

CAPITOL HILL EQUITABLE TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (ETOD)

Seattle, WA

Capitol Hill is a vibrant and diverse community, home to the nation's second largest LGBTQ population, students and young adults from around the globe, and families of widely varying income levels. Rich in restaurants, arts, and two significant parks, the neighborhood is served by light rail, with the highest ridership in the system. In an area of high opportunity, with high potential for displacement, this mixed-use Equitable Transit-Oriented Development (ETOD) responds to the community's needs by leveraging public investments for the benefit of all.

Community Engagement and Priorities

This project is the result of a deeply community-informed process and a decade of engagement with residents, businesses, education, healthcare, arts, and LGBTQ communities in numerous ways to identify community priorities. In anticipation of the ETOD, the Capitol Hill Champions, composed of many of the stakeholders listed above, created development guidelines and urban design recommendations to ensure the neighborhood's priorities were understood by Sound Transit and their public/private developers. Early and frequent engagement with the Capitol Hill community was conducted throughout the design process.

Community priorities included mandated affordable housing, LGBTQ senior housing, a home for the farmers market, community gathering spaces, sustainability, local retail, and arts integration.

Of the four campus buildings, two represent the book ends of the rental housing spectrum. Station House offers 110 affordable homes for households earning less than 60% of the Area Median Income (AMI). The 76 homes in The Park are mostly luxury rentals, but 20% are set aside for households earning less than 80% AMI.

Dignity in Design

Sitewide design principles were established to guide the design of each building while allowing them to uniquely respond to their surrounding context, crafting the first 30 feet, movement across the site, and keeping the plaza at the heart. Additionally, Station House and The Park were designed for two different developers, with two very different residential programs and budgets, and two different contractors. It was a significant challenge to ensure these two buildings would exemplify a similar level of quality and design excellence.

AIDS Memorial Pathway

Capitol Hill is known for civic activism, from the AIDS epidemic to Black Lives Matter. This history is uplifted by the design and integration of the plaza with the AIDS Memorial Pathway (AMP), which encompasses the site and extends into Cal Anderson Park. Four artworks honor the AIDS epidemic and the continued impact on BIPOC communities. The AMP public art installations were curated to honor of the resilience of the Capitol Hill LGBTQ community. The team worked closely with the AMP committee to envision this public space for reflection and gathering.

Creating a "There" There

While Capitol Hill has the greatest residential density north of San Francisco and west of Chicago, it had no recognizable center. The plaza is the heart of the ETOD campus and has become the epicenter of Capitol Hill. The plaza has become the de-facto living room for the neighborhood to celebrate Pride, hold community events, shop at the weekly farmers market, and host events or impromptu dance parties. Visitors arriving via light rail exit the transit station amidst a thriving reflection of the community's values, immersed in the vibrancy that is Capitol Hill.

Social and Environmental Impact

A rooftop garden at Station House provides access to organic locally grown produce for low-income residents and a habitat for pollinators. An adjacent deck offers rare views of the Olympic mountains, the Seattle skyline, and Mt. Rainier.

All buildings achieved Salmon Safe certification and LEED for Homes Platinum. By providing critically needed affordable housing and community amenities, while enhancing the ecology and vibrancy of Capitol Hill, this is an exemplar of successful Equitable Transit-Oriented Development for the nation.

