

Station Area Boundary

On January 16, 2026, the City Council passed two motions related to House Bill 1491 (Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Bill) and compliance with the Growth Management Hearings Board Final Decision and Order (GMHB Order). The two motions were:

Motion 2a - Direct staff to evaluate aligning compliance with the GMHB Order and HB 1491 (2021 TOD bill) and establish the first follow-up with City Council for February 2026.

Motion 2b - Confirm the guidelines for developing the station area boundary, Guidelines 1-4, and direct staff to return to the City Council in February 2026 with a draft station area map.

This document evaluates the first step in aligning compliance with the GMHB Order and the TOD Bill: establishing a preliminary station area boundary. Specifically, the four guidelines for establishing a draft station area boundary are analyzed below. The goal for determining a preliminary station area boundary is to provide a draft for public review prior to the City Council further considering the compliance strategy.

Application of the station area modification guidelines will be completed in four steps:

- Step 1 – Determine the Baseline Station Area
- Step 2 – Apply Guideline 1
- Step 3 – Apply Guideline 2
- Step 4 – Apply Guidelines 3 and 4

STEP 1 – DETERMINE BASELINE STATION AREA

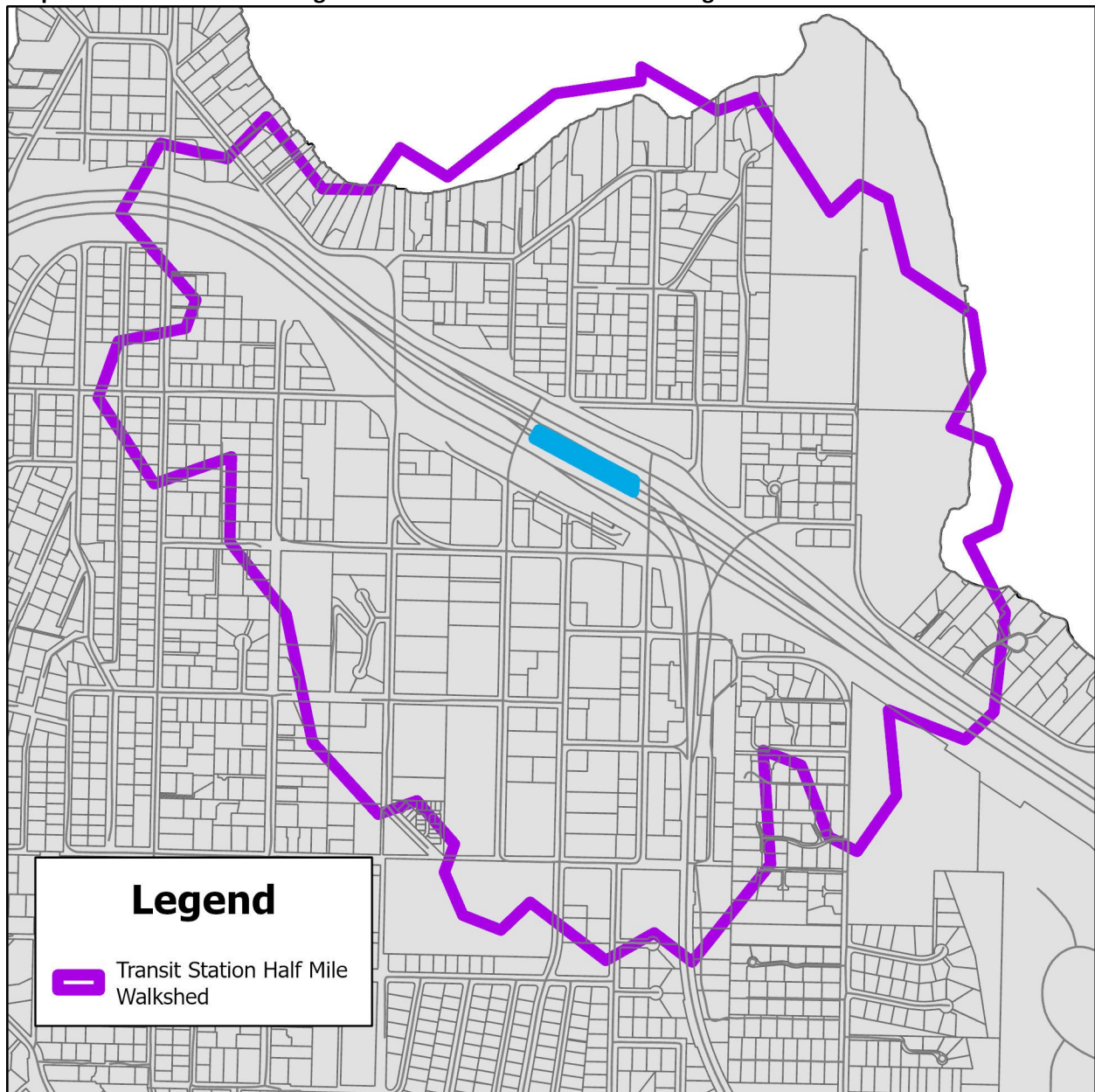
House Bill 1491 (TOD Bill) requires the City to designate a station area for transit-oriented development. The GMHB Order also requires the City to adopt a station area sub area plan. The applicable station area for both requirements is defined in RCW 36.70A.030(36) as:

"Rail station area" means all lots fully within an urban growth area that are:

- (a) Fully or partially within one-half mile walking distance of an entrance to a train station with a stop on a light rail system, a commuter rail stop in a city with a population greater than 15,000, or a stop on a rail trolley operated west of the crest of the Cascade mountains; or
- (b) Fully or partially within one-quarter mile walking distance of an entrance to a train station with a commuter rail stop in a city with a population no greater than 15,000. (RCW 36.70A.030(36))

The entirety of Mercer Island is located within an urban growth area so any lot that is fully or partially within one half mile walking distance of the light rail station would be included in the light rail station area per the GMA definition. The purple outline on Map 1 shows the area within one-half mile walking distance of the entrance to the light rail station. One half mile walking distance shown on Map 1 was calculated based on the City's street network.

Map 1. One-Half Mile Walking Distance From the Mercer Island Light Rail Station.



Half-Mile Walkshed Documentation

The half-mile walkshed analysis that produced the purple line in Map 1 was run in ArcGIS Online using ESRI's street and pedestrian network tool. ESRI tool documentation is available online here: <https://doc.arcgis.com/en/arcgis-online/analyze/create-drive-time-areas.htm>

The tool was run using the following parameters:

Measure: Walking Distance

Options: Half mile

Travel Direction: away

Overlap Handling: Dissolve

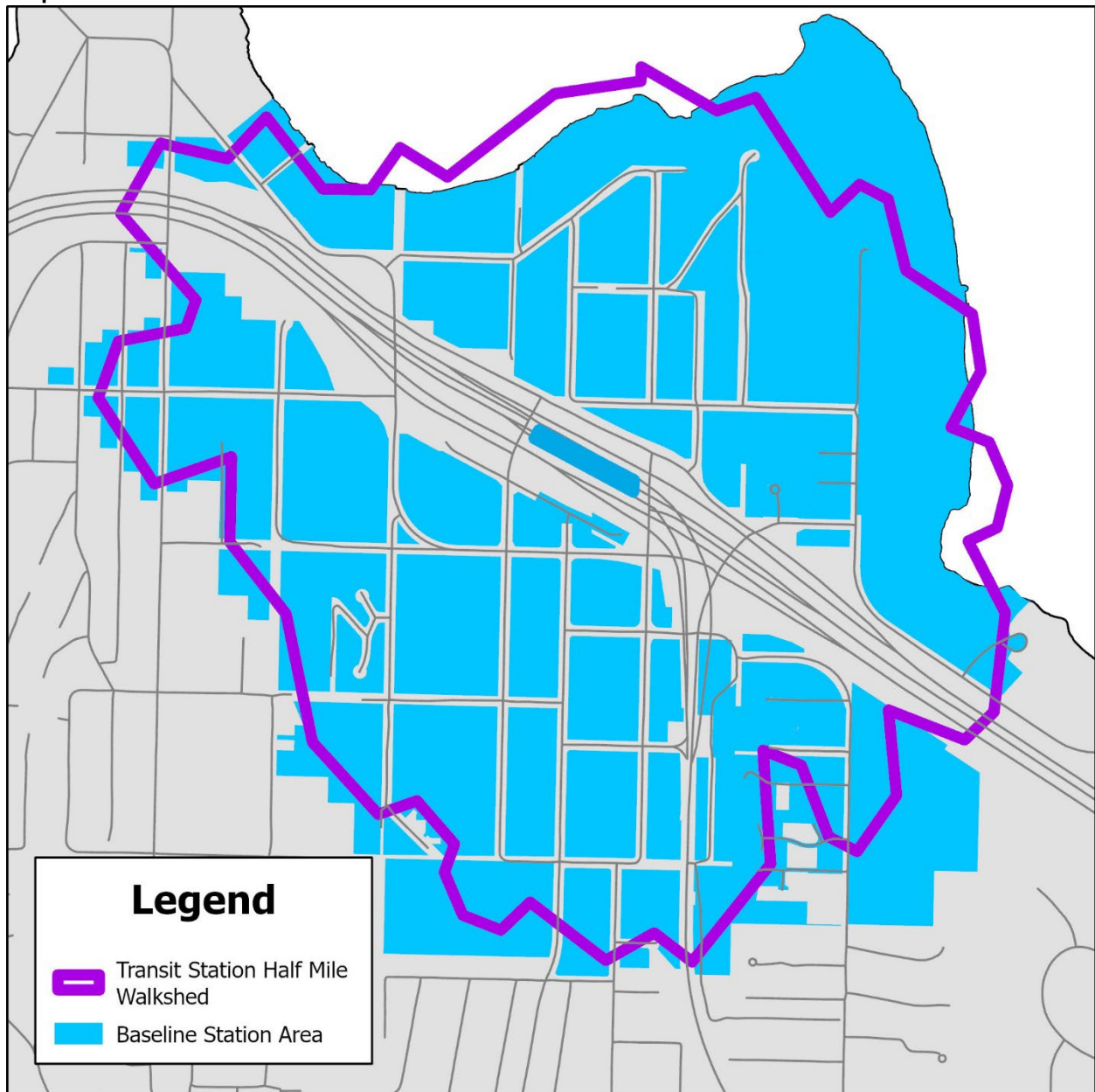
Include Reachable Streets: yes (Note: This setting defines the street centerline output as “reachable”)

Use Current Map Extent: No (Note: This setting is only relevant if there are many potential origin points spread out geographically and the analysis applies to a subset visible in the current view. In this instance only two origin points were analyzed, one on the east side of the station and one on the west side.)

Identify Lots Fully or Partially Within One-Half Mile Walking Distance

All lots that are fully or partially within one-half mile walking distance of the light rail station must be designated as the station area (RCW 36.70A.030(36)). These lots constitute the “baseline station area” because they are the minimum required to meet the RCW definition. Map 2 shows the lots that are wholly or partially within the one-half mile walking distance of the light rail station. The walking distance is shown as a purple line and the lots that make up the base line station area are shown with a light blue. The base line station area excluding the I-90 corridor is roughly 340 acres.

Map 2. Baseline Station Area and One-Half Mile Walkshed.



STATION AREA MODIFICATION GUIDELINES

State statute allows cities to designate a modified station area in consultation with and approved by the WA Department of Commerce (RCW 36.70A.840(2)(b)). A modified station area can better reflect the existing conditions and form a more logical boundary for the station area. On January 16, 2026, the City Council approved Motion 2b directing staff to prepare a modified station area base on four proposed guidelines. The station area modification guidelines are:

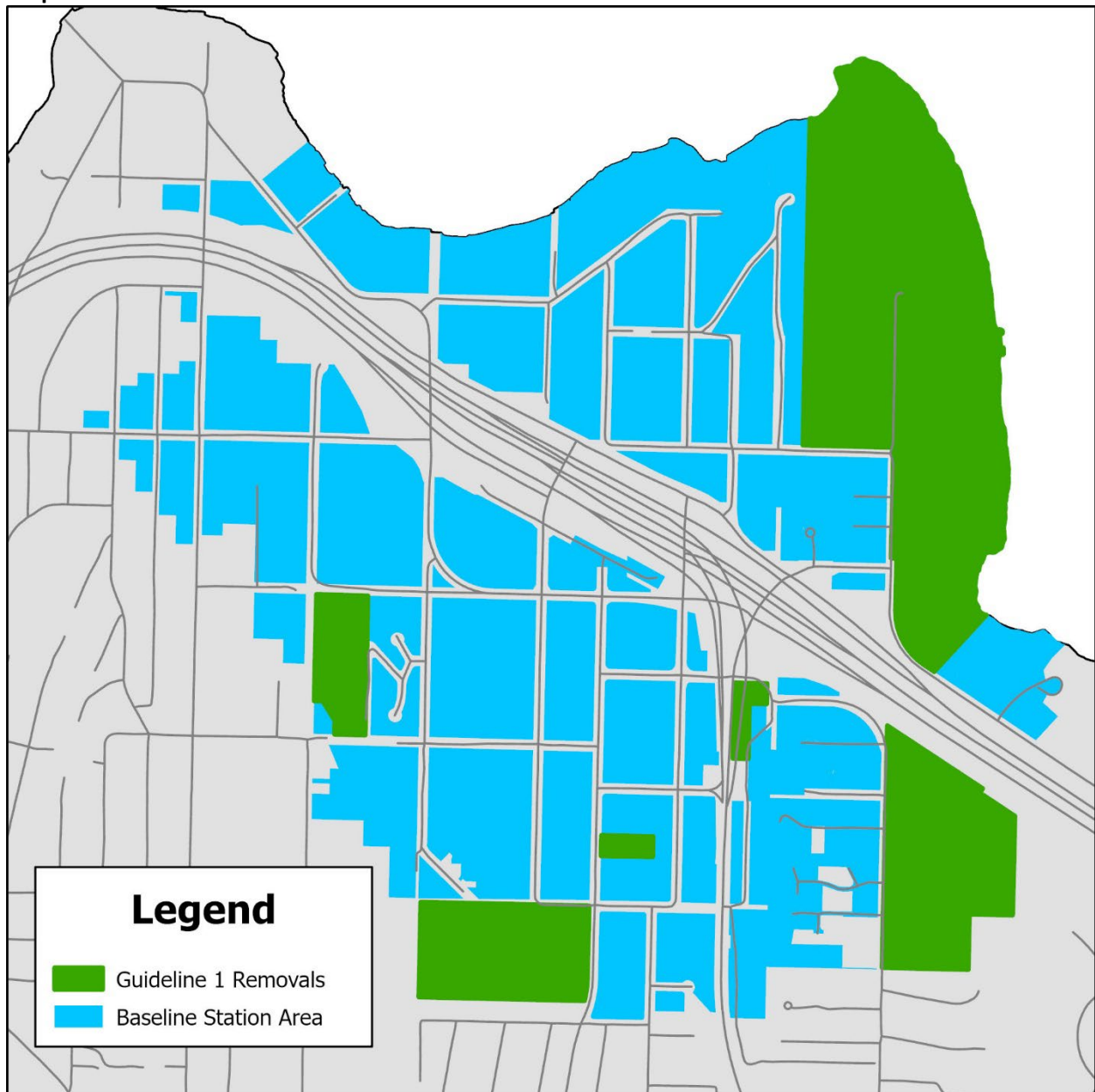
Guideline 1	Exclude city parks, open space, and the Interstate 90 corridor from the station area.
Guideline 2	Exclude areas that would be non-contiguous from the station area after removing city parks, open space, and the I-90 corridor are removed from the station area.
Guideline 3	Align the remaining station area boundary with City streets.
Guideline 4	The station area boundary should follow existing zoning boundaries if City streets do not make a logical boundary.

The four guidelines have been applied to determine a preliminary modified station area boundary. The modified station area boundary is expected to yield a more logical preliminary station area than the baseline station area because it will take into account existing conditions and zoning boundaries. Furthermore, application of these guidelines is expected to result in a modified station area that has approximately the same amount of residential lands.

STEP 2 – APPLY GUIDELINE 1

Map 3 shows the lots to be removed from the baseline station area under guideline 1. In addition to parks, open space, and the I-90 corridor, Fire Station #91 and a portion of Island Crest Way are also proposed to be removed under guideline 1 because they are not expected to be rezoned as a part of the GMA compliance effort.

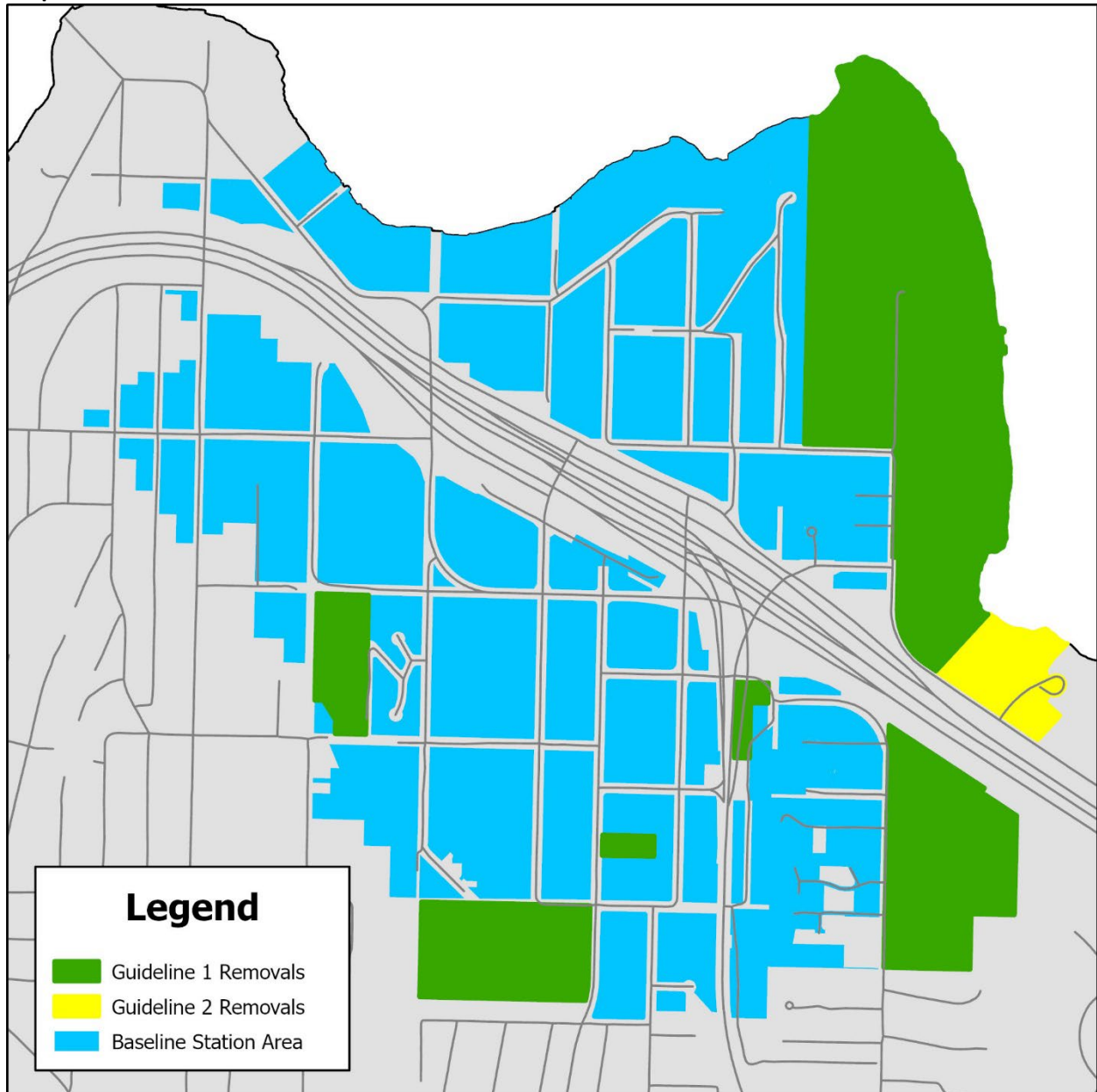
Map 3. Guideline 1 Baseline Station Area Removals.



STEP 3 – APPLY GUIDELINE 2

Guideline 2 would remove the areas that are noncontiguous with the station area after applying guideline 1. There is one area of the baseline station area that would be noncontiguous with the station area after applying guideline 1. The area to be removed by guideline 2 is shown on Map 4.

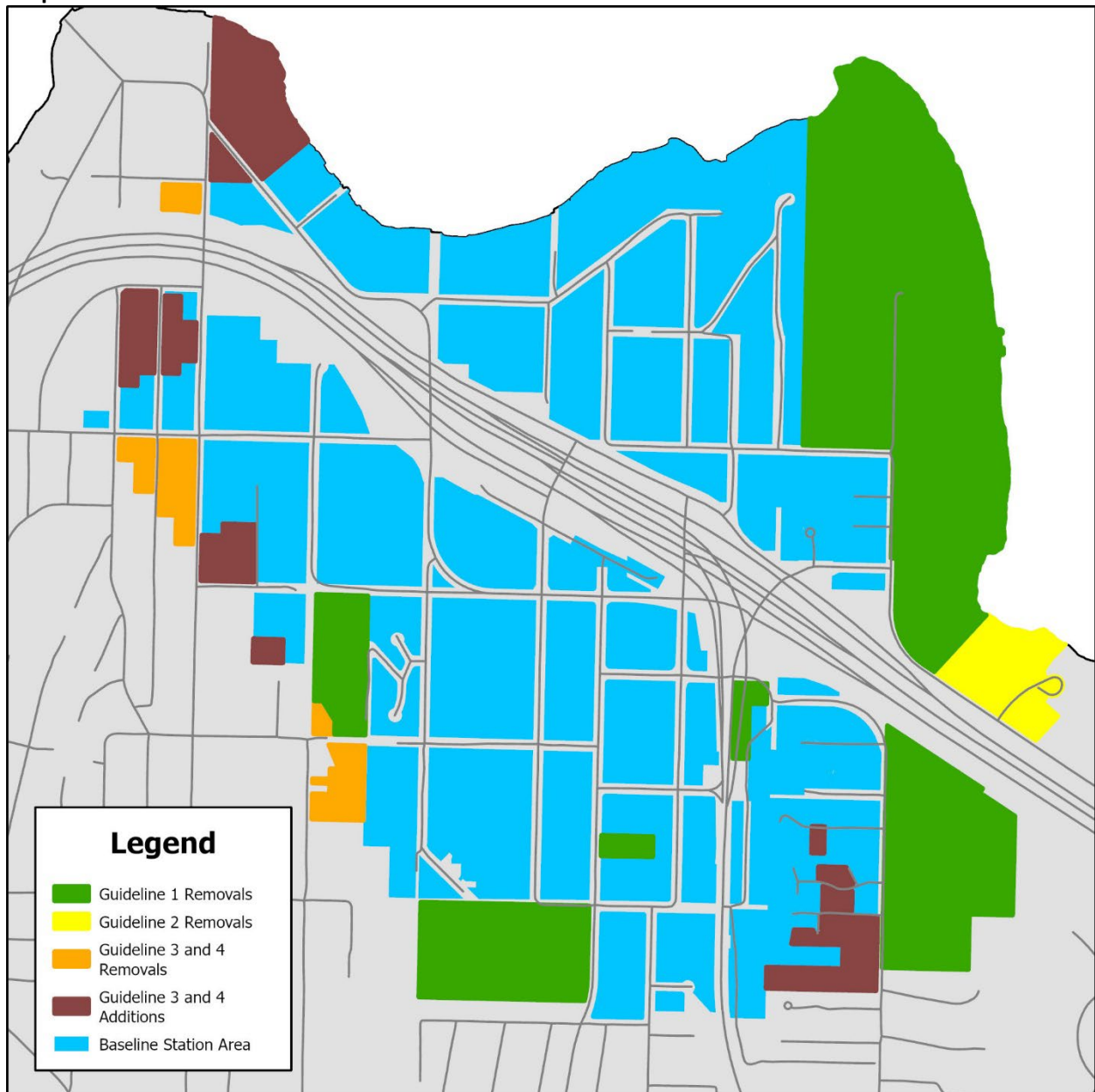
Map 4. Guideline 2 Baseline Station Area Removals.



STEP 4 – APPLY GUIDELINES 3 AND 4

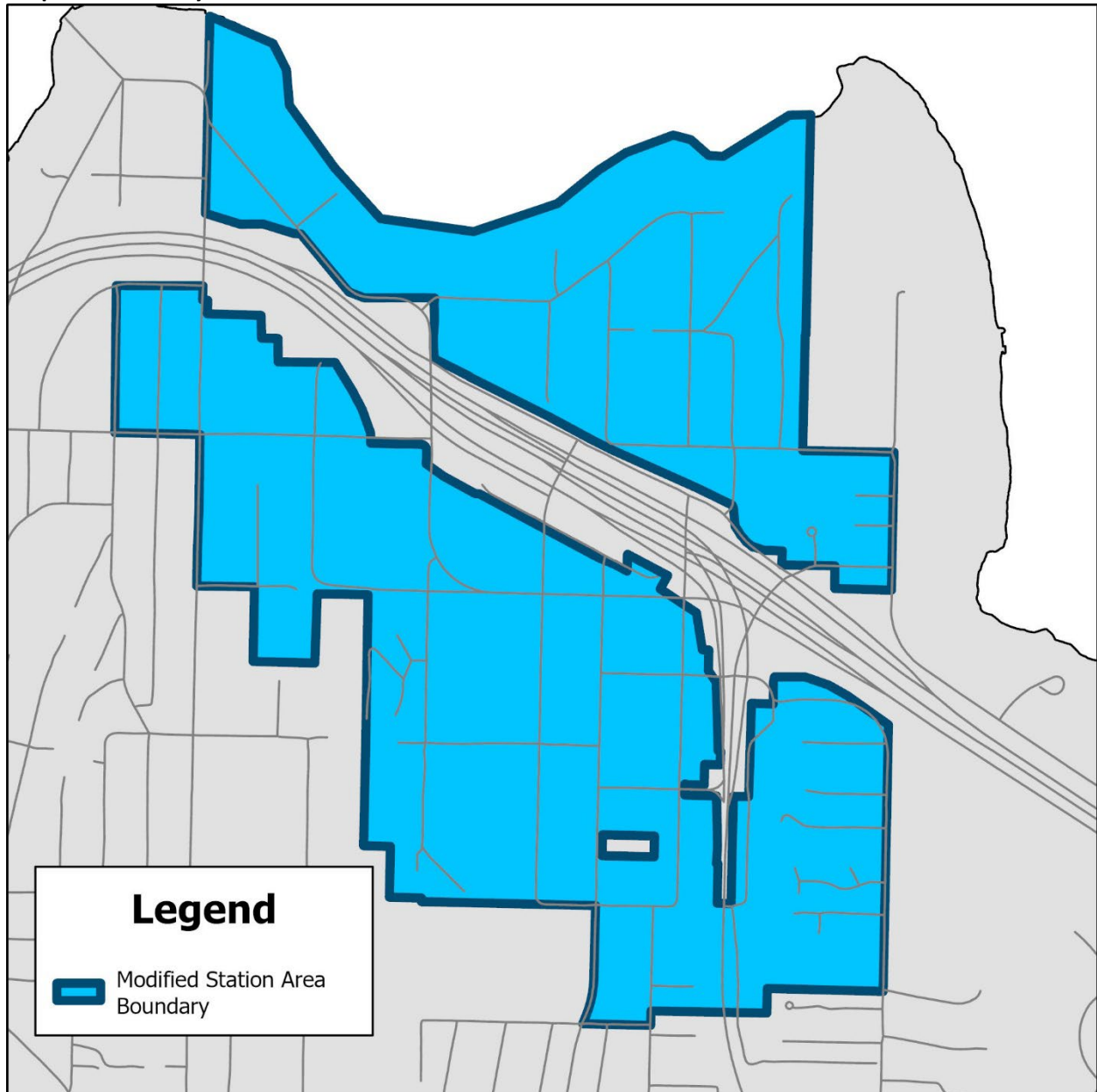
Guidelines 3 and 4 can be applied to address the other areas of the baseline station area boundary that have not been affected by the first two guidelines. First, guideline 3 would move the boundary to align with City streets. Then, in some areas aligning with streets does not make a logical boundary, the boundary was aligned with the existing zoning boundaries. Applying guidelines 3 and 4 results in both additions and removals from the baseline station area because the boundary is moving to align with existing infrastructure and zoning map boundaries. Map 5 shows the additions and removals that result from guidelines 3 and 4.

Map 5. Guidelines 3 and 4 Baseline Station Area Additions and Removals.



After all the guidelines were applied, a new modified station area boundary was produced. This modified station area boundary is shown on Map 6.

Map 6. Preliminary Modified Station Area.



There are three areas of the modified station area boundary that are affected by the application of guidelines 3 and 4 and prompt a more detailed explanation. These three areas are:

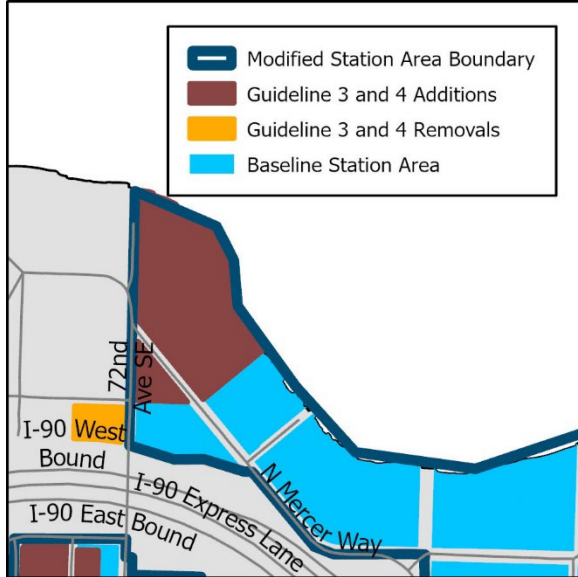
- Northwest corner;
- Western boundary; and
- Southern boundary.

Northwest Corner

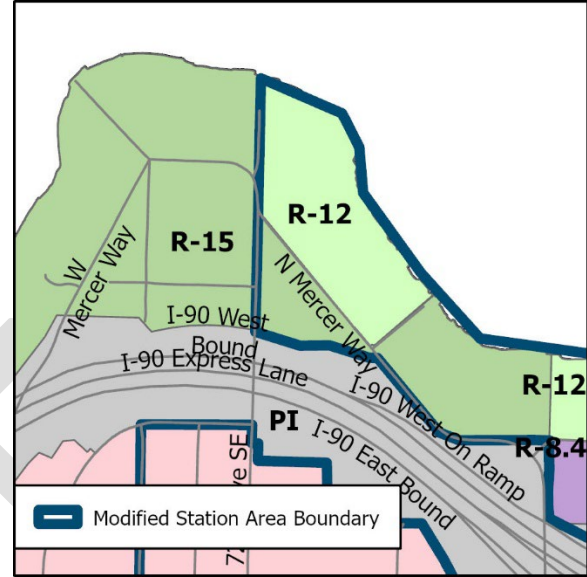
The baseline station area in the northwest corner would cross through the middle of an existing neighborhood and place some properties within the station area and leave some out. The northwest corner of the station area boundary can be drawn to align with 72nd Ave SE to avoid dividing the

neighborhood in the area. 72nd Ave SE was selected when applying guideline 3 in this area because the other street in this area, 74th Ave SE would have further reduced the size of the station area without a corresponding increase elsewhere to balance the station area additions and subtractions.

Map 7. Northwest Corner.



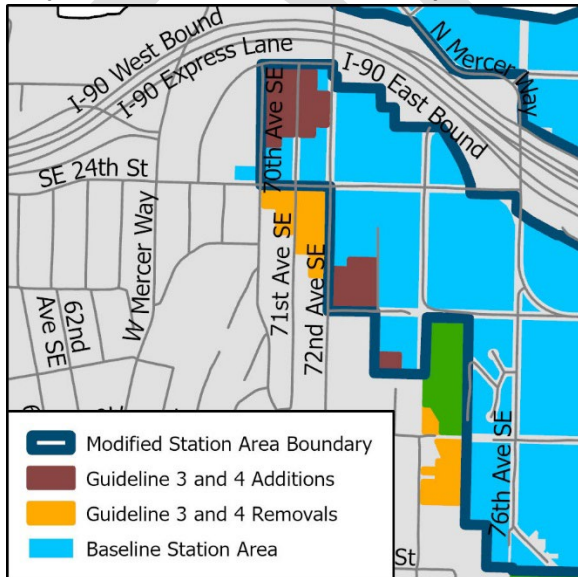
Map8. Northwest Corner.



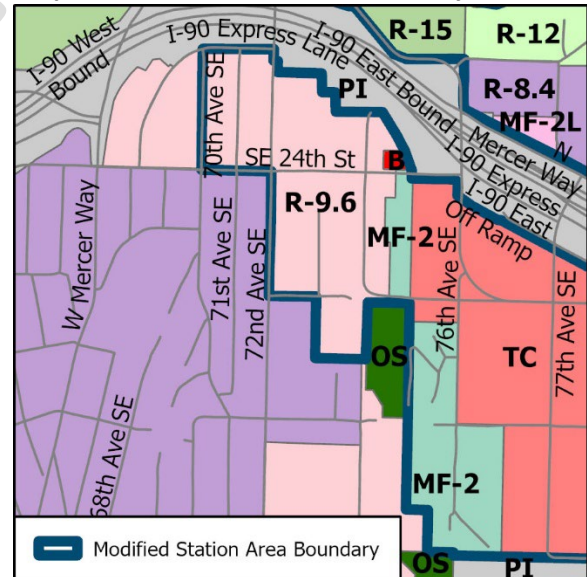
Western Boundary

The western boundary south of I-90 is proposed based on a combination of both guidelines 3 and 4. Here, the boundary is aligned with the City street 70th Ave SE between I-90 and SE 24th Street. South of SE 24th Street, the existing zoning boundary and 72nd Ave SE make the initial logical boundary. Map 9 shows the western modified station area boundary, the baseline station area, and the guidelines 3 and 4 additions and subtractions. Map 10 shows the western modified station area boundary and the existing zoning.

Map 9. Modified Western Boundary.



Map 10. Modified Western Boundary.

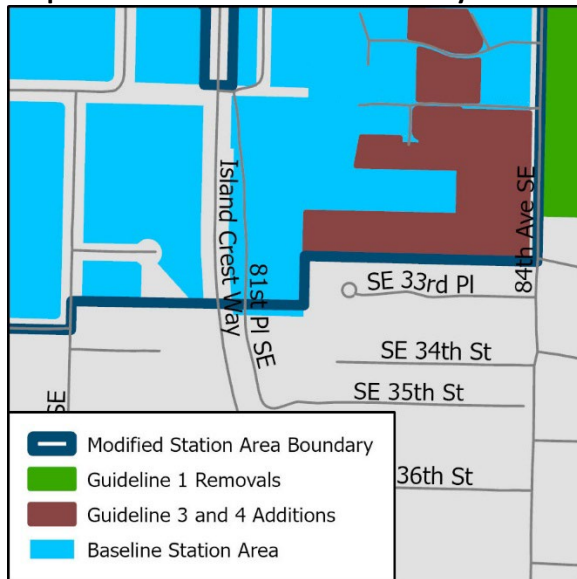


Southern Boundary

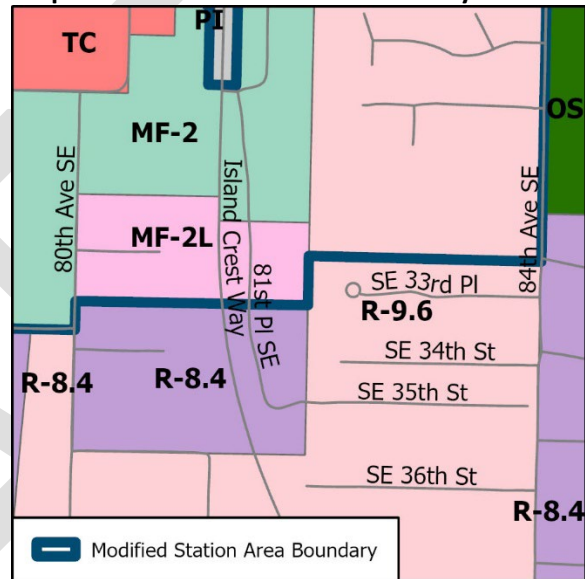
The southern boundary west of Mercerdale Park would follow the existing zoning boundary of the MF-2 and MF-2L zones until after it crosses Island Crest Way. The southern boundary presents a challenge for the application of guidelines 3 and 4:

- 1) The existing zoning boundary between the MF-2L and R-9.6 zones does not make a clear southern station area boundary, and
- 2) The City streets do not outline a clear southern boundary line between the MF-2L zone and 84th Ave SE.

Map 11. Modified Southern Boundary.



Map 12. Modified Southern Boundary.



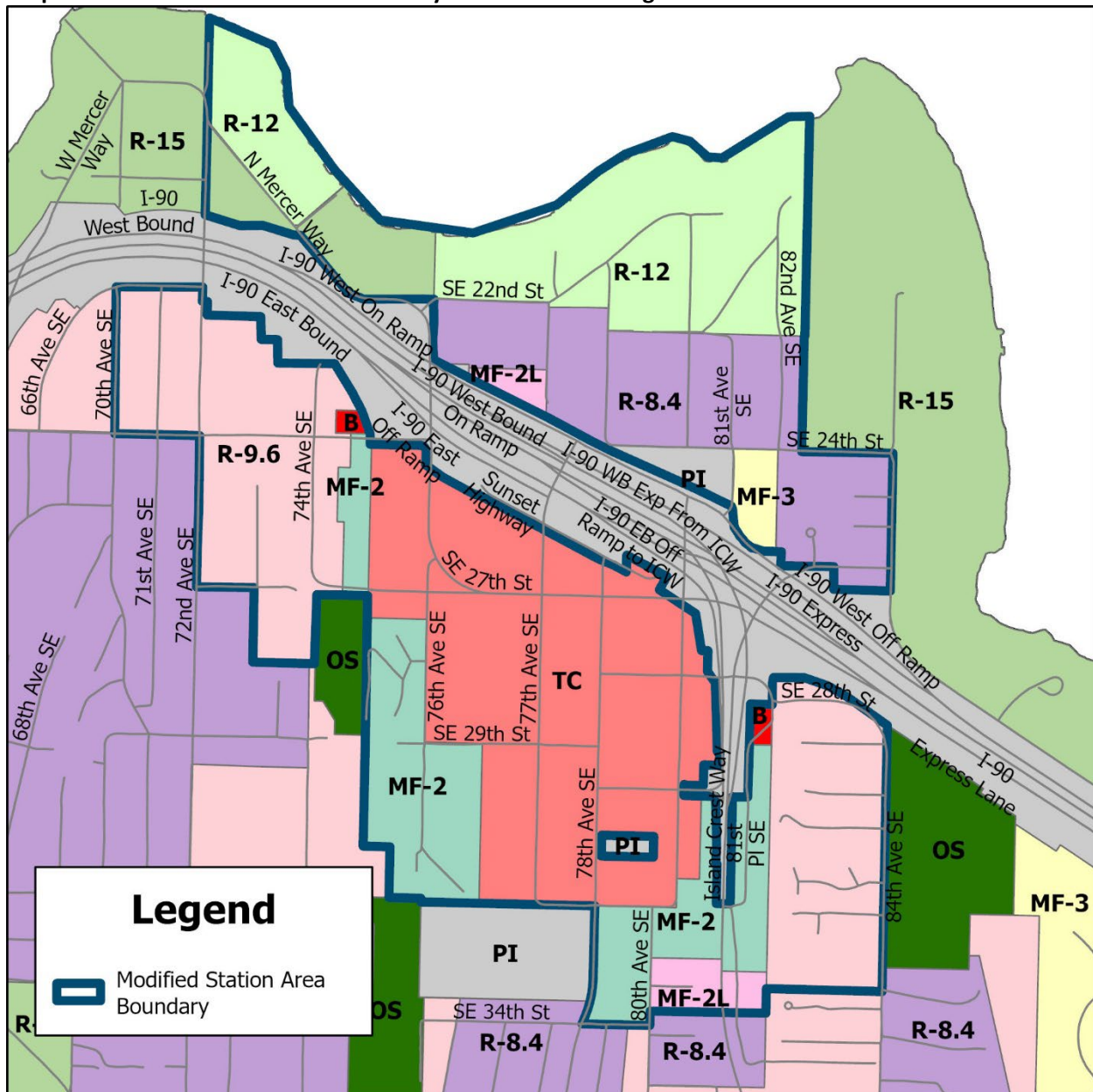
MODIFIED STATION AREA DESCRIPTION

The modified station area boundary is shown in dark blue outline on Map 13. Map 13 includes the current zoning in the modified station area. The modified station area would be composed of the following existing zones:

- Single-Family Zones: R-8.4, R-9.6, R-12, and R-15
- Town Center Subareas: TC-7, TC-5, TC-5 plus, TC-3, TCMF-4, and TCMF-3
- Multifamily Zones: MF-3, MF-2, and MF-2L
- Commercial Zone: B

The station area is characterized by three main types of development: single-family homes, low-rise multifamily, and mid-rise mixed-use. The existing multifamily zones are largely fully developed with two to three story multifamily development. The mid-rise mixed-use development is entirely within the existing Town Center zone and has a range of 3 to five story buildings. The Town Center zone is also the commercial center of the city.

Map 13. Modified Station Area Boundary and Current Zoning.



Modified Station Area – Removals

The areas that are within the baseline station area (wholly or partially within one-half mile walking distance of the light rail station) and would be removed from the modified station area after applying the four guidelines total about 114 acres not counting the I-90 corridor. One-hundred of the excluded acres are public lands not expected to be rezoned or developed as a part of the GMA compliance effort: a lot in the Island Crest Way interchange, parks, open space, Fire Station #91, or the Mercer Island Community and Events Center. Guideline 2 removes about 7 acres from the modified station area because it would be noncontiguous after the removals from guideline 1. Then finally, the application of guidelines 3 and 4 would remove approximately another 7 acres as the boundary is adjusted to align with city streets and existing zoning boundaries.

Modified Station Area – Additions

Applying guidelines 3 and 4 would add roughly 19 acres to the modified station area as the boundary is adjusted to align with city streets and existing zoning boundaries. The areas added to the station area include:

- Residential area northwest of the boundary and east of 72nd Street
- Residential lots in the R-9.6 zone along the western boundary, south of I-90
- Residential lots in R-9.6 zone west of Upper Luther Burbank Park

Total Modification Summary

Baseline Station Area	341.6 acres
Area Removed By Guideline 1	100.4 acres
Area Removed by Guideline 2	6.85 acres
Area Removed by Guidelines 3 and 4	6.8 acres
Total Area Removed from the Baseline Station Area (Guidelines 1-4)	114.05 acres
Area Added by Guidelines 3 and 4	19.35 acres
Modified Station Area	246.9 acres

(Note: this total excludes rights of way)