

## West Hill Concerns About Community and Economic Development



West Hill's retail corridor along Renton Avenue has many vacant storefronts and is not heavily developed. Many residents would prefer to shop in West Hill but due to a lack of options most residents shop for convenience goods in Renton. Residents have also expressed a desire to improve the image of their retail corridor to attract additional retailers, arts and cultural amenities to the neighborhood. Community members would like to see economic development that provides more local employment opportunities, informal community gathering places, and options to shop locally for everyday needs.

### Renton Approach to Community and Economic Development

Renton takes an integrated approach to community and economic development through its Economic Development, Neighborhoods, and Strategic Planning Department (EDNSP). In recent years Renton has been garnered a great deal of regional attention for its successful efforts to revitalize the City's Downtown district.

**Renton's Neighborhood Program** promotes positive interaction between the City and its residents by administering Neighborhood Grants and sponsoring Neighborhood Picnics. The program is staffed by a team of City employees who serve as volunteer liaisons.

- o The **Neighborhood Grant** program provides matching funds for a range of neighborhood improvement projects. \$50,000 is available for grants annually and individual grants range from less than \$100 to several thousand dollars. Typical projects include neighborhood beautification projects (landscaping, signage, public art), safety improvement projects (traffic circles, lighting), and reimbursement for neighborhood newsletters.
- o **Neighborhood Picnics.** Once a year, recognized neighborhoods can apply for matching funds from the City for an annual picnic. The picnics bring neighborhoods together, strengthen community bonds, and give residents the chance to meet the Mayor and City Council in a relaxed atmosphere.



**Renton's Strategic Planning Division** provides long-range land-use planning for the City, including developing, managing and implementing the City's comprehensive plan, growth management compliance, and sub-area plan development. The Strategic Planning Division also formulates zoning and development standards and processes annexation proposals.

**The Economic Development Division** works in concert with the business community to actively promote and develop economic activity in the City with the goal of strengthening Renton's tax base and providing an even greater variety of job opportunities, housing, and services.

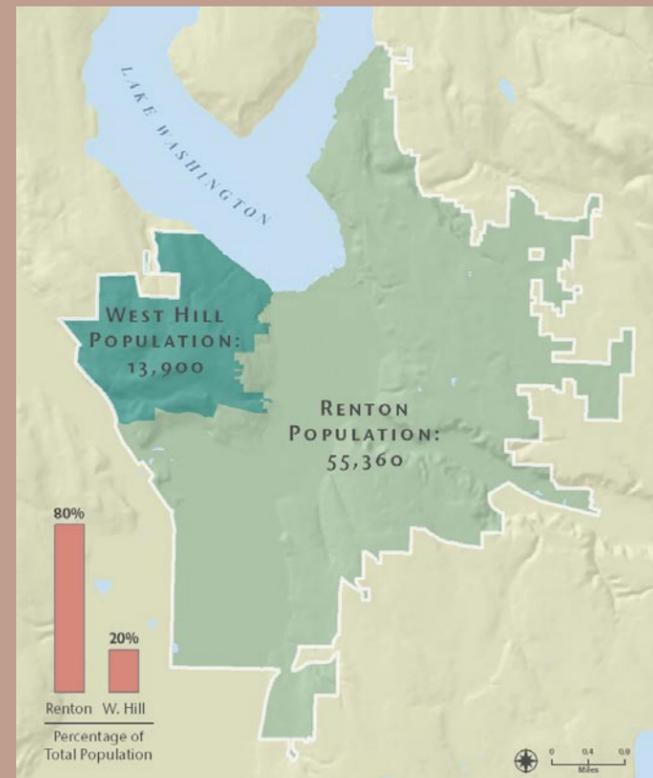
### How Might the West Hill Community Work with Renton EDNSP?



If the West Hill neighborhood wanted to take steps to revitalize its commercial corridor, proponents would first approach the Neighborhood Program and take advantage of possible Neighborhood Grants. The City's Economic Development Division would be called in to work with the community to help identify potentially viable commercial uses and financing mechanisms. One possible outcome is that the Strategic Planning Division would work with proponents to propose development standards that would make the commercial area more attractive for businesses and shoppers.

## What if West Hill were to...

### City of Renton Including West Hill



## ANNEX TO RENTON

### The Neighborhood of West Hill

If West Hill were part of the City of Renton, the neighborhood of West Hill would represent 20% of Renton's entire population. With a city population of roughly 70,000 (2005), the new, larger City of Renton would increase from the 14th most populous city in the state to the 12th.

One way to think about what the addition of West Hill would do to Renton is to note that, if West Hill became part of the city, Renton's center of gravity (for population) would shift about a half mile to the northeast. Renton's current center of gravity lies in a residential neighborhood to the east of I-405 (roughly at the intersection of NE 4th and Edmonds Avenue NE). With a neighborhood of West Hill, the center would shift to the west of I-405, to the city's commercial center (to the Paccar plant).

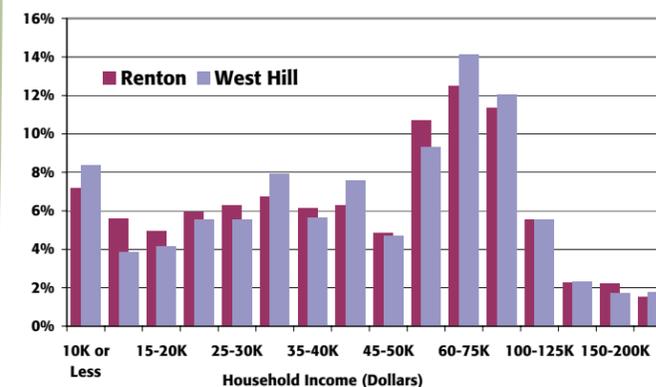
In effect, annexation of West Hill would more closely align Renton's city boundaries with the practical boundaries that describe how Renton functions as a place.

As a neighborhood in Renton, West Hill would strengthen already well-established connections with the City. Most of West Hill is part of the Renton School District, and according to information provided by participants in neighborhood forums, many of West Hill's residents already shop and play in Renton on a regular basis.

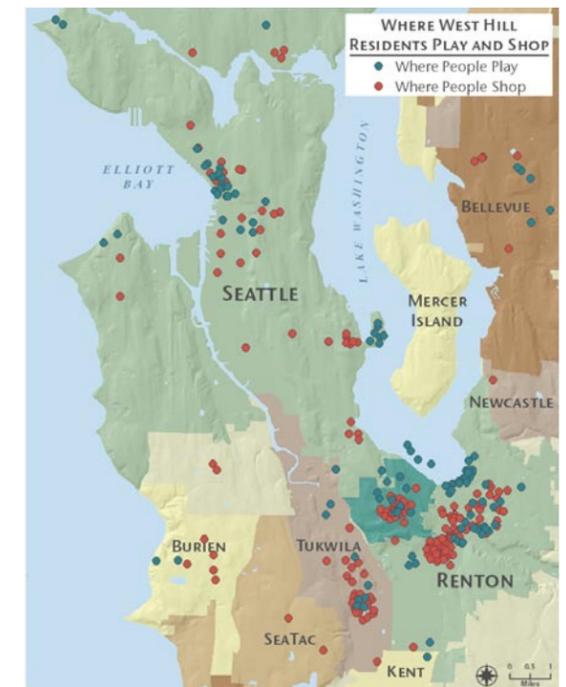
West Hill has a similar distribution of incomes to that of

Renton, but slightly weighted to the higher income ranges. West Hill has a slightly smaller portion of households with incomes less than \$30,000 (based on 2000 census data) and slightly larger shares with incomes of \$60,000 or more.

### Household Income in Renton and West Hill



### Where West Hill Resident Shop and Play



## Tax Burden

If West Hill were annexed to Renton, the typical homeowner would see a reduction in taxes and a reduction in the costs of utility services. Compared with the taxes and utility fees paid by residents currently, pay as part of unincorporated King County, the homeowner would see total savings of nearly \$300 per year. Compared with annexing to Seattle, annexation to Renton would save residents roughly \$450.

Renton's lower property levy rate would have saved a homeowner with a \$225,000 house \$190 in 2005.

In terms of utility services, Renton households face substantially lower costs in surface water fees (which are billed on residents' property taxes) and for solid waste collection.

State law dictates that solid waste collection contracts cannot be renegotiated immediately upon annexation or incorporation. If West Hill were to annex to Renton, however, residents could expect that collection rates would ultimately be reduced.

## Levels of Service

West Hill's annexation to Renton would result in a broad range of service changes. Given deeper fiscal resources for local services, Renton typically spends more on provision of local services than does King County.

In the end, however, the extent to which a given slate of services is more attractive depends on which services an individual values most.

## Parks

- West Hill would have access to Renton's Community Services Department, which provides preschool, youth, teen and adult leisure programs; youth, teen and adult athletics; fitness and wellness programs; outdoor recreational opportunities; cultural arts programs and programs designed to provide social and recreational opportunities to senior citizens and those with special needs. Currently non-residents pay an additional fee to access these programs.
- The Department includes the library, historical museum and golf course.



### Taxes Paid by Typical Homeowner

	Stay Unincorporated	Annex to Seattle	Annex to Renton
<b>Property Tax*</b>	\$2,860	\$2,700	\$2,670
<b>Utility Taxes</b>	\$60	\$288	\$236
<b>Cable Franchise Fee</b>	\$24	\$12	\$17
<b>Monorail Tax**</b>	--	\$238	--
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$2,944	\$3,238	\$2,922
<b>Difference vs. Unincorporated</b>		Increase \$294	Decrease (\$22)

### Service Costs

	Stay Unincorporated	Annex to Seattle	Annex to Renton
<b>Surface Water Fee</b>	\$91	\$122	\$65
<b>Water &amp; Sewer Charges</b>	\$901	\$923	\$901
<b>Solid Waste Collection Charges</b>	\$436	\$248	\$161
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$1,428	\$1,292	\$1,127
<b>Difference vs. Unincorporated</b>		Decrease (\$136)	Decrease (\$274)
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	\$4,372	\$4,530	\$4,049
<b>TOTAL COST DIFFERENCE</b>		Increase \$157	Decrease (\$296)

\* House assessed at \$225,000

\*\* Assumes total vehicle value of \$17,000

## Levels of Service

- The City of Renton provides, in combined funds, over \$1 million in general fund and Community Development Block Grant funding for human service programs, including the senior center, at-risk youth programs, and support for housing and homeless programs.

## Fire

- Upon annexation to Renton, West Hill would be served by the Renton Fire Department. Currently, Renton FD employs 106 paid uniformed personnel and 12 civilian staff, 5 stations and Administration and Training facilities. The Renton FD currently serves all of the City of Renton. The FD also contracts with King County Fire Protection District #25, for whom Renton FD serves 10,750 citizens in a 5.35 square mile area.
- Both Renton and Seattle's departments have average response times about 1 minute faster than FD 20.
- Annexation would result in a decline in service in the case of back-to-back calls. FD 20 currently has a fire engine and an aid vehicle at each station; Seattle and Renton would likely only have one engine at the station, making move-up response more difficult.
- FD 20 is primarily a volunteer organization with 54 volunteers, 7 full-time fire personnel working weekdays, and 2 clerical staff. Current volunteers are qualified to be paid professional firefighters, but neither Seattle nor Renton have a volunteer program, so it is likely the volunteers could opt to transition to paid positions as they become available.
- West Hill fire stations in FD 20 will become property of the annexing jurisdiction. The Skyway station will likely be kept in service. The station near Lake Washington will likely be decommissioned, since it was built in 1942 and never upgraded. Currently, this station is only staffed in the evenings by volunteers.
- Mutual aid agreements with other cities would remain in place.

## Library

- West Hill would become part of Renton's City Library System through the Parks & Community Services department (branches are in Downtown Renton and the Highlands).
- The City has lower collection per capita, circulation per capita, operating costs per capita, and historical capital investment per capita than either the King County Library District or the Seattle Library.
- Voters in the King County Library District recently approved a second capital levy. By law, all members of the District are committed to paying off the approved levy. This means that, even with a change in governance (and a change in library service provider), West Hill residents will continue paying property taxes to repay the KC Library District bonds (the second of which is due to be fully repaid in 2022).
- As part of the new capital levy, the King County Library District is slated to build a new, 8,000 square foot library in West Hill in 2011. If the area were to annex to Renton or Seattle ... (we are working on this question)
- If the KC Library District did not build the new library, what would happen with the existing facility? Possibilities:
  - Transfer current building to Renton with some compensation to KCLS
  - Renton makes future capital investments in the building using City CIP process
  - Close current facility and West Hill is served by Renton's two current branches

