



# Kent Station

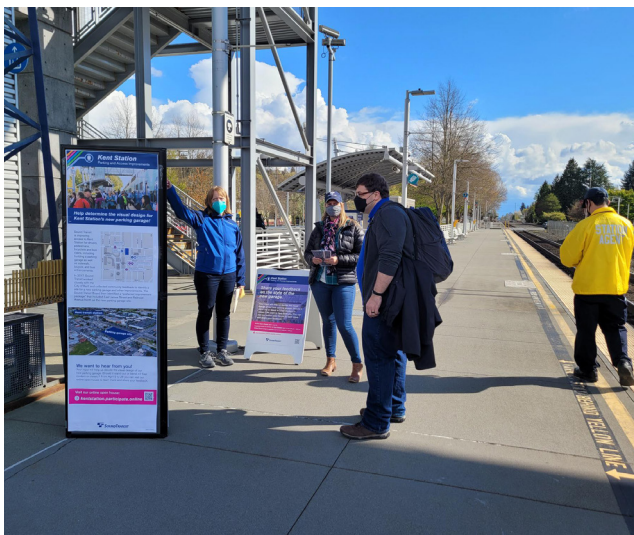
## Parking and Access Improvements

### Spring 2022 Visual Design Outreach Summary

#### Overview

Sound Transit is building a new garage and improving bicycle and pedestrian access at Kent Station so that more people can conveniently access the Sounder train and regional bus service. In April of 2022, we conducted community outreach to gather input on the visual design of the new garage and provide a status update. The project includes construction of a garage, sidewalk improvements, and a mid-block crossing on Railroad Avenue North just north of East Smith Street.

We hosted an online open house April 5 – April 26 where visitors could read about the project and take an online survey about the garage visual design. We also hosted an in-person drop-in session at the station on April 14 and a virtual Q&A session on April 18. Overall, more than 220 people participated, either online or in person (Appendix A) resulting in 231 written comments.



April 14, 2022: Transit user giving input to Sound Transit staff.



**231** comments from in-person and online survey responses



Approximately **100** mailers distributed to station users at Kent Station



**1,569** users visited the online open house and 196 took the survey



**2** email updates sent to over 2,260 recipients on project listserv



**39** people gave feedback at the April 14 in person drop-in session



**3,925** mailers sent to homes and businesses within a half-mile of the station



**6** people attended the April 18 virtual Q&A session

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## Summary of comments received

### Possible design elements for the parking garage

In the online survey, respondents were asked to rank the importance of visual design elements on a scale of 1-5 (5 being “most important” and 1 being “not important”). The most important elements identified by the 196 survey respondents were:



**Streetscape plants and greenery**  
(4.6 average rating)



**Canopies and other forms of shelter for station users** (4.4 average rating)



**Warm, subtle nighttime lighting**  
(3.9 average rating)

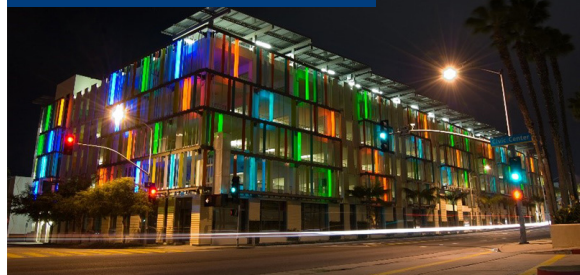


**Using earth tones/a natural color palette** (3.4 average rating)

**A building with a visually prominent stair tower/entrance** (3.4 average rating)



**Dramatic nighttime lighting**  
(3.0 average rating)



### Less popular features were:

**Using brick/masonry materials**  
(2.7 average rating)



**Incorporating pops of color**  
(2.4 average rating)



**A building that is iconic and stands out**  
(2.4 average rating)



## Example survey comments about visual design

- “Lots of green! Plants and trees.”
- “Protection from rain while waiting is most important.”
- “Please make it look unique. I want this garage to be one of the best structures in kent, something kent could be known for.”
- “History of Kent - reflect that in the design.”



April 14, 2022: Sound Transit staff talking to transit rider about how to take the online survey.

## Visual connections between the new garage and the station

When asked how the area that will connect the garage to the station should look, respondents thought adding landscaping was most important. Landscaping should be native, soften the appearance of the garage and should be used as a way to delineate pathways.

Other important features were that the new garage be cohesive with the architecture of Kent Station and historical downtown. Online survey respondents were least interested in the garage design standing out. Respondents also shared a variety of feedback about this question, many calling for a historical element to the design, and other comments about garage capacity, incorporating art work, ease of cleaning and utility.

## How the new garage should look

When asked how the new garage should look, the majority of respondents wanted to see awnings sheltering walkways, and the next most common response was a desire to incorporate features from downtown Kent. The idea that was least important to respondents was a bright and bold color pallet. Many people brought up visibility and safety as concerns.

## Other topics

- Many respondents preferred design elements that were well-lit, colorful, and modern looking.  
*“I like that it’s brighter to deter crime, and something more futuristic.”*
- Safety and security were the top concerns that people expressed; transit riders referenced issues with theft and vandalism at the current garage.  
*“There must be a focus on lights / CCTV and security. Focus on protecting folks vehicles above any art or decorative priorities.”*
- Many expressed a desire for the new garage to be pedestrian and bike friendly and have a “walkable” feel.  
*“Anything that makes it more pedestrian and bike-friendly would be great!”*
- Some respondents shared a desire for the space to be multi-functional and flexible in its future uses.  
*“...The south U-Village parking garage is a good model for what a parking garage should be, something that adds value to the station area for ALL users...”*
- A desire to incorporate more plants and greenery was a feature shared by many people who responded.  
*“Native plants and trees, wildlife habitat, and other natural efforts to mitigate summer heat”*
- Accessibility was a priority for many respondents along with functionality.  
*“Safety issues for older and sight impaired residents such as variations in textures and colors to aid in walking. Sound alerts for crossing areas.”*

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- People expressed a desire for the new parking garage to be sustainably focused and/or deter use of personal vehicles.

*“This will be a space that greets new people to Kent, it should be bright, innovative, sustainable and easy to navigate without having to touch surfaces (thank you pandemic)”*

- Many respondents shared a request for increased parking capacity and to make traffic flow more efficient.

*“Ingress and egress of cars are vital. Needs to have good flow and clear signage.”*

## Respondent characteristics

Of the **196 respondents** to the online survey, **41%** take transit from Kent Station, **70%** live nearby, and **17%** work nearby. (Respondents could select more than one option.)

Of the **80%** of online respondents who answered demographics questions:

- The most common home zip codes were: 98030 (southeast Kent), 98031 (northeast Kent), 98032 (west Kent), and 98042 (Covington area).
- Nine percent identified as Hispanic or Latino/a/x.
- The most common racial identifications were: white (79%), Asian or Asian American (12%), other (7%), American Indian or Alaskan Native (6%), and Black (3%).
- The top languages spoken at home were: English (99%), Spanish (9%), and Cantonese (1.3%). (Respondents could choose multiple options.)
- Twenty percent preferred not to state their household income; 48% had household incomes above \$100,000; 23% had household incomes between \$50,000 and \$100,000; and 8% had incomes under \$50k.
- A majority were between 35 and 64 years old (57%), with 13% 65 or older, 22% 25-34, 6% 19-24, and less than 1% under 19.

- 54% were female, 44% male, and 2% prefer not to say or to self-describe.
- 8.6% consider themselves to have a disability.

## Outcomes and next steps

Sound Transit will use this feedback to inform the visual design of the new garage. We have drafted a Vision Statement (see below) based on public and stakeholder feedback, which will be included in the project requirements for the design-build contractor. We expect to share final designs with the community in mid 2023 and to begin construction in late 2023.

## Stay informed about the project:



Contact Melanie Mayock, Community Outreach Specialist:  
[melanie.mayock@soundtransit.org](mailto:melanie.mayock@soundtransit.org) or  
206-689-4877



Visit the project website:  
[soundtransit.org/kent-station-access](https://soundtransit.org/kent-station-access)



Sign-up for project updates by email:  
[soundtransit.org/subscribe](https://soundtransit.org/subscribe)

## Frequently Asked Questions

### How many stalls will be in the new parking garage?

The new garage will have as many as 534 stalls. This is the number we studied in our environmental analysis. The actual number of stalls will depend on the proposals we get from contractors in our procurement process, which will incentivize maximizing the number of stalls at a given budget.

### Why isn't Sound Transit building more stalls?

We have to balance the demand for new parking at Kent Station with the cost and our ability to mitigate traffic and environmental impacts of a new garage. Further, we know we can never build enough parking for everyone who wants a space - that's one reason we also work with our partners on other ways to access the station, including walking, biking, rolling and taking the bus.

### Why is Sound Transit building a new garage when the current one is not full?

This garage was promised to voters in the ST2 ballot measure in 2008, to address growing ridership on Sounder and regional bus service. While transit ridership declined during the pandemic, we expect it to rebound over the coming years, and this new garage is going to be needed when it opens in late 2026.

### Will there be a fee to park in the new garage?

Sound Transit's current policy is to offer monthly parking permits at parking facilities that are 90% full, for up to half the spaces. Monthly permit prices for solo drivers are set at each facility, based on local market pricing, and monthly permits are available for carpools at no cost. The goal of the program is to provide a reliable option at places that fill up early in the morning, as well as to recover costs. Prior to the pandemic, we offered monthly permits at the Kent garage; that was suspended during the pandemic as demand fell.

In future years the Sound Transit Board may decide to offer other parking products, such as daily permits.

### Why isn't Sound Transit building housing on this site rather than parking?

A second garage for Kent Station was part of the ST2 ballot measure approved by voters in 2008. It would be a decision by the Sound Transit Board to make a change from what was approved. We did explore the possibility of building a garage that could be transitioned to housing later and found that it was not feasible.

### Can Sound Transit incorporate retail in the garage?

As a transit agency, Sound Transit is focused on providing transit services at our facilities. We encourage our customers to support neighborhood businesses as they travel to and from our stations.

### How will the garage affect traffic in the area?

Sound Transit was required to complete a State Environmental Policy Act Checklist to consider impacts of the garage, including traffic. In our analysis, which is available on our website, we found that the garage could impact traffic flow at the intersection of Railroad Ave N and E James Street. We have proposed several measures to mitigate that impact, including funneling exiting traffic south to E Pioneer Street and Central Ave N, away from James Street.

### How will you ensure the garage is safe?

Sound Transit implements industry best practices to ensure our facilities are safe. Tactics include:

- Placing security cameras outside garages.
- Landscaping that preserves open sight lines.
- Lighting on the garage exterior and surrounding areas to ensure a visible and well-lit area for pedestrians and others.
- 24-hour lighting inside all areas of the garage.
- Ensuring visibility for stairwells and elevator shafts, such as using glass or other transparent materials.
- Monitoring of garages by security staff and encouraging customers to report any suspicious activity.

### **What about security on trains and at stations?**

We have mobile security patrols throughout the day, as well as emergency telephones in garages and on platforms.

### **Why doesn't Sounder run on weekends and evenings?**

Sounder runs primarily on tracks owned by the BNSF Railroad. They use those tracks heavily during evenings and weekends for freight movements. We do provide special even trains for select events, like some Seahawks, Sounders FC, and Mariners games. See the schedule here: <https://www.soundtransit.org/ride-with-us/event-service>

### **What is your policy to ensure people pay their fares?**

In August of 2021 we launched a Fare Engagement Pilot Project. This is an effort to reimagine how we handle fare compliance, with a goal of preventing the inequitable effects that often result from unpaid fines. In May of 2022, our Board approved continuing the program through the end of 202, as well as doubling the number of fare ambassadors who provide customer service and check proof of payment. Read more here: <https://www.soundtransit.org/blog/platform/new-approach-to-fare-checking-enforcement-moves-forward-fare-ambassador-program>.

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## Vision Statement

### Theme: Modern Urban Village

#### Context

Situated at the intersection of Railroad Ave. North and James St. just north of Kent Station, the new parking garage is in close proximity to the Kent Station shopping center, the downtown area and “Meet Me on Meeker” improvements. The new garage shall extend Kent’s urban identity by becoming a visual anchor contributing to future downtown development.

#### Overall design aesthetic

The garage design shall take cues from the rich history of Kent’s vibrant downtown while looking towards the future, reflecting the city’s growth in tech savvy industries; providing a space of convergence between the historic and contemporary.

The garage’s site is on a prominent corner in an urban area with all four sides visible to the public. The overall design must reflect a comprehensive concept, with a clearly identifiable point of entry. It shall lend itself to an urban area, activating its surroundings by being lively with a modern sensibility.

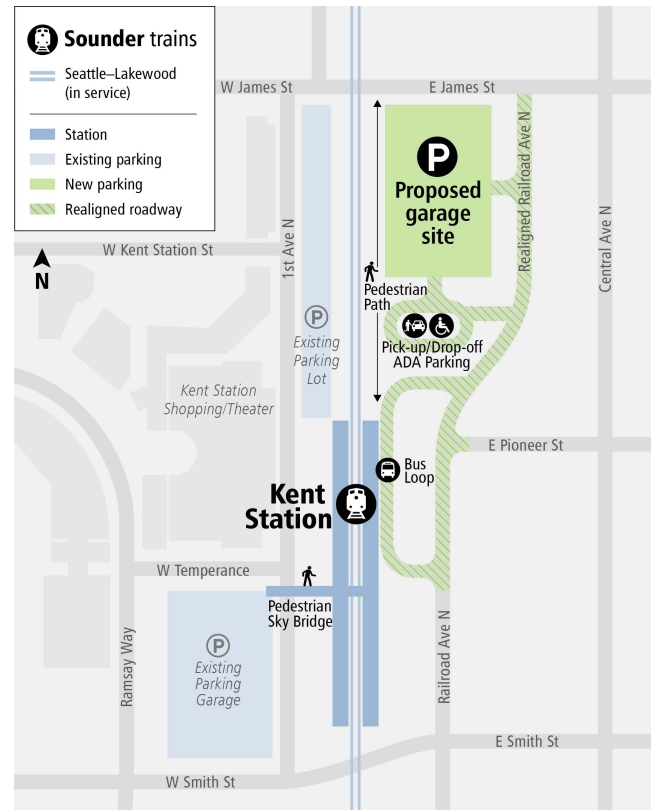
Overall, there is a community desire to demonstrate visual richness, either through colorful lighting, variety in the use of materials, or dynamic patterns that contribute to façade screening on all sides with visibility both day and night. Variability in height and depth, along with layering materials and spaces and emphasizing architectural elements, shall help dissolve the mass of the building and create a visually engaging and activated garage.

#### Active Streetscape

Creating a safe and inviting environment at the garage and the surrounding area is of the utmost importance. The experience at the ground level must emphasize pedestrian-friendly design by creating an active streetscape, which includes metal awnings providing weather protection, inviting lighting, paving patterns, art, architectural details, quality materials, and landscaping with a variety of native plants and trees.

#### North and east sides

Along James St. and Railroad Ave. N, the garage site experiences a lot of vehicular and pedestrian traffic



and is more commercial with an urban street-edge. The garage sides facing these streets must provide a safe and friendly pedestrian experience. The design shall incorporate screening, metal awnings to provide weather protection, architectural lighting, commercial details and landscaping to help create human-scale at the ground level and provide protection along busy streets.

#### South side

The south side of the garage, facing Kent Station, shall host much of the pedestrian activity as the main point of entry to the garage. This is the key opportunity for connectivity with the transit station and the surrounding urban environment, which includes the open-air shopping center across the tracks. The elevator and stairs create a vertical tower, an inviting focal point to the garage. The tower must be transparent for safety and incorporate glazing and architectural lighting, so it maintains a strong visual presence at night that is glowing and energetic. The vertical stair tower is also the preferred location for an art piece that is being developed and ultimately integrated with the support of Sound Transit’s art program. Urban design elements,

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*such as garage screening, paving patterns, pedestrian lighting, and landscaping with a variety of native plants and trees, shall play a significant role in shaping a welcoming environment that is safe and encourages movement throughout the space.*

### **West side**

*The west side of the garage faces the railroad tracks and many pedestrians will walk along this edge towards the transit station. This side of the garage is important due to the pedestrian activity and its visibility from the train and the street. Design principles emphasizing safety are of prime concern and weather protection shall support a successful pedestrian path to the station. While this side may not require as many architectural elements as the street-facing facades, it is an extension of the garage concept and shall incorporate thoughtfully considered design elements including screening.*