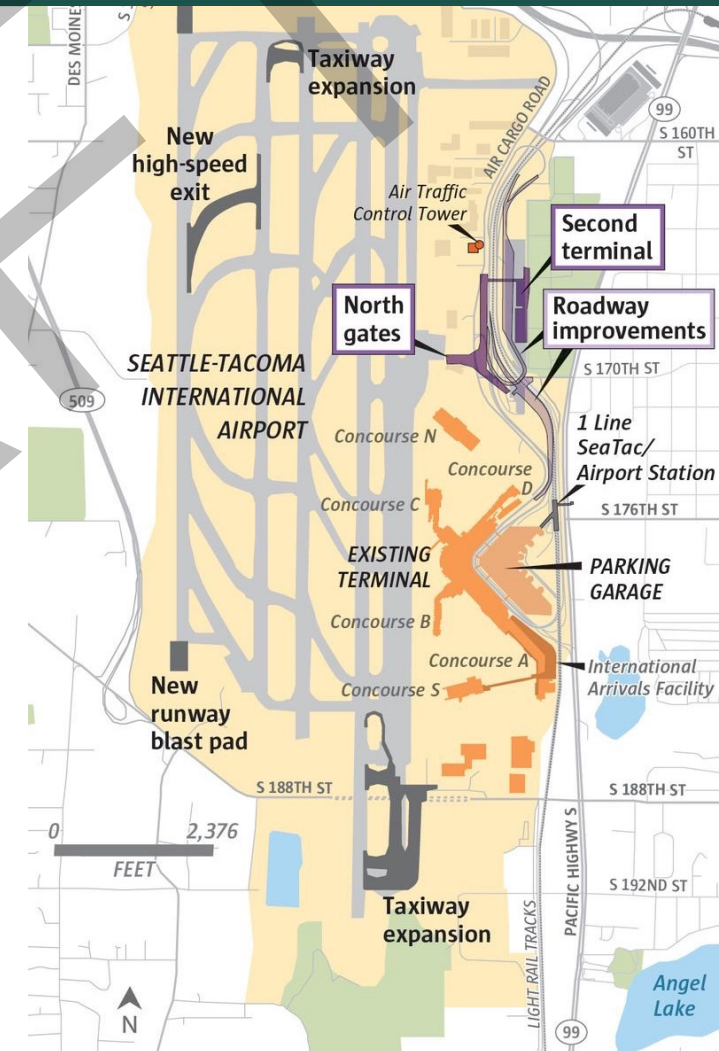


Forecast

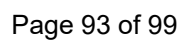
As part of the budget process, we review our five-year forecast. This forecast highlights that our current revenue levels are insufficient to sustain our existing services. The 2025-2026 biennial budget is structurally balanced, maintaining the minimum fund balance of 16.67% and adding approximately \$800,000 to it over the next two years. Strengthening the City's fund balance is vital for ensuring fiscal sustainability and reducing the risk associated with an uncertain economy. However, it will become increasingly challenging in future budget cycles to maintain services without significant revenue increases. Like many cities in Washington, the revenue structure for our City's general fund services does not keep pace with the growing demands of a changing population and inflation.

Threats

- Deteriorating fiscal situation
- Increased airport activity
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- Increased airport activity
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Other interview findings:

- Wide range of desired development outcomes
- Frustration with past city decisions/leadership to limit development
- City not seen as a partner
- Community groups can be fractious
- Consider expanding the geographic scope of the study
- Difficult to compete with jurisdictions that have MFTE

Questions?

BREAK

DRAFT

GROUP DISCUSSION

Discussion:

What are we trying to solve downtown?

What is the #1 issue we need to address?

What is your #1 priority for new development downtown?

What would success look like in 10-20 years?

Are we looking at the right geographic area?

Which other priorities for development are in competition?

What concerns need to be addressed to maintain public trust?

NEXT STEPS

Planning Commission October 6

What types of development are realistic and desirable?

Joint Session November 5

How much change and where?

City Council December 3

Review and confirm direction.

Final recommendations packet and public information materials in Early 2027



ECONorthwest

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