

# YESLER TERRACE REDEVELOPMENT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### INTRODUCTION

The Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) is proposing redevelopment of Yesler Terrace, a public housing community located on the southern slope of First Hill in Seattle. Yesler Terrace currently contains 561 units, housing approximately 1,200 residents. Redevelopment is proposed in order to create a mixed-income, mixed use community that better serves existing and future residents. The project would include a mix of affordable and market-rate housing, office and retail uses, as well as parks and open space, and vehicular, pedestrian and bike improvements. It is anticipated that redevelopment of Yesler Terrace would take approximately 15-20 years to complete.

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) consistent with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) will be prepared for phased redevelopment of Yesler Terrace as a housing-based, mixed-use community. This document provides a description of the EIS Approach, the EIS Alternatives, and those Elements of the Environment that have been preliminary identified for consideration and analysis in the EIS.

### SEPA/ NEPA EIS APPROACH

Funding for aspects of the Yesler Terrace project will likely be derived from federal, state and city sources; therefore, the EIS must comply with federal environmental regulations under NEPA, as well as state environmental regulations under SEPA. One comprehensive EIS will be prepared to satisfy the requirements of both sets of regulations.

This EIS is intended to evaluate the probable significant environmental impacts that could occur as a result of assumed redevelopment activities on the site under a range of EIS Alternatives. Impacts associated with the alternatives will be analyzed, and appropriate mitigation measures to address significant adverse impacts will be identified. The EIS will provide decision-makers with relevant information to evaluate the Proposed Actions, and potentially grant approvals to allow redevelopment.

**Planned Action:** The EIS is also intended to fulfill SEPA requirements for Planned Action environmental review. According to SEPA, a “Planned Action” is a designation for a project or elements of a project that shifts environmental review from the time a permit application is made to an earlier phase in the process (WAC 197-11-164). The intent of this designation is to provide a more streamlined environmental process by using an existing EIS prepared at an earlier stage for SEPA compliance for long-term actions.

**Lead Agencies:** The City of Seattle Human Services Department (HSD) will be the Responsible Entity under NEPA for the EIS, in accordance with Housing and Urban Development (HUD) regulations. The Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) has been designated as the Lead Agency under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) to ensure compliance with SEPA requirements.

## BACKGROUND

Built in 1939, Yesler Terrace was the nation's first racially integrated public housing project. Current residents of Yesler Terrace comprise a diverse community, including families with children, seniors, people with disabilities and immigrants. Residents of the community are considered very low income by HUD, earning less than 30 percent of the city's median income. More than one-fifth of the 561 housing units were built during World War II as temporary defense housing. SHA considers Yesler Terrace to no longer be a cost-effective or physically efficient way of providing quality affordable housing to its residents, due to utility and infrastructure deficiencies and other site and economic factors.

Redevelopment planning for this project began in 2006 with the establishment of the [Yesler Terrace Citizen Review Committee \(CRC\)](#). The CRC was appointed to make recommendations to the SHA Board of Commissioners on the redevelopment efforts and is made up of participants representing both the immediate neighborhood and stakeholders throughout the City. Through a series of meetings held over a one year period, the CRC developed a planning framework called the [Yesler Terrace Definitions and Guiding Principles](#). These principles, approved by the SHA Board in December 2007, outline the core values that will guide the redevelopment process. Based on the definitions and guiding principles developed by the CRC, eight draft [planning concepts](#) were developed to respond to one or more of the guiding principles. These concepts served as the cornerstone for SHA and their consultant team to develop conceptual site development scenarios. Five workshops were held in 2008 by Yesler Terrace planners to gather input from residents on conceptual site alternatives for the redeveloped neighborhood. The conceptual site scenarios form the basis for the range of redevelopment alternatives to be evaluated in the EIS.

Based on the planning process conducted to date, SHA defines as follows: the purpose of the Yesler Terrace Redevelopment Project to redevelop this community into a mixed-income, mixed use community that better serves existing and future residents by:

- Maintaining Yesler Terrace as an affordable community that is livable, safe, vibrant and supports diversity;
- Replacing hazardous and deteriorating housing;
- Providing an equitable distribution of incomes and housing types throughout the site;
- Reconnecting Yesler Terrace with surrounding communities;
- Developing an improved and sustainable system of streets, parks and open spaces; and,
- Incorporating strategies to address economic opportunities and social needs for all residents.

## LOCATION OF THE PROJECT

The approximately 28-acre site is located in the City of Seattle's First Hill Neighborhood. Yesler Terrace is generally bounded by Interstate 5 on the west, Alder Street and Fir Street on the north, 12th Avenue on the east, and Main Street on the south (see **Figure 1 – Site Boundaries**).

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

The Proposed Actions to be analyzed in the Yesler Terrace EIS include:

- Approval of City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan and zoning changes that would be necessary in order to accommodate the mixed-use redevelopment, including a Land Use code text amendment/rezone and Comprehensive Plan Amendment;
- Planned Action Ordinance;
- Preliminary and Final Plat approvals;
- Street Vacation petition approvals;
- Future local, state and federal permits that would be required for construction and development of the Yesler Terrace community;
- Release of Funds by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD); and,
- Construction and operation of the Yesler Terrace community.

Assumed redevelopment of Yesler Terrace would include replacement of all existing low-income housing units, as well as supporting infrastructure, including improved streets and utilities, and new parks and open space. Preliminary concepts call for a range of land uses, including: 3,000 to 5,000 residential units, 800,000 to 1.2 million square feet of office/institutional space, and 40,000 to 88,000 square feet of retail space.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ALTERNATIVES TO BE EVALUATED IN THE EIS

The EIS will address the probable significant adverse environmental impacts of the development alternatives and the no-action alternative. At this stage of the process, there is no preferred plan for redevelopment of Yesler Terrace. The Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) will ultimately be evaluating the differences among a range of long-term redevelopment scenarios. Therefore, this EIS will analyze a range of lower to higher density redevelopment options.

For purposes of environmental review, three redevelopment alternatives, an existing zoning alternative, and the no-action alternative will be considered. These represent a full range of land use intensities and densities that the site could accommodate, given SHA's objectives, purpose and need for the project, and current site and zoning factors. The redevelopment alternatives (Alternative 1-3 described below) represent an overall envelope of potential redevelopment for analysis in the EIS; however, none should be considered a definitive plan for the redevelopment of Yesler Terrace. The alternatives function to provide representative levels and types of redevelopment that could be achieved over time for analysis in the EIS. As part of the ongoing master planning and decision-making process, a different mix and configuration of land uses within the range of these redevelopment scenarios could be selected as a preferred plan.

Future redevelopment of the site is assumed to be built out by the year 2030. For all EIS alternatives, the Yesler Community Center and the roadway alignments of Boren Avenue, Broadway, Yesler Way and Alder Street would remain. All EIS alternatives provide a one-to-one replacement of the existing 561 extremely low income housing units. All EIS alternatives consider a potential streetcar stop near the intersection of Yesler Way and Broadway. Also, for all alternatives, it is assumed that the area east of Boren Avenue would be redeveloped under its existing zoning (Mid-Rise, and Neighborhood Commercial 3P-65) and would not require a Comprehensive Plan or Land Use Code text amendment/rezone.

### **Alternative 1 – Lower Density Alternative**

This alternative represents the potential lower range of redevelopment of the site, with an assumed 3.40 million sq. ft. of housing-based/mixed use redevelopment built over the assumed 20-year horizon (See **Figure 2 – Alternative 1**). Land uses under Alternative 1 would include approximately:

- 3,000 dwelling units (2,750 dwelling units west of Boren Avenue and 250 units. east of Boren Avenue);
- 800,000 sq. ft. of office;
- 40,000 sq. ft. of neighborhood commercial (including 10,000 sq ft of neighborhood retail/office east of Boren);
- 4.5 acres of public open space, including a 2-acre common open space west of the existing Yesler Community Center, and,
- Structured parking within/under buildings.

It is assumed that three existing on-site buildings (the approximately 20,000-sq. ft. Jesse Epstein office building, the approximately 10,000-sq. ft. Steam Plant, and the City-owned Yesler Community Center) would be retained. No street vacations are proposed under this alternative. It is assumed that limited transportation and utility infrastructure improvements would be required to support proposed uses under this alternative. This alternative would require a Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Code text amendment/rezone to allow mixed-use redevelopment.

### **Alternative 2 – Medium Density Alternative**

This alternative represents the potential middle range of redevelopment of the site, with an assumed 4.52 million sq. ft. of housing-based/mixed use redevelopment over the assumed 20-year horizon (See **Figure 3 – Alternative 2**). Land uses under Alternative 2 would include approximately:

- 4,000 dwelling units (3,750 dwelling units west of Boren Avenue and 250 units. east of Boren Avenue);
- 1.0 million sq. ft. of office;
- 60,000 sq. ft. of neighborhood commercial (including 10,000 sq ft of neighborhood retail/office east of Boren);
- 5 acres of public open space, including a large 2-acre common open space west of the existing Yesler Community Center, and,
- Structured parking within/under buildings.

It is assumed that no existing buildings (except for the City-owned Yesler Community Center) would be retained. Street vacations and new street dedications are proposed under this alternative to provide a more connected grid network internally and to/from the surrounding community. It is assumed that substantial transportation and utility infrastructure improvements would be required to support proposed uses under this alternative. This alternative would require a Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Code text amendment/rezone to allow mixed-use redevelopment.

### **Alternative 3 – Higher Density Alternative**

This alternative represents the potential higher range of redevelopment of the site, with an assumed 5.56 million sq. ft. of housing-based/mixed use redevelopment over the assumed 20-year planning horizon (See **Figure 4 – Alternative 3**). Land uses under Alternative 3 would include approximately:

- 5,000 dwelling units (4,700 units west of Boren Avenue and 300 units east of Boren Avenue);
- 1.2 million sq. ft. of office;
- 88,000 sq. ft. of neighborhood commercial (including 18,000 sq. ft of neighborhood retail/office east of Boren);
- 5.5 acres of public open space, including a 2-acre common open space west of the existing Yesler Community Center, and,
- Structured parking within/under buildings.

It is assumed that no existing buildings (except for the City-owned Yesler Community Center) would be retained. Street vacations and new street dedications are also proposed under this alternative to provide a more connected grid network internally and to/from the surrounding community. It is assumed that substantial transportation and utility infrastructure improvements would be required to support proposed uses under this alternative. This alternative would require a Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Code text amendment/rezone to allow mixed-use redevelopment.

### **Alternative 4 – Residential Development under Current Zoning**

Under Alternative 4, existing City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan and Lowrise-3 zoning designations would govern future development of the site. It is assumed that three existing on-site buildings (the Jesse Epstein office building, the Steam Plant, and the City-owned Yesler Community Center) would be retained. It is assumed under this alternative that all new construction would conform to the proposed new multi-family (L-3) zoning code changes being considered by the City (See **Figure 5 – Alternative 4**). Redevelopment under this alternative would include approximately:

- 1,525 dwelling units (1,225 units west of Boren Avenue and 300 units east of Boren Avenue);
- 3.75 acres of public open space, including 1 acre of common open space west of the existing Yesler Community Center;
- Structured parking within/under buildings and surface parking stalls (approximately 50 percent of each type).

No street vacations are proposed under this alternative. Street frontage (sidewalk/landscaping) and limited utility improvements would be required to support proposed uses under this alternative. There would be potential to dedicate additional right-of-way on some streets for increased width and to correct alignment.

### **No Action Alternative – Renovation and Replacement of Existing Buildings**

This alternative would essentially represent a continuation of the site in its present condition. As under Alternative 4, the existing City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan and L-3 zoning designations would govern future development of the site. The 561 extremely low income public

housing units would be replaced and renovated as buildings fail or on a programmed schedule. Four existing on-site non-residential buildings would remain: the old community center and gym, Jesse Epstein building, Steam Plant and the Yesler Community Center. Existing streets, utilities and other infrastructure would be repaired as necessary over time and would be built consistent with City Code requirements.

## ELEMENTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The following elements of the environment have been preliminarily identified by HSD and SHA for analysis in the Yesler Terrace Redevelopment Project EIS. Per SEPA and NEPA, the EIS will evaluate the probable significant environmental impacts that could result from the EIS alternatives, and will identify appropriate mitigation measures. Direct, indirect and cumulative impacts associated with the range of alternatives will be assessed.

- ***Earth***
- ***Air Quality***
- ***Water Resources***
- ***Plants and Animals***
- ***Energy – Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emissions***
- ***Environmental Health***
- ***Noise***
- ***Land Use***
- ***Relationship to Plans, Policies and Regulations***
- ***Aesthetics/Light and Glare/Shadows***
- ***Historic and Cultural Resources***
- ***Transportation***
- ***Public Services***
- ***Public Utilities***
- ***Socioeconomics/Environmental Justice***

Further details on the descriptions and analyses contemplated to be provided in the EIS by element are presented below.

### **Earth**

- Existing topography, geology and soil conditions on and in the vicinity of the site, including geotechnical hazard areas (i.e. steep slopes, landslide, seismic and/or erosion hazard areas).
- Overall suitability of site soils and subsurface conditions to accommodate proposed redevelopment.
- Estimated excavation and grading plan and impacts of construction.
- Relationship of site redevelopment to geotechnical hazard areas.

### **Air Quality**

- Existing air quality conditions and primary sources of existing emissions on and in the vicinity of the site.
- Anticipated fugitive dust and equipment emissions during construction.
- Emission sources with site redevelopment, including from added project traffic.
- Potential emission and odor effects of existing I-5 traffic on new, mixed uses on site.

## **Water Resources**

- Existing municipal stormwater management system(s) and conditions onsite and in the site vicinity.
- Existing groundwater conditions beneath the site and in the immediate vicinity of the site (including any shallow groundwater conditions).
- Capacity of the existing stormwater system(s) to accommodate proposed redevelopment in terms of stormwater flows and discharge.
- Local, state and federal regulations/permits required for stormwater management.
- Conceptual temporary and permanent stormwater management systems on the site associated with project construction and operation and connections to the downstream municipal system.
- Potential surface water quantity and quality impacts during construction and operation of the project.

## **Plants and Animals**

- Any existing significant trees onsite (per City of Seattle regulations).
- Existing plant and animal communities on and in the immediate vicinity of the site.
- Any federal Endangered Species Act (ESA)-threatened, candidate and/or local plant and animal species and/or habitat of importance on and in the immediate vicinity of the site.
- Clearing of vegetation and/or retention and provision of open space associated with the proposed project.
- Potential for redevelopment to impact significant trees, plant and animal communities and ESA species.

## **Energy - Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

- Applicable policy and regulatory background regarding climate change and greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs).
- Qualitative description and quantitative estimate of the proposed redevelopment's contribution to GHGs and implications relative to climate change.
- Potential GHG-reducing characteristics of proposed redevelopment, including through use of building and/or energy conservation materials and techniques and potential vehicle trip reduction measures.

## **Environmental Health**

- Presence of any environmental site contamination on or in the immediate vicinity of the site (i.e. contaminants associated with former uses, such as gas stations, underground fuel tanks, etc.);
- Potential to disturb/release contaminants with proposed redevelopment.
- Potential effects of any existing contamination/hazardous materials on the proposed redevelopment.
- Relationship of proposed site redevelopment to any known contamination areas on the site and requirements under the State Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA).

## **Noise**

- Existing noise conditions and sources on and in the vicinity of the site.
- Existing noise-sensitive receivers on and in the vicinity of the site (i.e. residential uses).
- Potential noise impacts resulting from proposed redevelopment, including noise associated with increased traffic and other operational noise sources.

- Suitability of the site to accommodate redevelopment uses relative to existing noise sources (i.e., I-5).

### **Land Use**

- Existing land uses and land use character on and in the vicinity of the site.
- Impacts to on-site land uses with proposed redevelopment.
- Impacts from transition of the site in terms of mixed-uses and increased density and height limits on off-site uses.
- Compatibility/incompatibility of proposed redevelopment with existing off-site uses and uses to be retained onsite.
- Potential pressure for regulatory changes to occur on adjacent properties, similar to those required for the proposed redevelopment.

### **Relationship to Plans, Policies and Regulations**

- Relationship of the proposed redevelopment to applicable federal, state and local land use plans, policies and development regulations, including the City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan and Seattle Municipal Code. Regulatory changes that would be required for redevelopment of the site (i.e. Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Code changes).
- Relationship of the proposed redevelopment to the existing First Hill Urban Center Neighborhood Plan;
- Relationship of the proposed redevelopment to adjacent neighborhood plans, including the International District Urban Center Village and the Central Area Urban Village.

### **Aesthetics/Light and Glare/Shadows**

- Existing aesthetic character of the site and surrounding area.
- Existing public views of the sites.
- Any designated viewpoints, scenic routes, and/or view corridors in the vicinity of the site (per City of Seattle regulations).
- Existing sources of light and glare on and in the vicinity of the site.
- Changes to the aesthetic character of the site as a result of redevelopment.
- Changes to public views of the sites as a result of the proposed redevelopment.
- Impacts to any designated viewpoints, scenic routes and/or view corridors in the vicinity of the site as a result of the redevelopment.
- Potential impacts to views of designated historic landmarks as a result of redevelopment.
- Potential impacts associated with light and glare as a result of the redevelopment.
- Potential impacts associated with shadows on public spaces as a result of the redevelopment.

### **Historical and Cultural Resources**

- Presence of designated historic, cultural or other archaeological resources on or in the vicinity of the site and potential eligibility of on-site resources.
- Presence of any historic districts (as defined by the City of Seattle) proximate to the site.
- Potential impacts to designated or potentially eligible significant historic, cultural or archaeological resources and/or historic districts as a result of the redevelopment.

## **Transportation**

- Existing street network that provides access to and within the site and the area surrounding the site.
- Existing vehicular traffic conditions and traffic volumes on surrounding street networks.
- Existing pedestrian, bicycle and other non-motorized transportation facilities on and in the vicinity of the site.
- Existing transit facilities within or adjacent to the site.
- Presence of existing safety issues on local streets within and proximate to the site.
- Description of planned transportation and transit projects in the site vicinity, including the potential for street car extension.
- Proposed on-site circulation and parking.
- Projected traffic operations and volumes at build-out (2030), excluding traffic associated with redevelopment;
- Potential impacts of construction traffic on local streets in the vicinity of the site.
- Projected traffic distribution and peak hour level-of-service impacts at key intersections and streets proximate to the site at build-out (2030).
- Impacts of redevelopment on non-motorized transportation facilities and transit facilities proximate to the site.
- Potential safety issues on local streets and at key intersections as a result of added traffic from redevelopment of the site.
- Impacts and benefits of proposed street vacations on access, operations, connectivity and service provision.

## **Public Services**

- Existing staffing, equipment, service levels and any planned improvements to City of Seattle police, fire, and parks and recreation facilities serving the site.
- Existing enrollment, capacity and any planned improvements to Seattle School District schools serving the site.
- Potential impacts to police, fire and parks and recreation services from proposed redevelopment (including relationship of proposed redevelopment to any adopted level of service standards).
- Potential impacts to Seattle Public Schools from proposed redevelopment.
- Proposed parks and recreational facilities associated with site redevelopment.

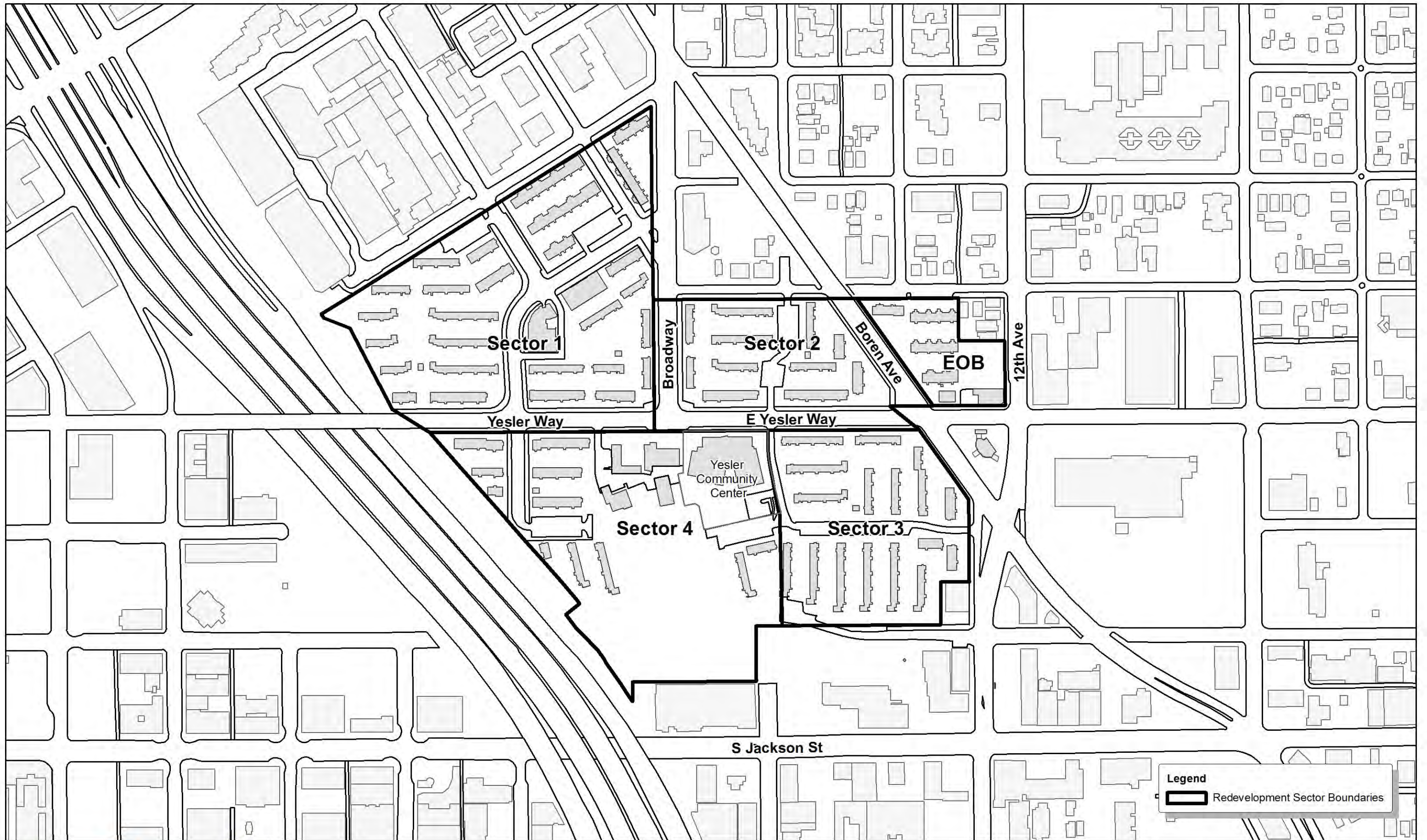
## **Public Utilities**

- Existing utility systems on and in the vicinity of the site, including water, sanitary sewer and electrical systems.
- Existing utility system capacities and any constraints.
- Demand on water, sanitary sewer and electrical systems from proposed redevelopment.
- Any improvements/expansions of utility systems required to serve proposed redevelopment.

## **Socioeconomics/Environmental Justice**

- Existing employment, population and housing levels and demographic characteristics onsite.
- Current and forecasted employment, population and housing levels in the city by neighborhood, including targets for new growth under GMA.

- Estimated population, housing and employment levels and demographic characteristics associated with site redevelopment and their relationship to the City's identified targets and forecasts.
- Impacts of redevelopment on minority or disadvantaged individuals, including from replacement/temporary relocation of housing, changes in community services and land use changes.



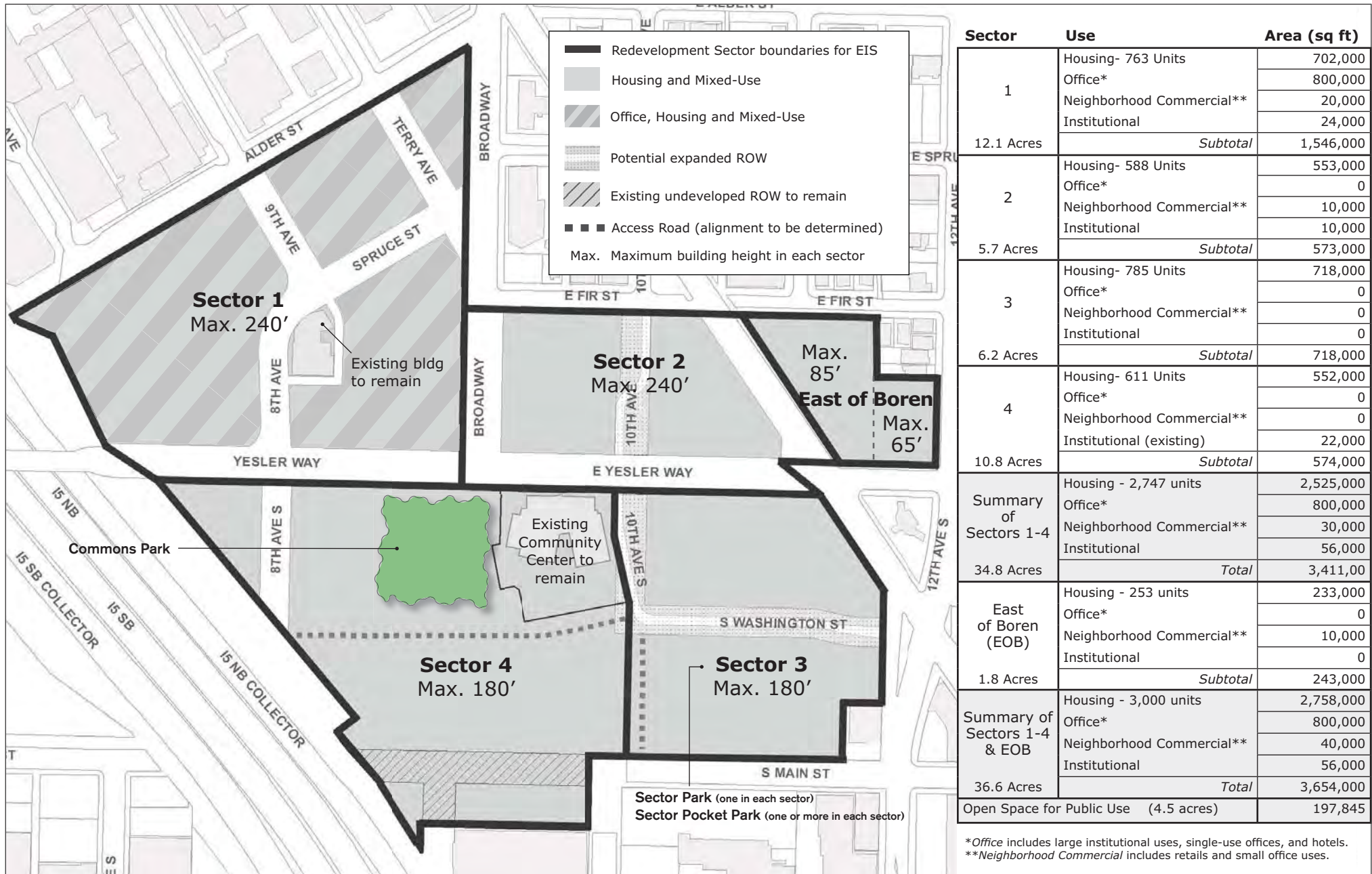
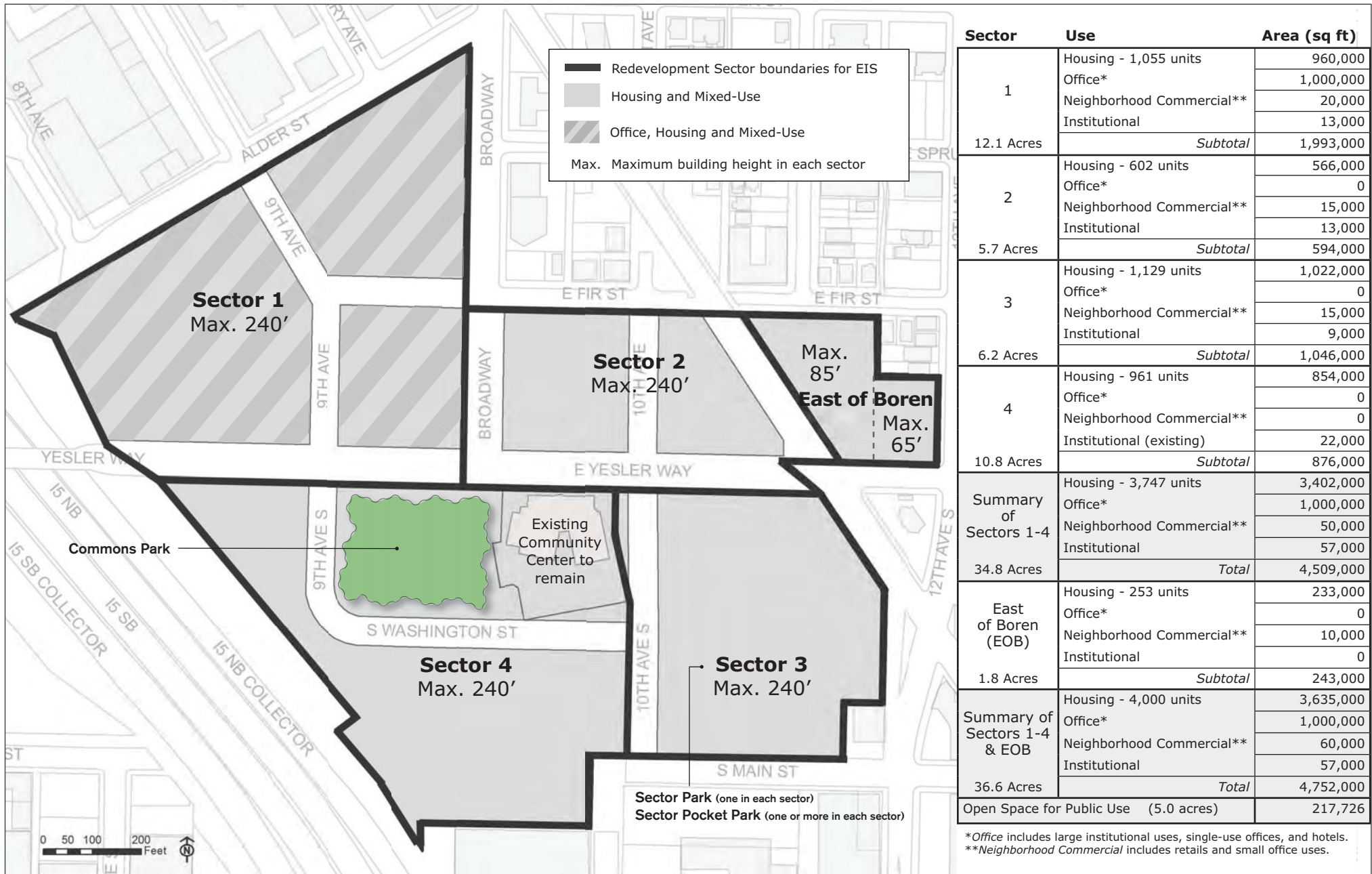


Figure 2  
EIS Alternative 1 - Lower Density

Yesler Terrace  
Redevelopment EIS





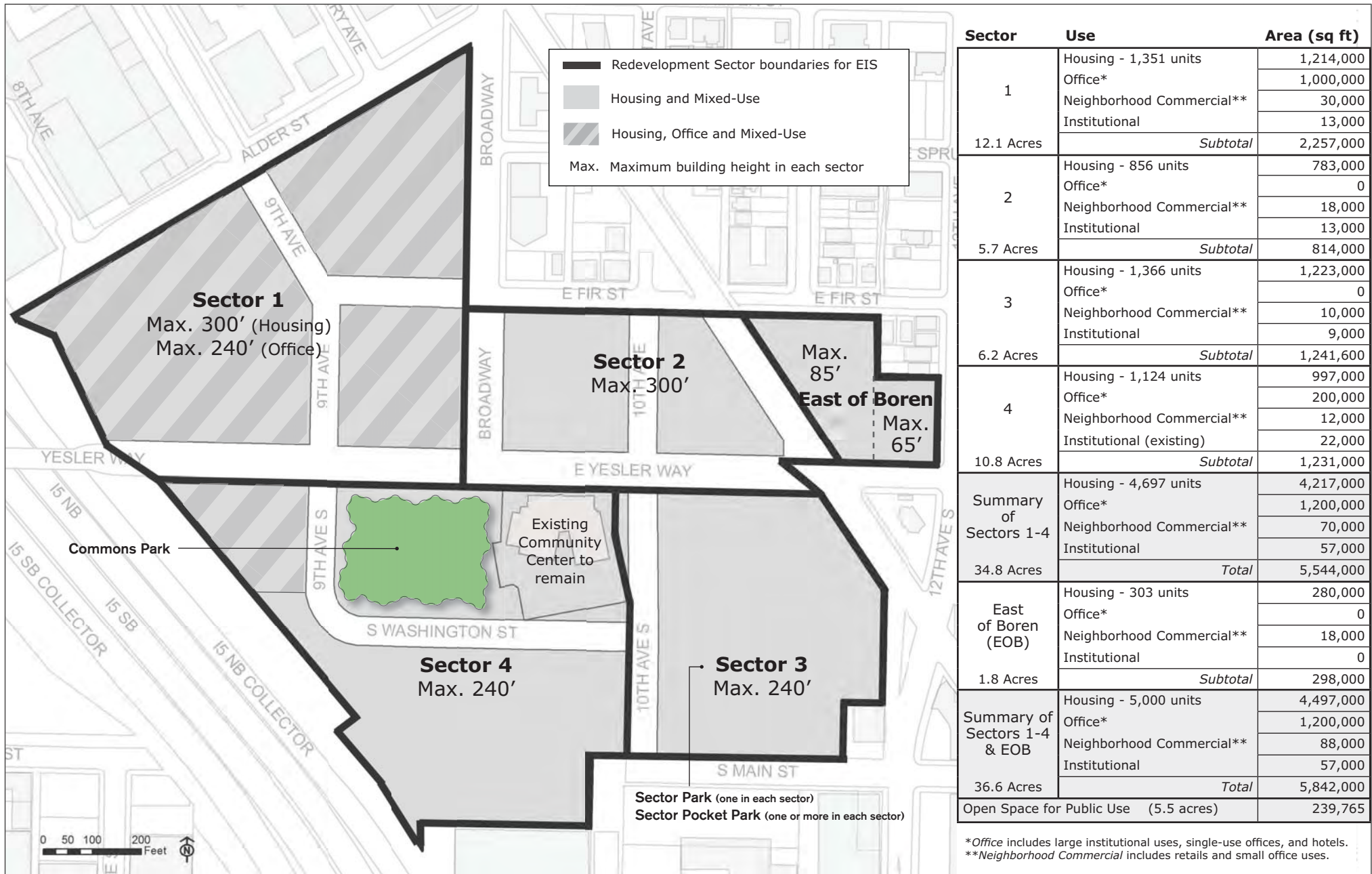
Sector	Use	Area (sq ft)
1 12.1 Acres	Housing - 1,055 units	960,000
	Office*	1,000,000
	Neighborhood Commercial**	20,000
	Institutional	13,000
	<i>Subtotal</i>	1,993,000
2 5.7 Acres	Housing - 602 units	566,000
	Office*	0
	Neighborhood Commercial**	15,000
	Institutional	13,000
	<i>Subtotal</i>	594,000
3 6.2 Acres	Housing - 1,129 units	1,022,000
	Office*	0
	Neighborhood Commercial**	15,000
	Institutional	9,000
	<i>Subtotal</i>	1,046,000
4 10.8 Acres	Housing - 961 units	854,000
	Office*	0
	Neighborhood Commercial**	0
	Institutional (existing)	22,000
	<i>Subtotal</i>	876,000
Summary of Sectors 1-4 34.8 Acres	Housing - 3,747 units	3,402,000
	Office*	1,000,000
	Neighborhood Commercial**	50,000
	Institutional	57,000
	<i>Total</i>	4,509,000
East of Boren (EOB) 1.8 Acres	Housing - 253 units	233,000
	Office*	0
	Neighborhood Commercial**	10,000
	Institutional	0
	<i>Subtotal</i>	243,000
Summary of Sectors 1-4 & EOB 36.6 Acres	Housing - 4,000 units	3,635,000
	Office*	1,000,000
	Neighborhood Commercial**	60,000
	Institutional	57,000
	<i>Total</i>	4,752,000
Open Space for Public Use (5.0 acres)		217,726

\*Office includes large institutional uses, single-use offices, and hotels.  
 \*\*Neighborhood Commercial includes retails and small office uses.

Figure 3  
 EIS Alternative 2 - Medium Density

Yesler Terrace  
 Redevelopment EIS





Sector	Use	Area (sq ft)
1 12.1 Acres	Housing - 1,351 units	1,214,000
	Office*	1,000,000
	Neighborhood Commercial**	30,000
	Institutional	13,000
	<i>Subtotal</i>	2,257,000
2 5.7 Acres	Housing - 856 units	783,000
	Office*	0
	Neighborhood Commercial**	18,000
	Institutional	13,000
	<i>Subtotal</i>	814,000
3 6.2 Acres	Housing - 1,366 units	1,223,000
	Office*	0
	Neighborhood Commercial**	10,000
	Institutional	9,000
	<i>Subtotal</i>	1,241,600
4 10.8 Acres	Housing - 1,124 units	997,000
	Office*	200,000
	Neighborhood Commercial**	12,000
	Institutional (existing)	22,000
	<i>Subtotal</i>	1,231,000
Summary of Sectors 1-4 34.8 Acres	Housing - 4,697 units	4,217,000
	Office*	1,200,000
	Neighborhood Commercial**	70,000
	Institutional	57,000
	<i>Total</i>	5,544,000
East of Boren (EOB) 1.8 Acres	Housing - 303 units	280,000
	Office*	0
	Neighborhood Commercial**	18,000
	Institutional	0
	<i>Subtotal</i>	298,000
Summary of Sectors 1-4 & EOB 36.6 Acres	Housing - 5,000 units	4,497,000
	Office*	1,200,000
	Neighborhood Commercial**	88,000
	Institutional	57,000
	<i>Total</i>	5,842,000
Open Space for Public Use (5.5 acres)		239,765

\*Office includes large institutional uses, single-use offices, and hotels.  
 \*\*Neighborhood Commercial includes retails and small office uses.

Figure 4  
 EIS Alternative 3 - Higher Density

Yesler Terrace  
 Redevelopment EIS



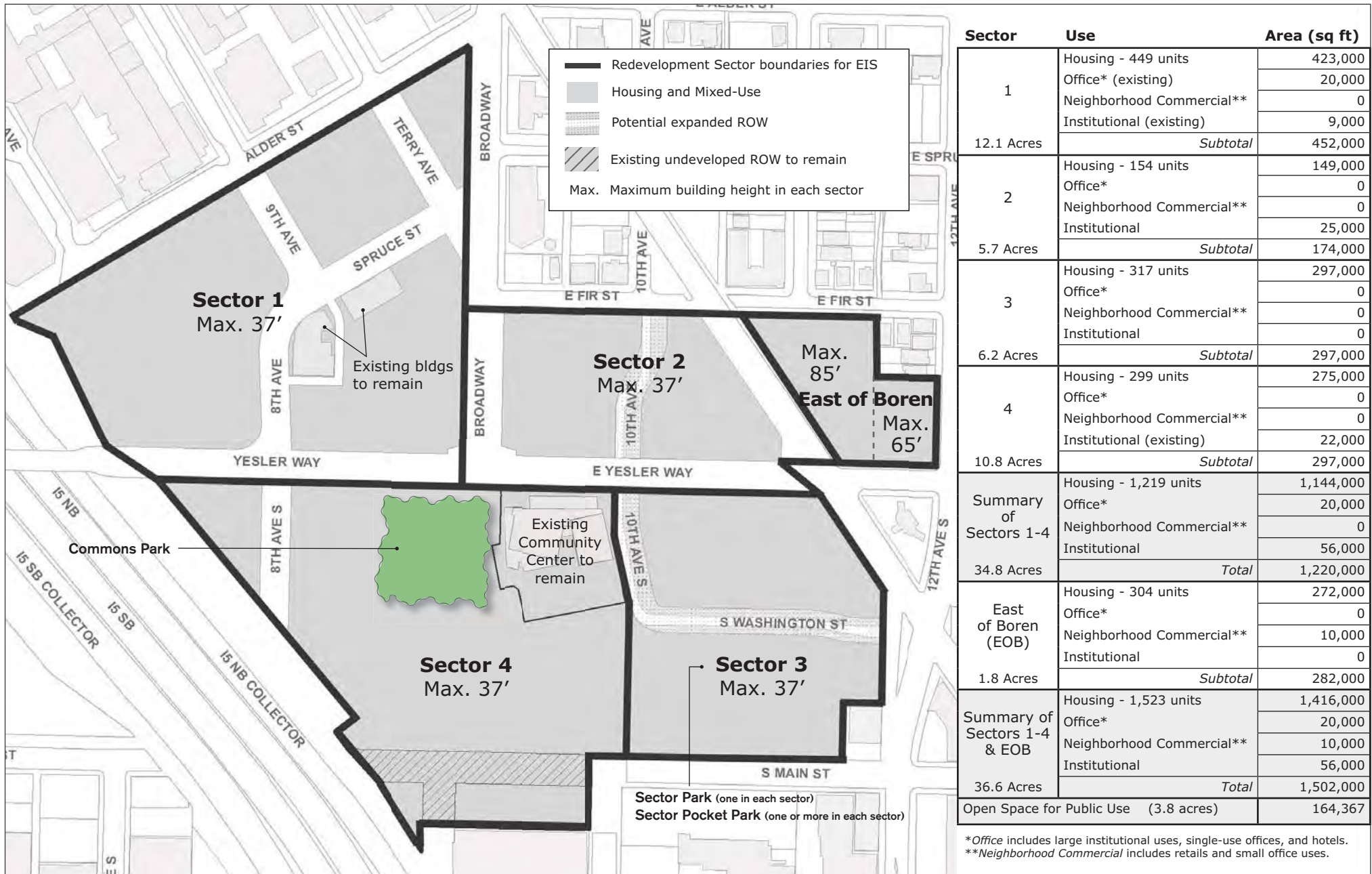


Figure 5  
EIS Alternative 4 - Existing Zoning

Yesler Terrace  
Redevelopment EIS

