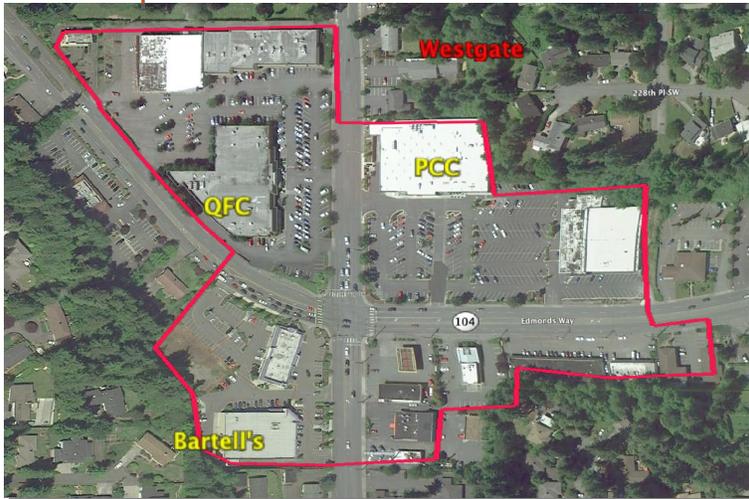


*Westgate Village
and Five Corners
Shopping Centers*

EDMONDS SPECIAL DISTRICTS



Sites in Context

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I. Introduction

The Edmonds Special Districts project is a three-phase collaborative effort between the City of Edmonds, undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Washington (“Project Team”), and Cascade Land Conservancy. The purpose of this project is to develop conceptual alternatives for future redevelopment of the Westgate Village and Five Corners shopping centers, and lay groundwork with the surrounding community for involvement in this process. Phase I was conducted by a 3-person team of undergraduate students in the Community, Environment, and Planning major at the University of Washington from October through December 2010.

Scope of Work

The Phase I team was charged with completing the reconnaissance work which supports the remaining two phases. Working with City of Edmonds representatives Rob Chave, Planning Manager, and Stephen Clifton, Community Services and Economic Development Director, and under the advisement of project manager Jill Sterrett, University of Washington Professor, the team chose to focus on providing preliminary studies about current use and conditions at each site.

The deliverables consist of the following:

- A survey of residents immediately surrounding the Westgate and Five Corners shopping centers, concerning current use and potential improvements
- A database of businesses for each area which documents interest and potential involvement in the future of this project
- A GIS map, which displays various site analyses completed over the past 10 weeks.

The data the team gathered is intended entirely to be preliminary, but serves to identify areas of further research.

Sites

The study areas are the Westgate Village (Westgate, Westgate Center) and Five Corners shopping centers, loosely defined by zoning and current use.

Location

The sites are located on major commute routes between the Interstate 5 / State Route 99 and downtown Edmonds. Westgate Village straddles the intersection of Edmonds Way (SR-104) and 100th Avenue West. There are two separate governmental entities, Washington State Department of Transportation and the City of Edmonds, governing the operation and maintenance of the roads. Five Corners surrounds the intersection of Bowdoin Way, Main Street, 83rd Avenue West, 84th Avenue West, and 212th Avenue Southwest. As a large intersection controlled only by stop signs, a turning circle or roundabout may be installed in this intersection in the future to improve operations and safety. These sites both function as gateways to downtown Edmonds and the waterfront due to the location along major transportation corridors.

Conditions

Both sites have a large collection of building styles. Westgate is characterized by larger corporate businesses such as QFC, Starbucks, Bartell's, and PCC, and some surrounding strip development. Buildings generally have large setbacks for high-capacity parking lots and several vacancies. The central core of Westgate Village is zoned for neighborhood business (NB), with a small patch of neighborhood commercial (NC) to the north and predominantly single-family residential zoning surrounding the study area.

By contrast, Five Corners does not have any large corporate chains, but still features strip-style development and minimalist architecture with plain facades. Because businesses are smaller, setbacks are not as large and street parking supplements the parking lots. The Five Corners core is zoned NB and surrounded by single- and multifamily residential zoning.

II. Methods

Surveys

Based on a meeting with Rob Chave and Stephen Clifton, the project team created two surveys to gather information about the residential and business communities.

The purpose of the residential survey was to gather information about how Edmonds residents use Five Corners and Westgate Village. We were interested in the frequency of people passing through and stopping at the sites, mode of transportation, businesses or activities visited/used, positive and negative aspects of the sites, and any improvements that might be made to the sites. The survey included comment boxes when appropriate for the purpose of allowing respondents freedom in their answers. Our intent was to receive a statistically significant number of responses to establish general trends in people's interest and use of the site. This data will guide the Phase II team in their community engagement efforts.

The City of Edmonds sent a mailer out to approximately 2,200 households within a 2000-ft radius around the center of each site; single-family residences and condos were both included. The mailer explained the purpose of the survey and provided a link for the online survey. A few local businesses showed support for the survey by providing residents a small incentive to complete it. As of December 16, 2010, one hundred seventy-two people have taken the survey and we are beginning to see trends in the data. The survey will be left open through January, allowing thorough data collection for the Phase II team.

The second survey is intended to gather information about redeveloping and focuses on businesses and property owners. The survey is being conducted in an informal manner through e-mail, telephone, or in-person conversations. Several standard questions are being asked of all participants, with the option to discuss questions particular to an individual business afterward. The questions ask specifically about conditions under which properties might be redeveloped and why an owner chose to locate their business in Edmonds and more specifically, within Westgate or Five Corners commercial areas. Because no comprehensive business contact information database was available, the team spent considerable time gathering this information. The survey has been administered to several businesses and level of interest has been determined for all Westgate and Five Corners business and property owners. This process will be continued through the next phase.

Site Analysis

With the assistance of Eric Scharnhorst, a Master of Urban Planning representative for the Phase II team, our team has completed a preliminary site analysis using an adapted form of Gehl Architects' 12 quality criteria for public spaces¹. This framework is a fairly subjective and brief method of assessing an area, but serves to describe the "feel" of the space for users. Twelve criteria in three categories are used to evaluate the site (see Table 1 below).

Protection	Comfort	Enjoyment
Protection against...	Possibilities for...	
Traffic and accidents	Walking	Scale
Crime and violence	Standing/staying	Possibilities for enjoying positive aspects of climate
Unpleasant sense experiences	Sitting	Aesthetic quality/positive sense experiences
	Seeing	
	Hearing/talking	
	Play/unfolding activities	

Table 1: Adaptation of Gehl Architects' public spaces analysis. Credit: Eric Scharnhorst.

¹ Gehl, Jan. *Cities for People*. Washington, DC. Island Press. 2010. Print.

Each team member and Mr. Scharnhorst “graded” Westgate Village, Five Corners, and the downtown intersection of 5th Avenue and Main Street in each category using a positive, neutral, or negative response, based on how each grader felt within each commercial area. For example, Westgate Center received a negative for Protection Against Unpleasant Sense Experiences because there was little to no protection from traffic or noise and no alternatives for different weather conditions.

This qualitative data led to a variety of different options for follow-up analyses. Consultation with Mr. Scharnhorst and Ms. Sterrett focused the team’s further research on quantitative use data and pedestrian access. The project team observed the sites, looking for different kinds of activities and the infrastructure which would support them, including counting outdoor seating, bicycle parking and human-scale sidewalk lighting. They also assessed access for three types of transportation: driving, walking, and bicycling. To assess driving, the team totaled the number of parking spaces within both Westgate Village and Five Corners and, over the course of several weeks, counted the number of parking spaces used during certain times of the day. Pedestrians and bicyclists were counted at the same time, and the team performed an audit of bicycle parking and transit stops at each site.

Additionally, the team completed a second qualitative site analysis focused on walking and access. They walked for 10 minutes along each major corridor serving Westgate Village and Five Corners, noting any strengths and weaknesses, obstacles, a sense of enclosure, light, and feelings (or lack thereof) of safety for each roadway.

GIS and Infographics

To best convey the qualitative and quantitative data gathered, the team created a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) map database and a series of infographics (visual representations of information). They input numerical data into existing files and created new shapefiles for walking and study area boundaries, locations of amenities (bike parking, human-scale lights, outdoor seating, transit), and the survey mailer distribution. The qualitative data gathered during the preliminary site analysis is displayed in an infographic modeled on the template Mr. Scharnhorst provided for the adapted Gehl Architects’ analysis.

III. Data

Community Engagement

Trends from our surveys reveal, unsurprisingly, that improved area walkability and more attention to functionality and user needs are desired changes for the two sites. Supporting users with new amenities would unify the shopping centers and increase use.

Results from Community Survey

It should be noted that this data is not a precise representation of all Edmonds citizens. Survey results indicate that the youth and the elderly are under-represented and women represent a majority of our responses by a factor of 3-to-2.

Since the respondents live within close proximity of the sites, they have knowledge and frequently pass by each commercial area. When asked about the frequency of travelling by each area, 63.4% of respondents stated that they passed by Westgate four or more times per week with over half of that group passing by more than ten times per week. The data from Five Corners was very comparable with 58.9% of respondents passing by four or more times per week and two-thirds of those passing by more than ten times per week.

Both commercial areas are situated along major transportation corridor and can be characterized as gateways to downtown Edmonds. The most popular destinations for those passing by Westgate were downtown Edmonds, I-5, and the Costco/Home Depot shopping center. The most popular destinations for those passing by Five Corners were downtown Edmonds, SR-99, and I-5.

Westgate shopping area is a place respondents visit more periodically: slightly more than 70% of respondents visit the site at least once a week. This is in stark contrast to Five corners where only 37.5% of respondents visit at least once a week. Over 44% of respondents stated that they visit Five Corners less than once per month. Drawing from respondents' comments, these results are likely due to the types of stores available. Westgate has two grocery stores, i.e., PCC and QFC that largely draw families for their weekly food shopping. The coffee shops and Mieko's Fitness are the large draws at Five Corners.

The feel of each area is unique. Five Corners is located in an area that is quieter and more residential while Westgate is situated along a very busy state route. When we asked respondents how they typically travelled to each site, we found that people were more inclined to bike or walk to Five Corners than to Westgate. Further analysis should be done to determine why. Based on survey comments and our observations, the team thinks that it may have to do with the overall feeling of safety, the fact that many people walk the Main St. hill for exercise, and the need to bring large amounts of groceries home from the markets that dominate the Westgate site.

When asked how the sites can be improved, respondents overwhelmingly stated they wanted more public spaces at both sites (i.e. outdoor cafes, plazas, and public meeting spots). This was the top suggestion in both instances with 54.6% and 56.7% choosing it in their top three suggestions for Westgate and Five Corners respectively. For Westgate, other popular choices were improved area walkability and a bakery. For Five Corners, respondents also favored more stores for services (i.e. haircuts and shoe repair), and a bakery.

These results will be used to help guide Phase II's public forums and should only be viewed a guidance at this juncture. See Appendix A for fully diagrammed results.

Additional Comments from Survey

Since the survey included a space for the public to add their own suggestions, some of the suggestions are highlighted below.

Reasons why they choose to drive rather than walk:

Westgate - Have small children, cannot carry bags home, convenience, too far to walk, multiple destinations, narrow and unsafe sidewalks, bike lanes not adequate, too noisy and polluted, fast cars, bad weather, infrequency of buses, walk unpleasant, have disabilities, dangerous to cross street, sense of autonomy.

Five Corners – Unsafe street crossings, lack of bike lanes, multiple destinations, no sidewalks on portions of walk, no bus route on Bowdoin Way, small kids/pets in car, too far, too hilly, previous bus routes used no longer run, picking up to go food.

Improvements would they like to see:

Westgate – Better bus access, fill vacancies, a quality restaurant, skate park, farmers market, traffic management, clothing store, nothing.

Five Corners – Traffic control, better restaurants, improve aesthetics/architecture, grocery store, services, place for high school kids to hang out, retail, roundabout.

Business Survey

The survey to business and property owners within the Westgate and Five Corners shopping centers lays the groundwork for future collaboration between the Phase II and III teams, the City, and the business community at the two sites. This survey was initially going to be administered using a database of contact information provided by the City, however, the team found this to be insufficient and, thus, began a survey process by assembling an excel document which contains a point of contact with complete information for each business, and notes regarding preferred contact method, previous contacts made by the Phase I team, and business interest in level of involvement. Many businesses were not prepared or interested in participating in the survey at this time. However, several showed interest in future involvement.

The survey includes these questions:

- Why did you choose to locate your business/property in Edmonds?
- Why did you choose this particular site in Edmonds?
- Have you considered redevelopment?
- If you have considered redeveloping, what are issues (zoning, economic, etc.) that have held you back?

- What improvements to the site are of highest priority to you?

This information is still being gathered through email and in-person interviews, and will be provided to the Phase II team in January, 2011. Preliminary trends show an overall aversion to change, with the exception of a minority that sees potential in the process. Language has been key when talking with business member: the term redevelopment elicits strong negative reactions, so for ease of communication, the terms 'development' and 'revitalization' are/were preferred.

Site Analyses

Our site analyses show the same results as the surveys. Weaknesses in functionality and walkability fail to unify the sites and promote pedestrian circulation. Both sites are heavily oriented to automobiles, rather than supporting a diversity of transportation modes, and lack human scale.

Qualitative Site Analysis

Project team members rated each of the twelve categories with either a plus for positive experience, a minus for a negative experience, or nothing if their experience was neutral. The individual results were then tallied and the graphics were assigned a color to represent how many felt positive, negative, or were undecided. Each space was rated while standing on sidewalks at the main intersections of each area.

The results highlight the weaknesses and opportunities for change at Westgate and Five Corners. The team's use of the adapted Gehl Architects' analysis revealed that downtown Edmonds felt safer, livelier, and more vibrant, receiving a score of 10.8/12 points. Comparatively, Westgate shopping center received 2/12 points, and Five Corners received 3.3/12 points. This analysis is completely qualitative, but serves as a baseline for our guiding further investigation (see Appendix B for template and results).

Our collective experience at Westgate revealed that the project team shared negative opinions in most categories. Westgate received mostly bright red marks indicating zero positive experiences. The categories that fared better were the ability to see, provided by the openness of the streetscape, and crime and violence, based on the general feeling of the area being safe to walk. Five Corners was rated slightly better. Like Westgate, it still was poorly received, but scored higher for safety related to traffic/accidents, walkability, and crime and violence.

We also rated downtown Edmonds as a comparable because the project considers it a successful public space. The feeling the team got from downtown was very well received by all, scoring highly in each category except for opportunities to play.

Accessibility and Transportation

The project team's observations related to transportation generally concern accessibility and type. The team categorized transportation options as: driving, bicycling, walking/public transit use. Recognizing that each of these

categories requires different infrastructure and that the current infrastructure is of varying quality, the team performed an audit to track the strengths and weaknesses of each site. As mentioned previously, both sites emphasize driving and cars over bicycling, walking, and the use of public transit.

The team's quantitative methods included measuring parking utilization (see Appendix C), bike infrastructure, and public transit (see Appendix D). The team divided the sites into several distinct "lots" and counted the capacity of each. Then, over the course of several weeks, they counted the usage of the lots, trying to gain an even distribution of times and days. The team found that at Westgate Village, the QFC lot had the highest use, between 40.8% and 84.9% full. At Five Corners, the Mieko's/Caffe Ladro lot was most used, with a high of 87.9% and a low of 35.8% in use. The rest of the lots were less than 50% full every time we counted.

Bicycling at either Westgate or Five Corners is inconvenient at best and perhaps less safe at worst. Bike parking at Five Corners is difficult with a sole bike rack being located against the wall of Mieko's. At Westgate Village, bike parking is abundant but largely unused: Bartell's, Starbucks, QFC, PCC, and Robin Hood Lanes all have one or more bike racks. Bicycling near Westgate Village is not as safe as Five Corners because of fast-moving traffic and only fragmented bicycle lanes. Within the study area there is no infrastructure, road markings, or other protection for bicyclists. In some cases, wide shoulders can be used by bicyclists, but many of these are dedicated to overflow street parking in residential areas. The area in and around the Five Corners study area has no bike lanes, road markings, or wide shoulders/sidewalks for riding. Signage is frequent, but occasionally obstructed by vegetation.

Team member's 10-minute walks focused on the main corridors that carry people into and through the sites and they examined sidewalks, lighting, and crosswalks during each walk. In Westgate Village, many sidewalks were clear and easy to walk: free of plants and litter, level and crack-free, and wide enough for two pedestrians to walk comfortably next to each other. Some sidewalks, though, were overly narrow due to overgrown vegetation, making walking uncomfortable. Infrastructure, too, emphasized driving over alternative modes of transportation. Streets were well lit by overhead lights, but none of these lit sidewalks for pedestrians, making the area dangerous to walk. Similarly, crosswalks were all timed for automobile traffic, rather than pedestrian traffic, and pedestrians had to wait for extended periods of time to cross the five-lane roads.

Five Corners was overall more supportive of pedestrians. Sidewalks were more often clear, though some were narrowed from overgrown vegetation. One route lost sidewalks completely as it progressed into residential areas. Lights were primarily used for streets and cars, but one development provided pedestrian-scale lights for the sidewalks. Crosswalks were marked, but the large and complex intersection is controlled only by stop signs. In some cases crosswalks in the surrounding area had embedded lights to alert cars to a crossing.

Public transit is fairly frequent at both of the areas. Routes are well connected to major hubs at Aurora Village and the Mountlake Terrace transit center and to downtown Edmonds. Buses stop at or very near the center of shopping areas. Buses into downtown Edmonds, however, commence fairly early and many survey responses indicated that the schedules were often incompatible with the needs of pedestrians.

Activity Observations				
	Westgate Village	Five Corners	Downtown Edmonds	Notes
Pedestrians	1	13	86	Counted for 10 minutes
Bicyclists	1	0	-	
Bike racks	6	1	-	

Street furniture	4 public benches Café seating at Starbucks, PCC, QFC	0 public seating Café seating at Caffè Ladro	-	
Human-scale lights	0	2	-	

IV. Discussion/Conclusion

The central goal for the Edmonds Special Districts project in Phase I was to determine how users experience the Westgate Village and Five Corners shopping areas. Surveys focused on contextualizing how the sites fit into peoples' daily lives, and site analyses assessed access and usability for the sites. What preliminary data implies is that an orientation to automobiles prevents widespread use of alternative modes of transportation and a lack of human scale discourages staying in either Westgate Village or Five Corners.

While analysis of the sites shows good public transportation connections—there are plenty of bus stops in the areas, survey results currently show that most people never take the bus when visiting Westgate and Five Corners. This is definitely an area that can be strengthened. Many of the stops often had people waiting at them, which points towards use and that even if they are not going to the bus stops with the intention of visiting the sites, there is still a chance that they could stop by one of the businesses. The project team did notice that none of the bus stops were covered, increasing discomfort for those who do take the bus.

Biking is another alternative transportation method that has a high potential. However, there is little to no bike racks at the two locations. PCC and Mieko's both have bike racks, but they are extremely underutilized. Additionally, biking and walking is fairly undesirable at Westgate because of the dense traffic and noise. At Five Corners, the area is more conducive to biking and walking, but there are locations in the area where the sidewalk disappears, and the main intersection makes navigation very confusing.

The shortcomings of Westgate and Five Corners in the Gehl Analysis are typical of many similar suburban commercial developments. The areas are oriented to cars for ease of coming and going. As a result, the user has an unpleasant sense experience. There are little to no places for sitting, standing and staying, or outdoor activity. The scale of the built environment is oriented for cars. There are no public lights at a human scale, only taller lights used to light larger areas of streets for cars and pedestrians. If the environment was to become more pedestrian friendly, and the aesthetic qualities were more developed, the climate would be much more enjoyable.

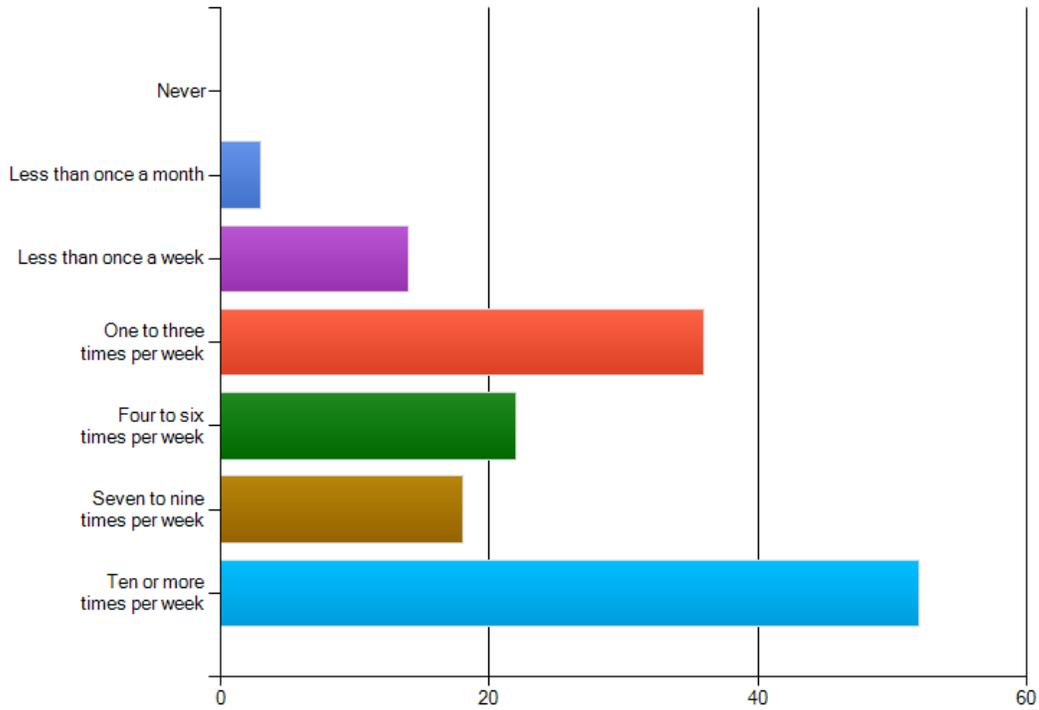
Additionally, Edmonds Way is a highly populated state road that ushers cars to and from the ferry. The density of cars makes for an environment that is hard to hear and communicate, which is something that needs to be considered in future plans, as it is unlikely that changes along the roadway can take place anytime soon.

There are definite successes at each location that can be built upon. The open sightlines at Westgate provide an area that feels safe for users. Five Corners has less dense roads nearby, such as Main Street, and a neighborhood-feel that are already being used by joggers and walkers. If the intersection included a roundabout and was made more pedestrian friendly, it is conceivable that more people would consider walking. In both areas, users feel safe from crime and violence.

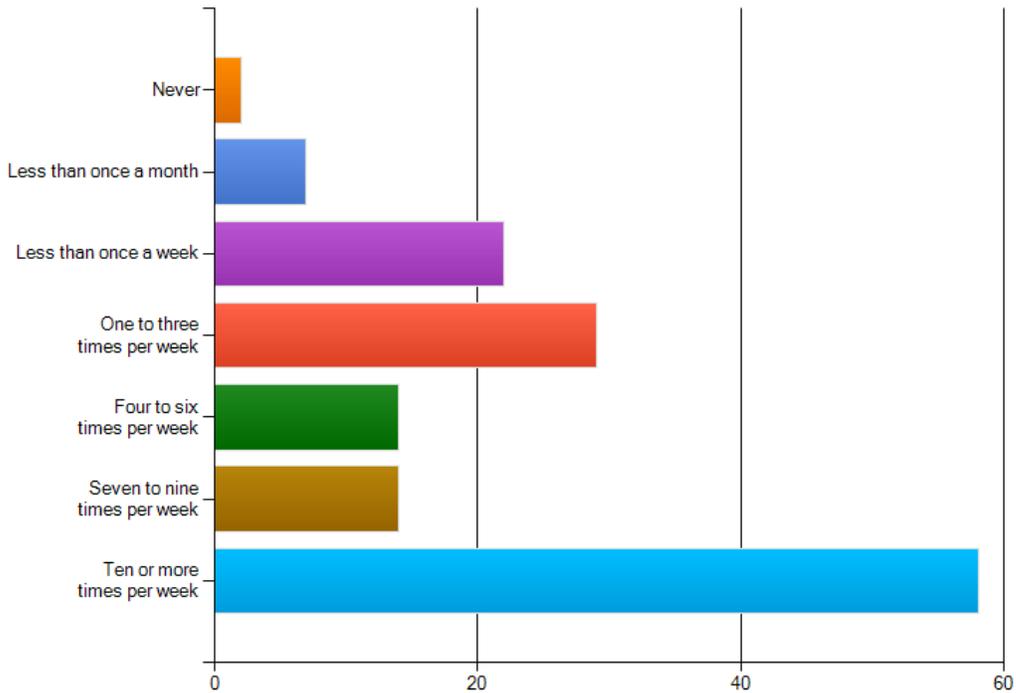
Appendix A: Survey Charts

The following charts were taken directly from the SurveyMonkey online service on December 16, 2010, with approximately 172 respondents.

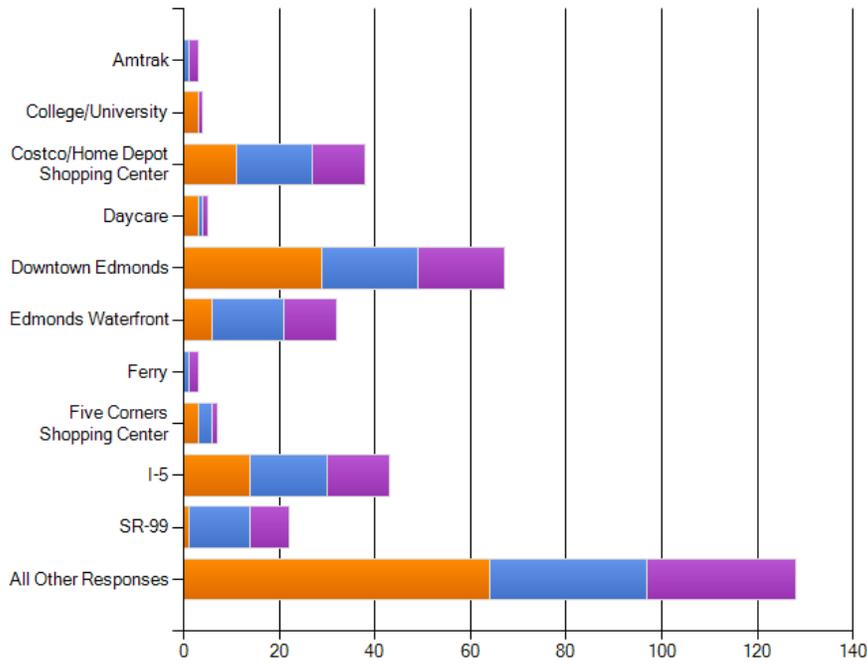
How often do you directly pass by the Westgate shopping area? A round trip equals two passes.



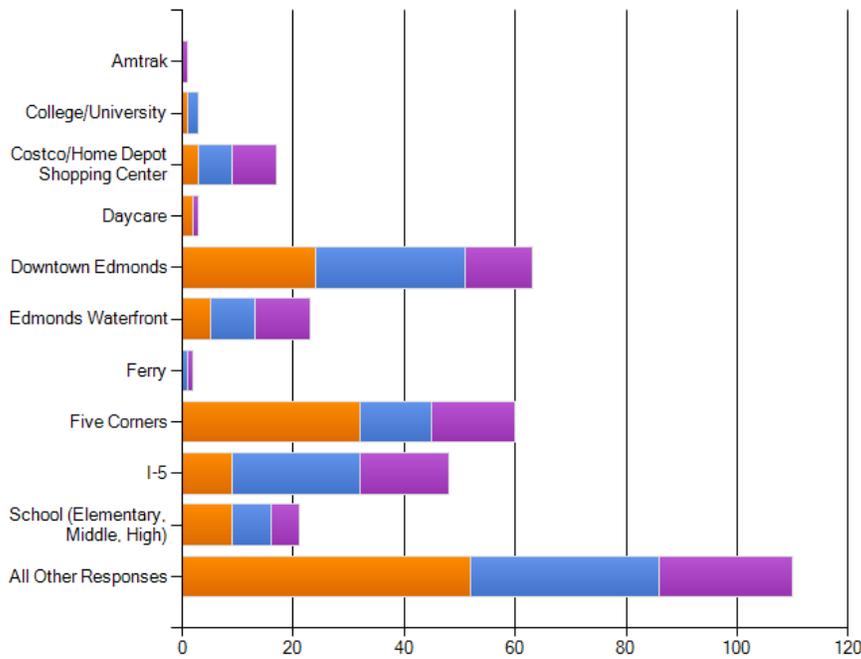
How often do you directly pass by Five Corners shopping area? Consider a round-trip two passes.



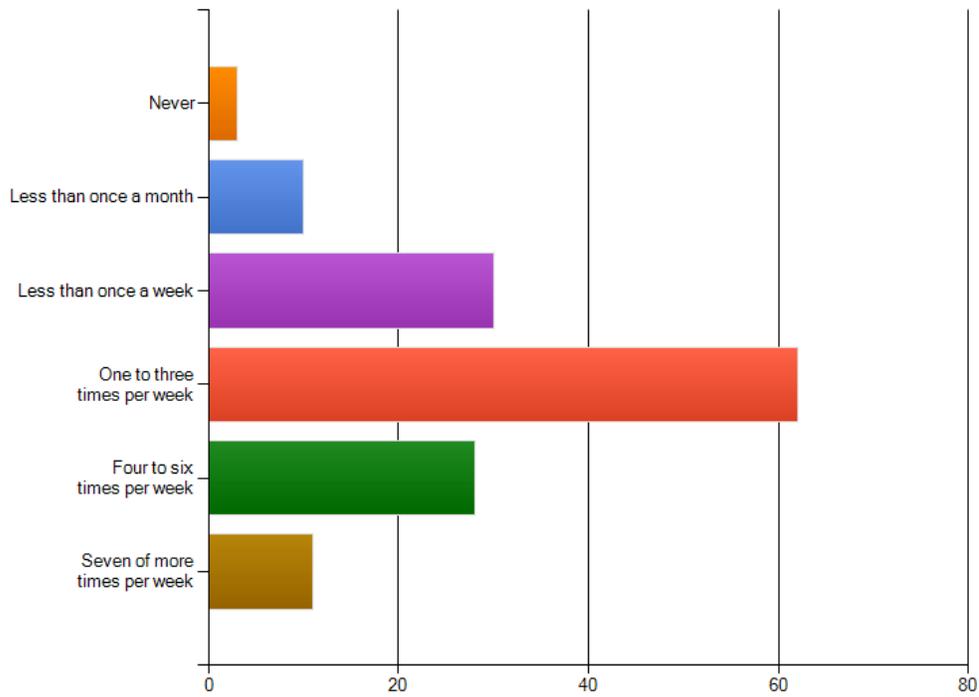
When you travel to or through the Westgate shopping area from your residence, where are you most likely heading? Please identify only your top three choices, ranking them 1, 2, and 3. If you choose "other," make only two additional selections, leaving the ranking for "other" blank.



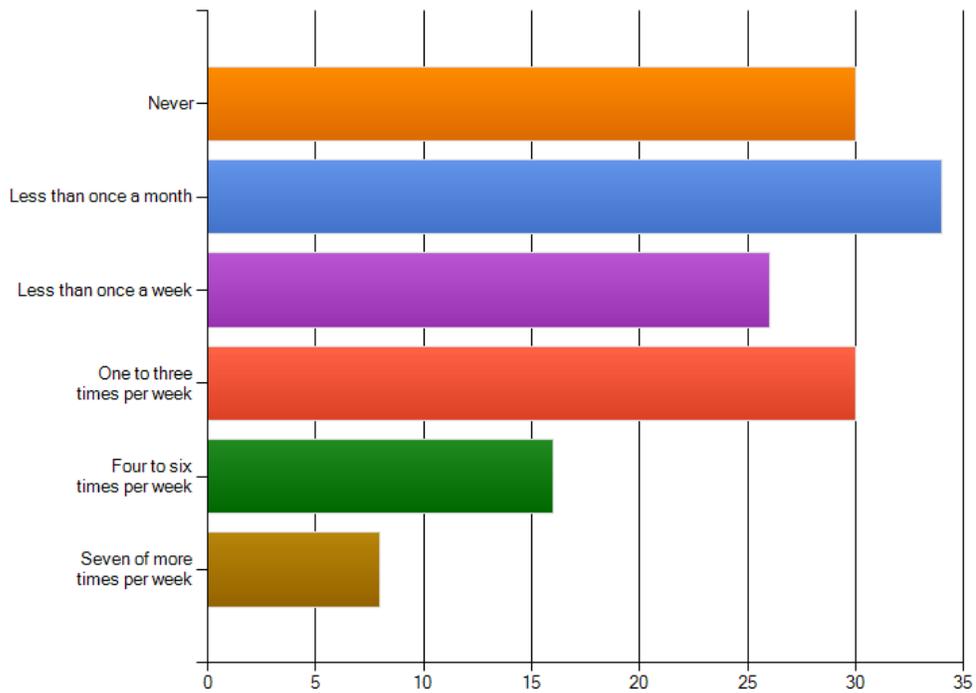
When you travel to or through the Five Corners area from your residence, where are you most likely heading? Please identify only your top three choices, ranking them 1, 2, and 3. If you choose "other," make only two additional selections, leaving the ranking for "other" blank.



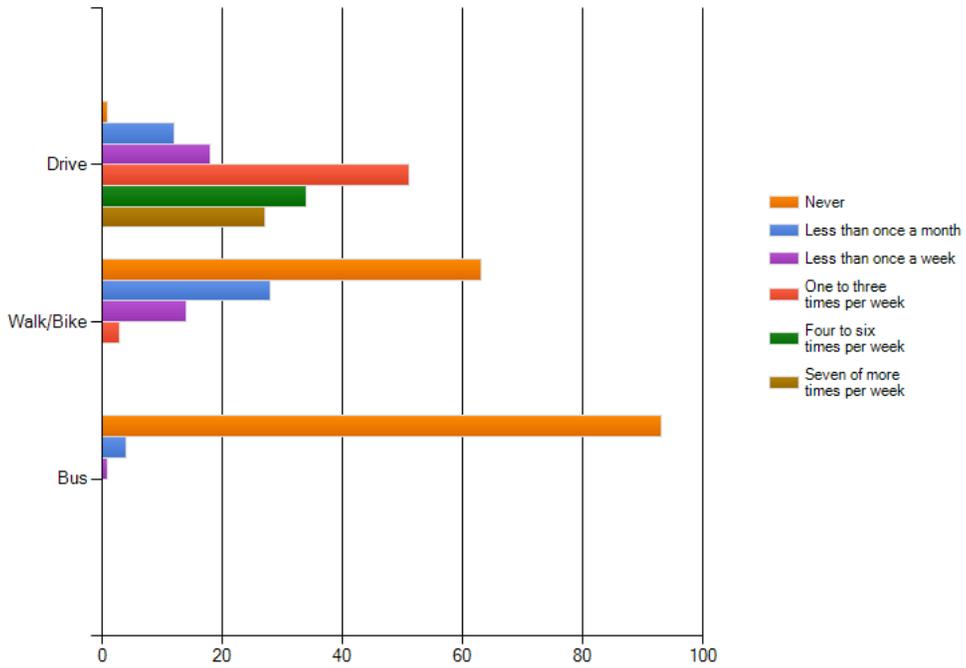
On average, how often do you stop at the Westgate shopping area?



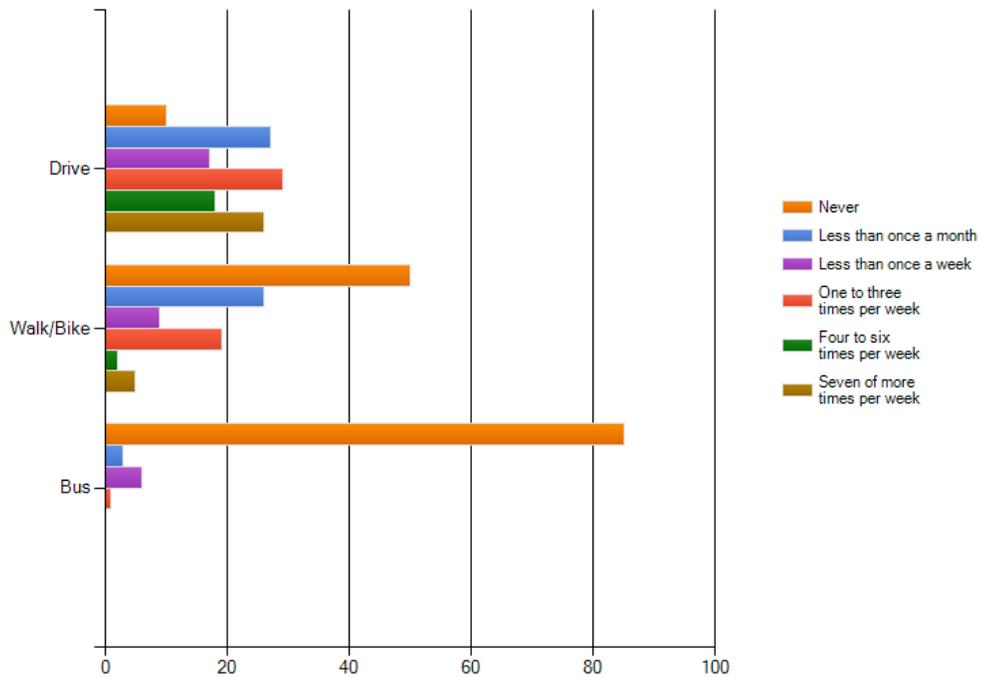
On average, how often do you stop at the Five Corners shopping area?



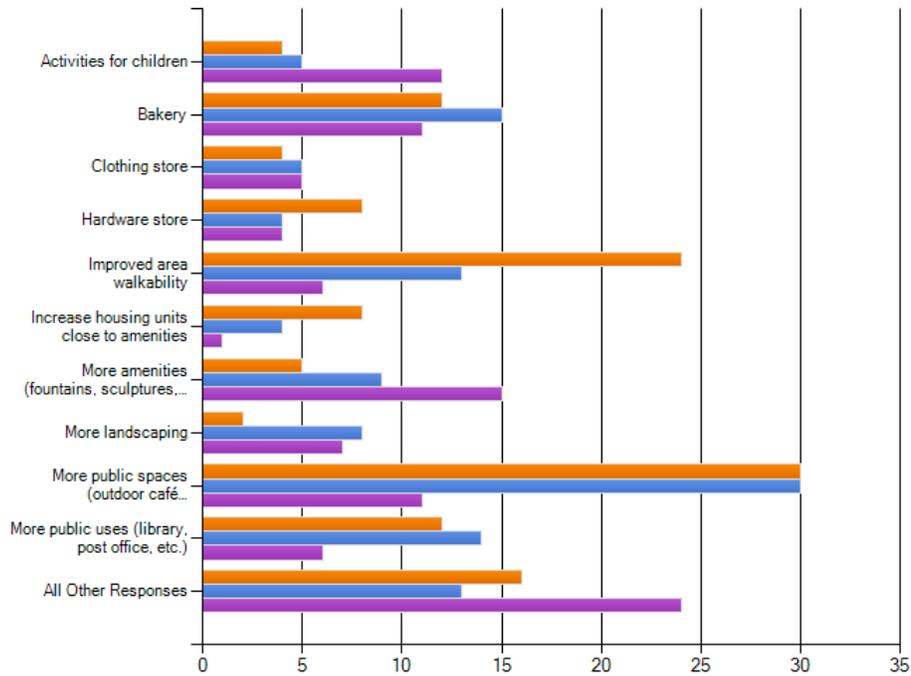
When stopping at the Westgate shopping area, how often, on average, do you use one of the methods below?



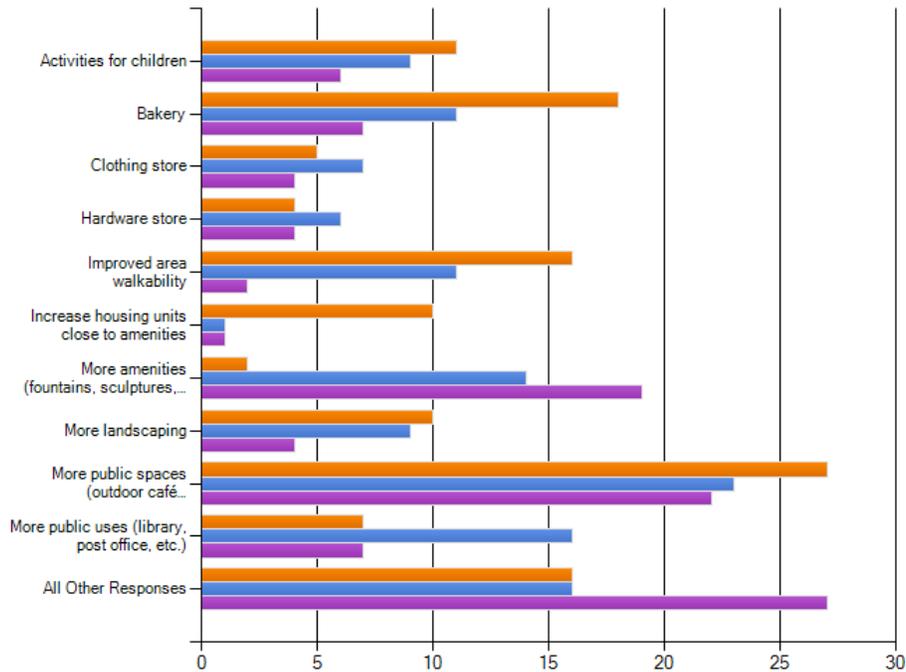
When stopping at the Five Corners shopping area, how often, on average, do you use one of the methods below?



How can the Westgate shopping area be improved? Please identify only your top three choices, ranking them 1, 2, and 3. If you choose "other," make only two additional selections, leaving the rank for "other" blank.



How can the Five Corners shopping area be improved? Please identify only your top three choices, ranking them 1, 2, and 3. If you choose "other," make only two additional selections, leaving the rank for "other" blank.

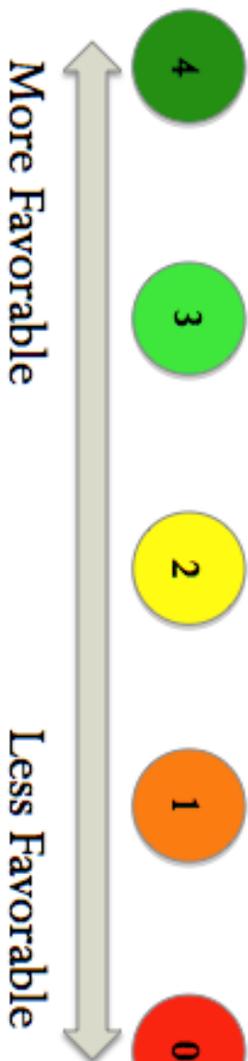
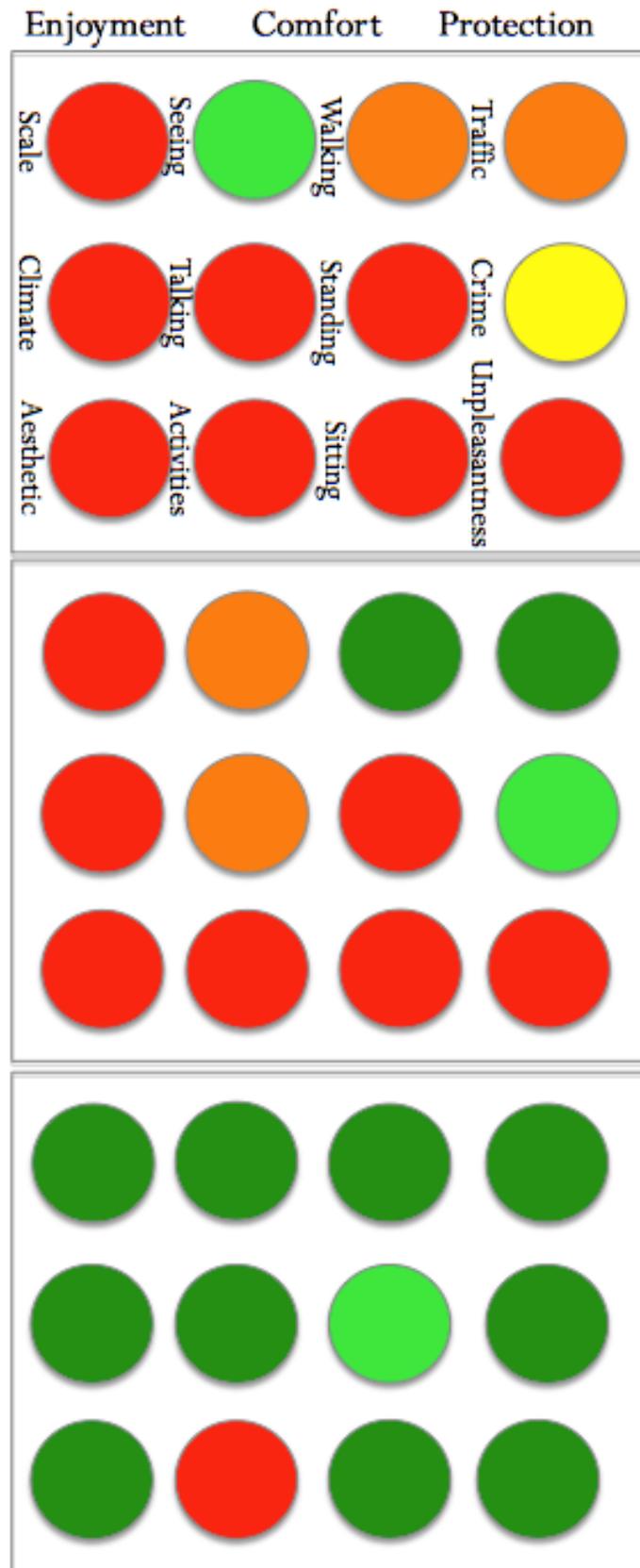


First Impressions

Westgate

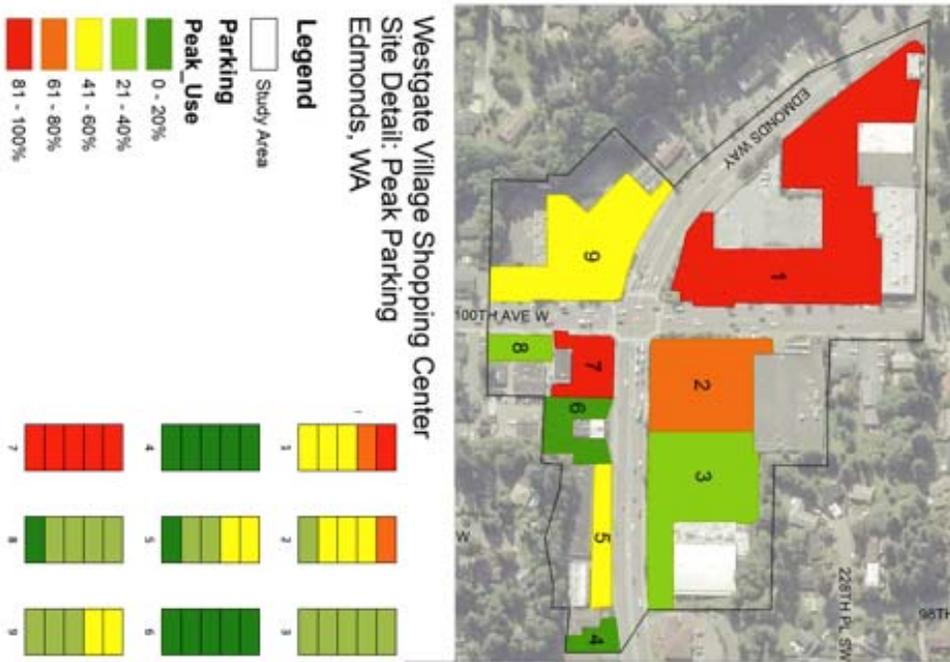
Five Corners

Downtown
(5th and Main)



Appendix C: Parking Utilization Data

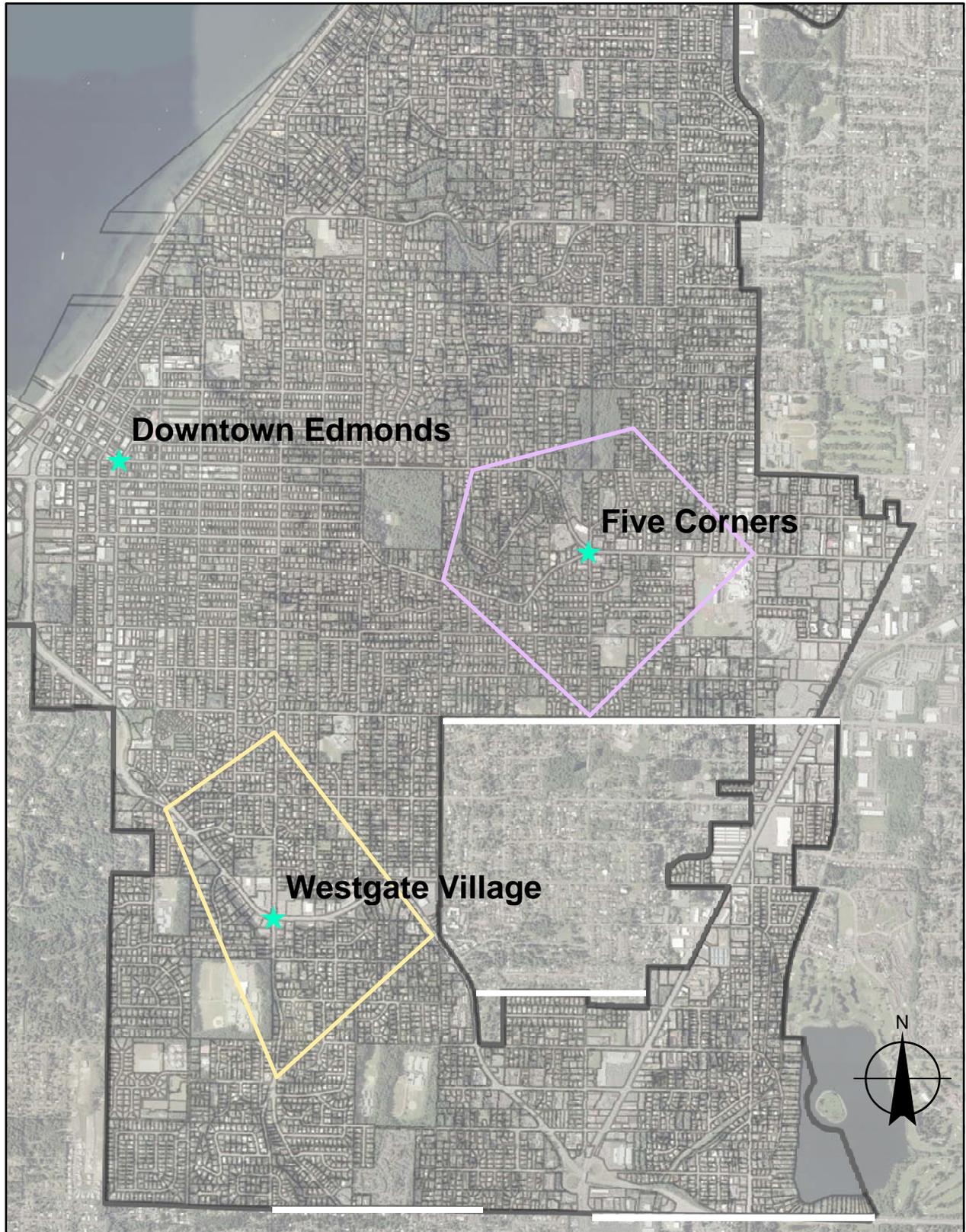
Parking Utilization



*The team collected counts from each parking lot at various times. Each box represents a data point. They are ordered according to utilization.

Appendix D: GIS Maps

Neighborhood Commercial Districts Edmonds, WA



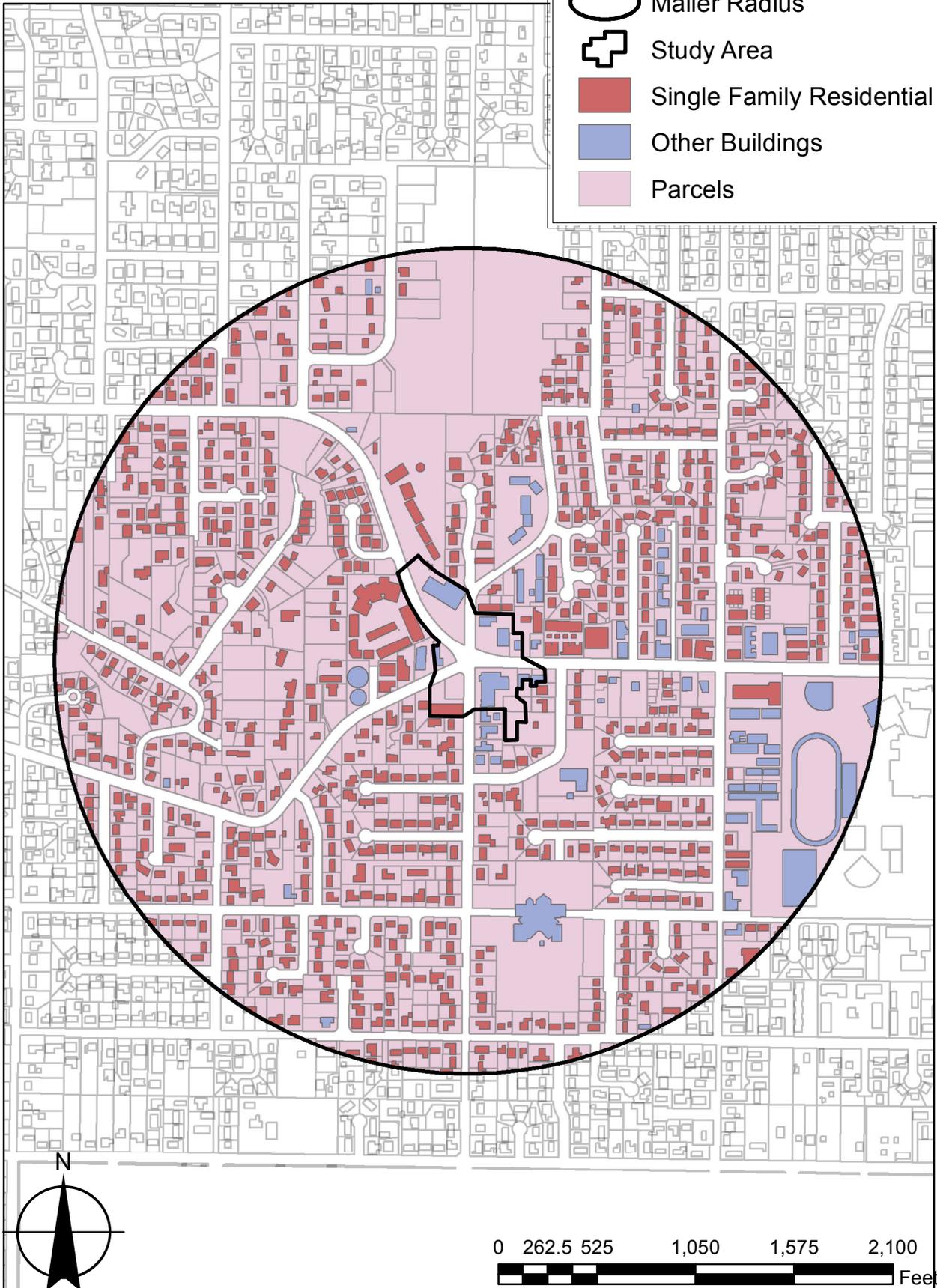
Legend

-  City Boundary
-  Five Corners
-  Westgate Village

0 625 1,250 2,500 3,750 Feet

Legend

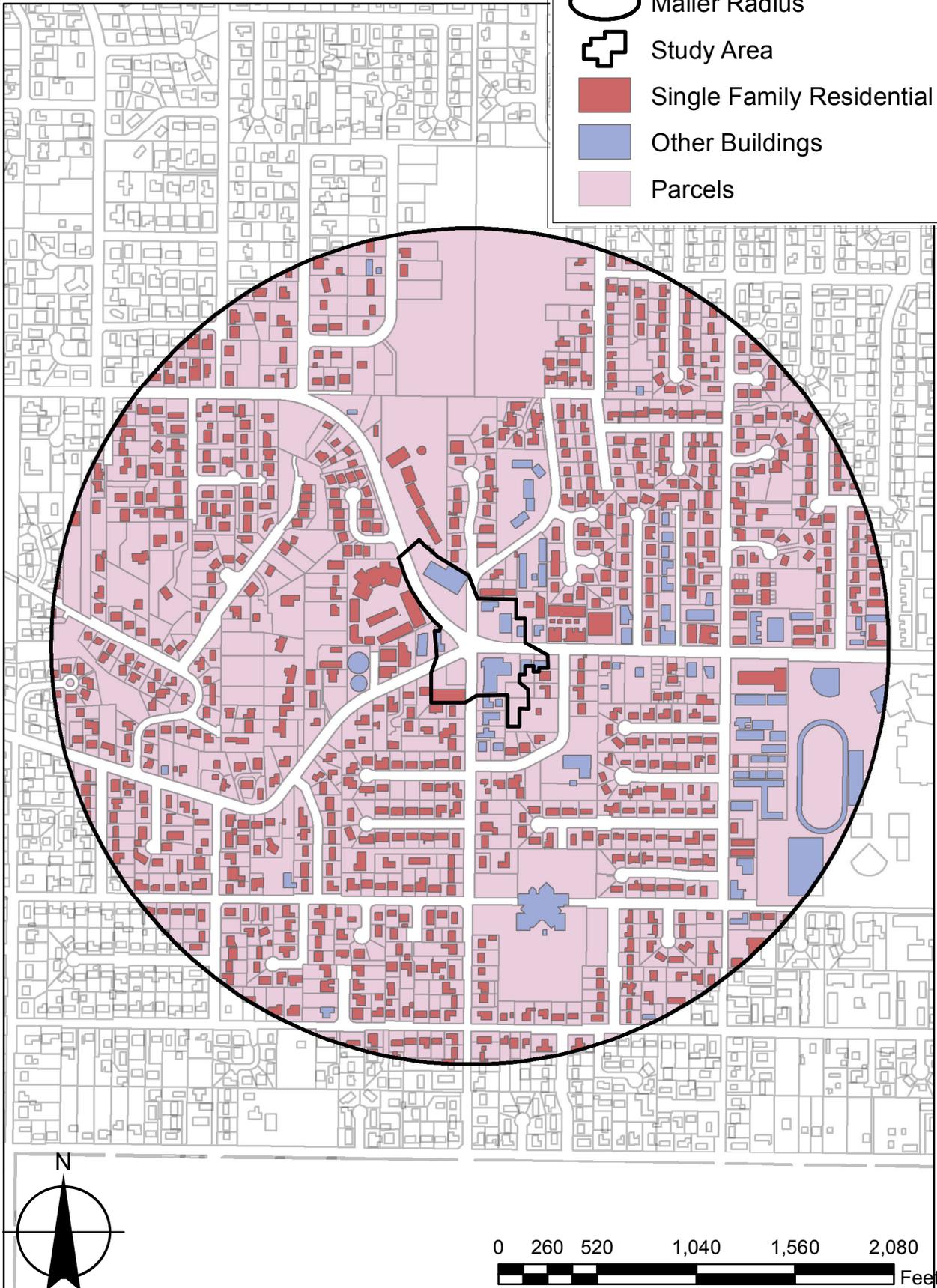
-  Mailer Radius
-  Study Area
-  Single Family Residential Units
-  Other Buildings
-  Parcels



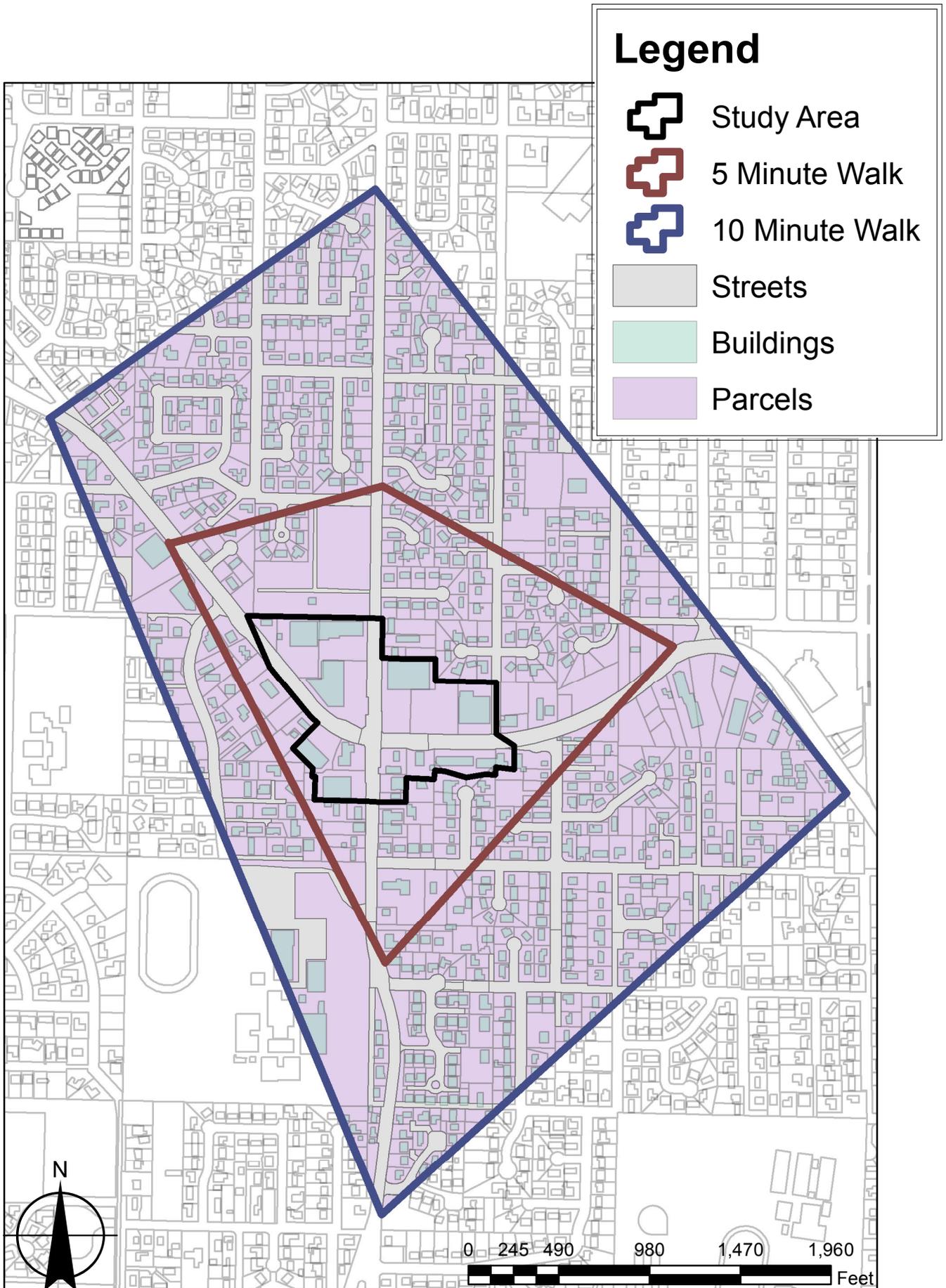
Westgate Village Mailer
Edmonds, WA

Legend

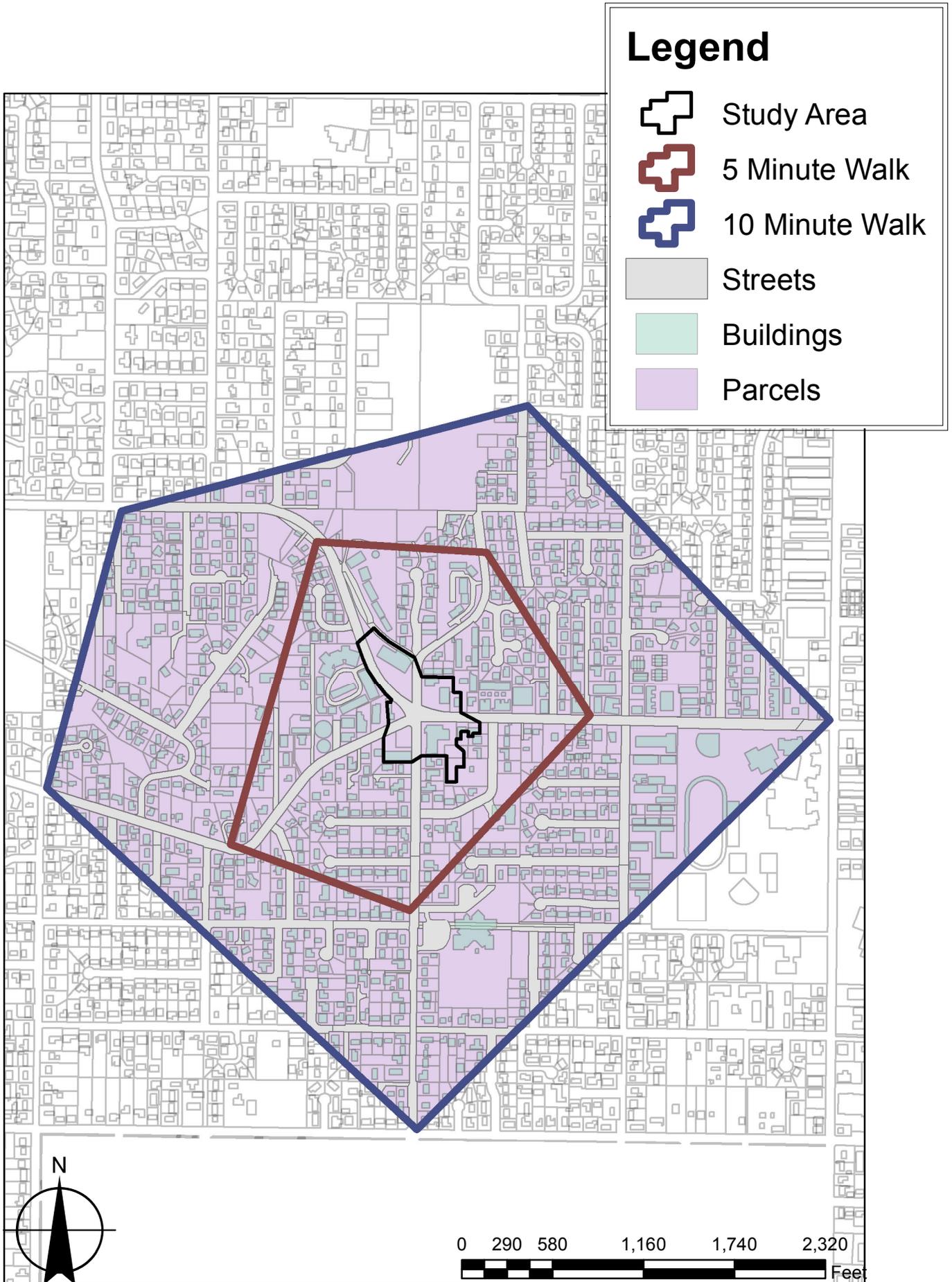
- Mailer Radius
- ⊕ Study Area
- Single Family Residential Units
- Other Buildings
- Parcels



Five Corners Mailer
Edmonds, WA



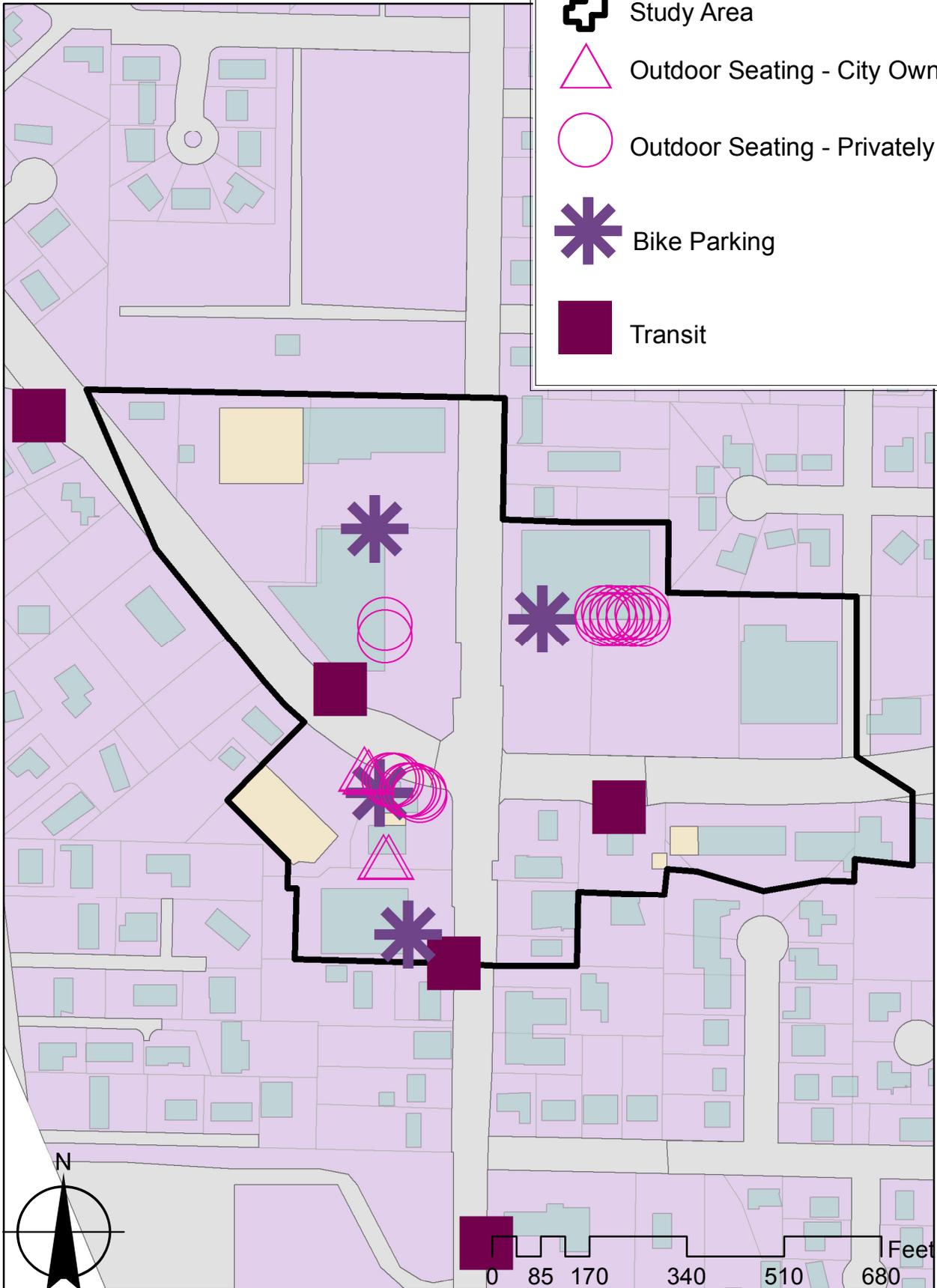
Westgate Village Walking Boundaries
Edmonds, WA



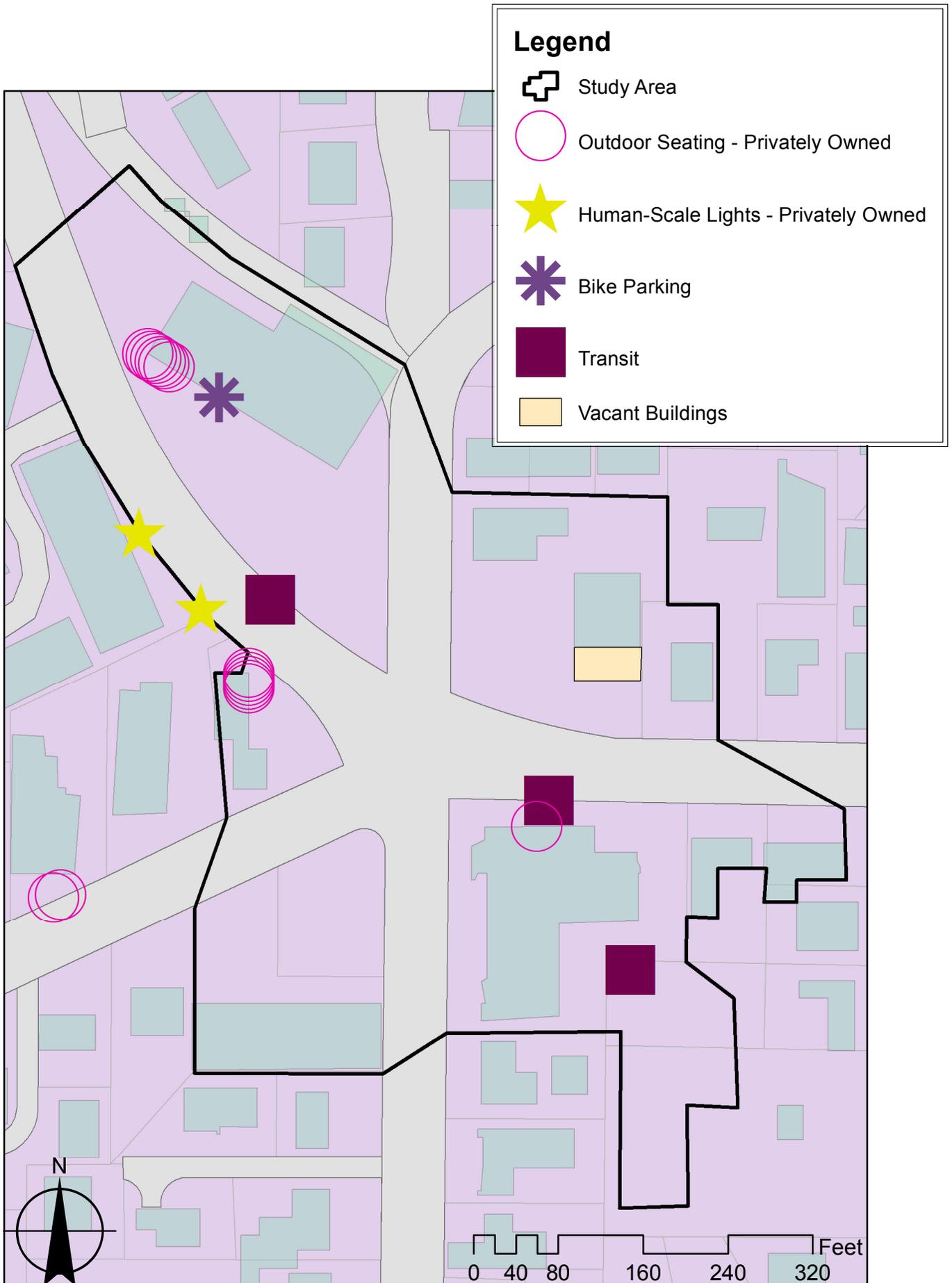
Five Corners Walking Boundaries
Edmonds, WA

Legend

-  Study Area
-  Outdoor Seating - City Owned
-  Outdoor Seating - Privately Owned
-  Bike Parking
-  Transit



Westgate Village Site Detail
Edmonds, WA



Five Corners Site Detail
Edmonds, WA