3.2 Aesthetics

This section addresses aesthetic impacts associated with each alternative, including visual character, views, light and glare, and shading conditions. Consistency with current design guidelines and zoning regulations pertaining to these topics is also discussed.

3.2.1 Affected Environment

Analysis Area

The aesthetics analysis area is shown in Figure 3.2-1. This analysis area consists generally of all properties between Kirkland Way and Central Way that lie east of Main Street and west of 6th Street. Also included in the analysis area is the Substation Block, which is located north of NE 85th Street between 6th Street and 8th Street, as well as those properties fronting the north side of Central Way between 3rd Street and 5th Street. This analysis area is similar to the area studied under the 2008 FEIS, though it has been expanded to include areas for study under the DSEIS Off-Site Alternative.

Visual Character

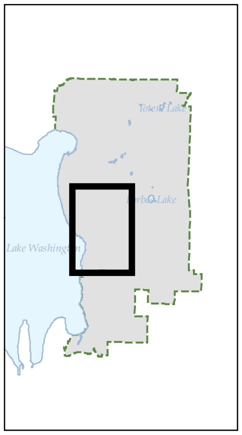
Visual character is the objective identification of the visual features of the landscape. Both natural and artificial landscape features make up the character of an area or view. Geologic, hydrologic, botanical, wildlife, recreational, and urban features all influence visual character. Urban features include those associated with landscape settlements and development, including roads, utilities, structures, earthworks, and the results of other human activities. The visual character of the aesthetics analysis area varies at different locations.

Peter Kirk Park

Peter Kirk Park serves as a focal point and visual landmark in the aesthetics analysis area. Though most vegetation consists of grass, a row of tall trees along Central Way screens the baseball field from passing traffic. In addition to the baseball field, open space, a playground, and a system of trails provide non-vehicular access to adjoining businesses on the south and east, integrating the park with the surrounding development.

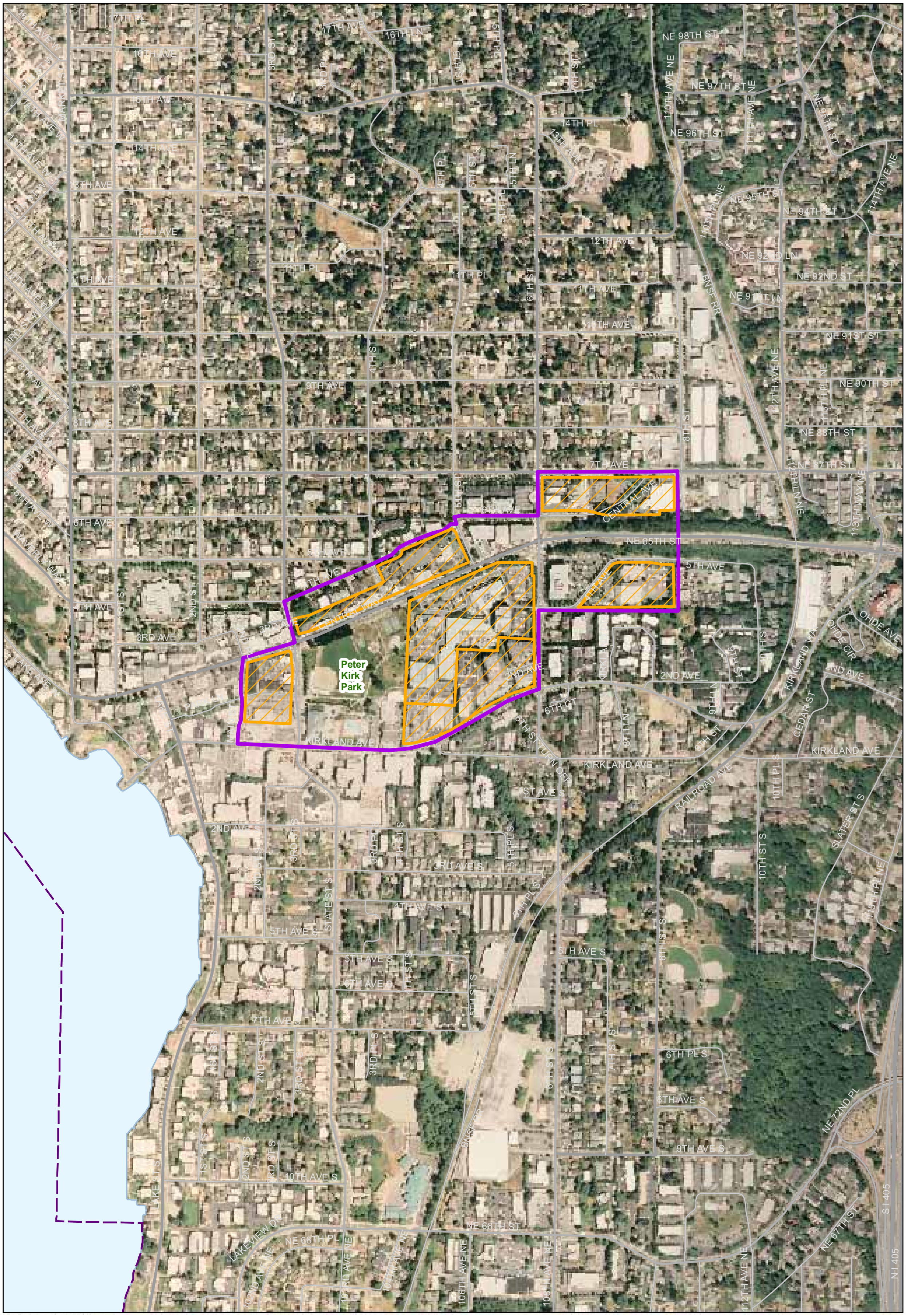
Superblock

The Superblock includes all properties east of Peter Kirk Park, west of 6th Street, north of Kirkland Way, and south of Central Way. The existing Parkplace development dominates the northern end of the Superblock and is suburban in character. Buildings are set far back from the streets, and the intervening space is devoted almost exclusively to parking. Landscaping along Central Way and 6th Street serves to screen the interior parking areas from passersby, pedestrian access is limited, and the area is internally focused and separated from the street.



Vicinity Map

0 5,800 11,600 17,400
Feet



Legend

- Analysis Area
- Study Blocks
- City of Kirkland Boundary
- Lake
- Street Centerline

0 270 540 810
Feet

Source: City of Kirkland 2008; ICF 2010

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Figure 3.2-1
Aesthetics Analysis Area

The remaining properties in the Superblock, south of Parkplace, generally consist of office buildings. The buildings along 6th Street are located closer to the street than on the Parkplace property and have better pedestrian access, but the remaining properties along Kirkland Way are similar to Parkplace regarding limited pedestrian access and expanses of surface parking. The Continental Plaza property uses structured parking and surface parking; its parking structure is located between the street and the building entrance, breaking the pedestrian connection.

A multifamily residential building on 6th Street (the Watermark property) breaks with this trend. The building is located closer to the street than other properties on the Superblock, with direct pedestrian access from 6th Street. The streetscape in front of this building is characterized by the presence of mature street trees that screen the multistory building from passing traffic and a decorative fence that adds visual interest and human-scaled details to the pedestrian environment.

Post Office Site

Located north and east of the Parkplace site, the Post Office site consists of a single, one-story building set at the rear property line and its associated parking and truck loading areas. The majority of the site is dedicated to customer, employee, and mail truck parking, with landscaped areas around the perimeter. The eastern end of the site is surrounded by a security fence to control access to employee-only areas, and a large amount of existing vegetation along the fence helps screen these areas from view. Customer access to the Post Office is from the west, along 4th Avenue, where large beds of low landscaping form a buffer between the street and the customer parking lot and, beyond it, the post office itself. A sidewalk is provided along the entire street frontage, though it is interrupted by wide curb cuts for the drive-through mail-drop, customer parking access, and employee parking/mail truck access.

The overall character of the area around the Post Office site is one of low-intensity suburban development with large amounts of vegetation. This area is visually separated from the rest of the analysis area by existing office development along 6th Street, as well as the embankment of NE 85th Street to the north, giving it a less intense, less active character than that of Downtown.

CBD-1B Core Block

The CBD-1B Core Block consists of the Peter Kirk Square shopping center and the Kirkland Antique Mall (currently vacant), both located across 3rd Street from Peter Kirk Park. Peter Kirk Square is a single-story, strip-style commercial development with buildings located around the periphery of the site and parking concentrated in the center of the property. This building and parking arrangement provides a moderately improved experience for pedestrians traveling along Main Street or 3rd Street by not forcing them to cross large empty areas. However, the building façades along these streets offer little visual interest, since the walls are often blank and building entrances are oriented toward the central parking area.

The Kirkland Antique Mall, located immediately south of Peter Kirk Square, consists of a single-story building surrounded by a large expanse of surface parking. Landscaping is minimal and pedestrian paths from the sidewalk are not provided. The building itself is constructed of cinder-block and appears to be in need of maintenance.

CBD-7 Block

The CBD-7 Block consists of those properties fronting on the north side of Central Way between 3rd Street and 5th Street. This portion of Central Way represents a lapse in the generally positive pedestrian environment observed to the east and west. Development here is mostly auto-oriented, including two gas stations, a carwash, a fast-food restaurant, and a bank with drive-through service. Since this area is directly across Central Way from Peter Kirk Park, well-marked crosswalks are available at regular intervals, but sidewalk interruptions for parking entrances are common, and buildings are set back farther from the street.

Substation Block

Located north and east of the intersection of Central Way and 6th Street, the Substation Block is relatively isolated from the rest of the analysis area. Intervening development and the embankment of NE 85th Street screen most of the area from view from the south. Existing development consists of a tire store, a car wash, an equipment storage yard, a Puget Sound Energy substation, a warehouse, and a 2-story office complex. The low intensity of development on this block, combined with a greater amount of landscaping and natural trees, give this area a less urban feel than other parts of the analysis area. Pedestrian amenities are only present in the form of sidewalks along 6th Street.

Views

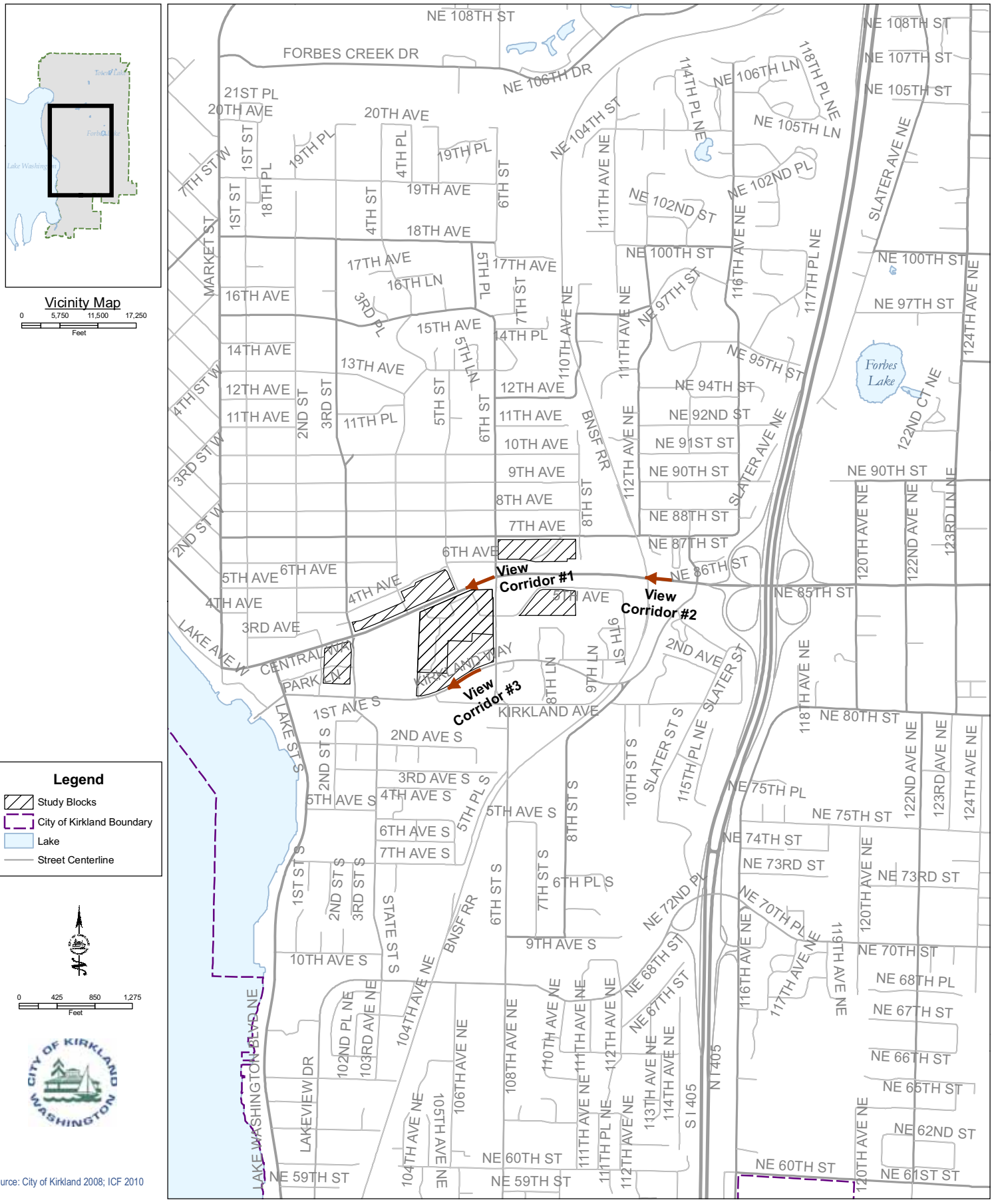
Assessment of impacts on views of landmarks, natural features, and other scenic vistas are an important component of an overall aesthetic analysis. The City of Kirkland Comprehensive Plan includes Neighborhood Plan chapters that identify issues and policies particularly relevant to that area of the city, including important view corridors. In the 2008 EIS, two territorial view corridors were identified that look directly into the analysis area:

- **View Corridor 1**. The gateway view to the southwest from the intersection of Central Way and 6th Street, and
- **View Corridor 2**. The gateway view to the southwest from the intersection of NE 85th Street and Kirkland Way.

The SEIS also considers a third view corridor defined by the Comprehensive Plan that could be affected by development under the Superblock Alternative and Off-Site Alternative:

- **View Corridor 3**. A territorial view to the southwest from the intersection of 6th Street and Kirkland Way.

The locations of these view corridors are shown in Figure 3.2-2.



Source: City of Kirkland 2008; ICF 2010

Figure 3.2-2
Aesthetics View Corridors

A view assessment is conducted by analyzing the visual character, visual quality, and viewer sensitivity. Visual quality is the assessment of the character and excellence of visual features identified. Visual character can be conveniently grouped under the component features of vividness, intactness, and unity of view, each of which is addressed in more detail below. Viewer sensitivity is the significance of and an individual's sensitivity to views of landscape features.

Regional Character

Judgments of visual quality and viewer response are made based in a regional frame of reference (U.S. Soil and Conservation Service 1978). The same landform or visual resource appearing in different geographic areas could have a different degree of visual quality and sensitivity in each setting. For example, a small hill may be a significant visual element on a flat landscape while having very little significance in mountainous terrain.

The Puget Sound region is highly urbanized, but the area is also characterized by a large system of lush parks, green space corridors, and vegetated roadsides, softening the urban feel. A mix of developed and natural landscapes characterizes the region. The landscape pattern is influenced by development extending from the metropolitan core of the region; smaller, growing cities; and major roadways in the region. Although the region is highly developed, views of Puget Sound, Lake Washington, the Olympic Mountains, Mount Rainier, and the forested Cascade Mountains create an outstanding visual backdrop.

Because the analysis area is within an urbanized area with views of significant natural features such as Lake Washington, the evaluation of visual quality and viewer response must be framed within this setting. View assessments, being relatively subjective, are expressed in terms of high, moderate, and low. In the context of the overall visual character of the Puget Sound region, the visual character of the analysis area is relatively moderate.

Visual Quality

Visual quality is evaluated using the approach to visual analysis adopted by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The FHWA method is used in this view assessment because it is characterized by an organized and systematic methodology. The public views being studied, although not related to a highway or roadway project, occur at public intersections with linear corridors and are often aligned with major local streets. The FHWA approach to view assessment employs the concepts of vividness, intactness, and unity (FHWA 1988; Jones et al. 1975) which are described as follows.

Vividness

Vividness is the visual power or memorability of landscape components as they combine in striking and distinctive visual patterns. There are four elements of vividness—landform, water form, vegetative form, and human form—that may be present and affect views in the landscape. A high vividness rating indicates that the landscape patterns are distinctive and form a dominant visual effect in the landscape (e.g., high mountain peaks, or city views with striking urban form and a strong sense of place). Moderate vividness indicates that landscape elements are noticeable and moderately pleasing, but do not dominate the landscape. A low vividness rating indicates that landscape patterns offer little visual diversity (e.g., monotonous vegetative patterns) or are unsightly (e.g., unscreened junkyard).

The landscape pattern of the analysis area does contain some unique features. Landform generally slopes to the west, providing scenic vistas of the Olympic Mountains. Lake Washington is a visible water form. Vegetative form consists mainly of landscaping (grass, trees, and shrubs) and natural evergreen trees. Development (human form) consists generally of buildings with indistinctive architecture. Vividness of the analysis area is considered to be moderate to high.

Intactness

Intactness is the visual integrity of the natural and human-built landscape and the extent to which the landscape is free from encroaching elements. Intactness is measured by the degree to which the human-built features encroach upon the natural landscape and vice versa. A high intactness rating indicates that the integrity of visual order in the viewshed[1] is intact and free from encroaching features. A medium intactness rating indicates that the natural landscape is moderately affected by encroaching, human-built features. A low intactness rating indicates that the view is highly altered by human-built features that result in a multitude of displeasing visual elements.

The analysis area is highly developed; office, commercial, and residential buildings encroach greatly upon the natural landscape, though the lower intensity of development in the Substation Block results in a greater degree of intactness than in the rest of the analysis area. Visual encroachment in the analysis area also includes a high level of visually displeasing elements such as vehicle traffic, parking lots, lights, and roadway signage. These elements detract from the overall visual order of the built environment of Downtown. Therefore, intactness in the analysis area is considered to be moderate to low.

Unity

Unity is the visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape considered as a whole. Unity is not meant to imply a repetitious or 'cookie-cutter' approach to human-built or natural features. Instead, overall unity is dependent on the degree to which all visual elements combine to form a coherent, harmonious visual pattern. A key element of unity is the interaction between human-built and natural elements. Environments where human-built and natural patterns reinforce each other have a high degree of visual unity.

A high unity rating indicates that human-built features, where present, blend harmoniously with the natural environment. Colors and materials are used that give a natural feel to human-built structures. A medium unity rating indicates that the human-built elements use colors and textures that allow the elements to blend moderately into the natural environment. A low unity rating indicates that the human-built or modified elements contrast markedly and have no visual relation to the natural environment.

In the analysis area, the level of unity varies with the viewpoint. Generally, for unobstructed views to the west, unity is considered moderate or high, since what the viewer sees may appear to be a homogenous downtown waterfront environment. However, in most views from adjacent roadways and properties, there is not a significant amount of harmony in the existing landscape. Buildings are often not painted in colors complementary to the surrounding environment and materials vary greatly in texture and appearance. In particular, View Corridor 3—a territorial view looking

[1] A viewshed is defined as all of the surface area visible from a particular location, such as, an overlook or sequence of locations (e.g., a roadway or trail) (FHWA 1988).

southwest along Kirkland Way toward Lake Washington—is currently obstructed by existing development south of Peter Kirk Park. Thus, unity in the obstructed view is considered to be low.

Viewer Sensitivity

Viewer sensitivity depends on the number and type of viewers and frequency and duration of views. Viewer sensitivity is also modified by viewer activity, awareness, and visual expectations as they relate to the number of viewers and viewing duration. Sensitivity tends to be lower for views seen by people driving to and from work or as part of their work (U.S. Forest Service 1974; FHWA 1988; U.S. Soil Conservation Service 1978). Commuters and non-recreational travelers have generally fleeting views and tend to focus on commute traffic, not on surrounding scenery. Therefore, commuters are generally considered to have low visual sensitivity.

Residential viewers typically have extended viewing periods and are concerned about changes in the views from their homes. Therefore, residential viewers generally are considered to have high visual sensitivity. As well, viewers using recreational trails and areas, scenic highways, and scenic overlooks are usually assessed as having high visual sensitivity.

The importance of a view is related, in part, to the position of the viewer. Therefore, visibility and visual dominance of landscape elements depend on their placement within the viewshed. To identify the importance of views of a resource, a viewshed is broken into distance zones of foreground, middle ground, and background. Generally, the closer a resource is to the viewer, the more dominant it is and the greater its importance to the viewer. Although distance zones in viewsheds may vary between different geographic regions or types of terrain, the standard foreground zone is 0.25 to 0.50 mile from the viewer; the middle ground zone from the foreground zone is 3 to 5 miles from the viewer; and the background zone from the middle ground is to infinity (U.S. Forest Service 1974).

In the analysis area, buildings, light poles, signage, roadways, landscaping, and natural vegetation are the dominant visual features. Many views are predominantly limited to the foreground for all viewer groups. For these views, topography, the built environment, and vegetation generally obstruct views to the middle ground and background. However, there are numerous view corridors to the west that have unobstructed views that include Lake Washington and the Olympic Mountains in the background.

Views in the analysis area exist for roadway travelers; occupants of some commercial, office, and residential buildings; recreationists using Peter Kirk Park; and pedestrians using sidewalks or paths. Viewer sensitivity is considered to be low for motorists, who are generally focused on other traffic and signage and getting to their destinations. For non-motorists, viewer sensitivity is higher.

Seasonal Variance

Visual quality typically peaks during summer-like conditions with clear visibility, and the winter season normally causes several changes in visual quality. First, views often become less obstructed in the winter season because deciduous plants lose their leaves, thereby reducing some vegetative screening. However, winter views often consist of gray overcast conditions that block background views. Thus, scenic vistas or panoramic views become less dramatic, as often only the foreground and middle ground are visible.

Second, vividness is often reduced during the winter season, as the color and pattern of the visual landscape becomes muted by overcast conditions. Views also become more limited because of the reduced daylight period between dusk and dawn.

Lastly, there tend to be fewer residents and recreationists doing outdoor activities in winter months; thus, there are fewer sensitive viewers. Overall, the visual quality is reduced as the winter visual landscape contains foreground and middle ground views and fewer background views. These views are present for a shorter duration of time and typically are not experienced by sensitive viewers.

Assessment of Views

View Corridor 1

Viewers from View Corridor 1 consist mainly of motorists traveling westbound along Central Way. This view corridor looks downhill toward Downtown with a sliver of Lake Washington and the horizon visible in the background. The north side of this view corridor is flanked by existing mixed-use development, and the south side is flanked by existing buildings and vegetation, both of which tend to tunnel views directly down the roadway corridor. Motorists frequently stop at this signalized intersection at Central Way and 6th Street and thus have an opportunity to experience the scenic view while waiting for the stoplight to change. Viewer sensitivity from this viewpoint is moderately high.

The view has fairly high vividness because of the topographic, vegetative, and water elements. The view's harmony is moderately high as the downhill view to the waterfront makes an aesthetic visual composition. However, the intactness associated with this view is relatively low due to the encroachment of existing development, roadway signage and lighting, and vehicular traffic.

The visual quality associated with this view corridor varies some seasonally; since, during the winter, views are muted and less vivid because of overcast conditions. Also, though visual quality is higher in the summer, views are significantly restricted due to increased vegetation growth on the south side of NE 85th Street and Central Way. Existing conditions for View Corridor 1 are illustrated in Figure 3.2-3.

View Corridor 2

The vantage point for View Corridor 2 located at the intersection of NE 85th Street and Kirkland Way is similar to View Corridor 1, but is higher up the hill to the east. Viewers from View Corridor 2 also consist mainly of motorists traveling westbound along NE 85th Street. View Corridor 2 looks downhill over Downtown with Lake Washington and the Olympic Mountains as background elements. The north side of the view corridor is flanked by vegetation that tends to screen northward views. However, the south side of the corridor is generally more open offering a sweeping panoramic view with existing buildings and vegetation intermittently screening views. Motorists frequently stop at this signalized intersection and thus have an opportunity to experience the scenic view while waiting for the stoplight to change. Viewer sensitivity from this viewpoint is moderately high.

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Figure 3.2-3
View Corridor 1—Existing Conditions

The view has fairly high vividness due to the topography, vegetative, and water elements. The view also has a moderately high harmony rating as the panoramic view of Lake Washington with a mountainous backdrop creates a visually pleasing composition. The highest visual quality associated with this view is not directly down the roadway corridor, but slightly to the south where the panoramic view centers on the lake. However, the existing development and roadway elements cause the intactness associated with this view to be relatively low.

As with View Corridor 1, the visual quality associated with winter views are muted and less vivid due to overcast conditions, and visual quality is higher in summer. Existing conditions for View Corridor 2 are illustrated in Figure 3.2-4.

View Corridor 3

Viewers from View Corridor 3 consist mainly of motorists and pedestrians traveling southwest on Kirkland Way. This view corridor looks downhill toward Downtown and the waterfront, though views of Lake Washington are mostly obstructed by existing development near the intersection of 3rd Street and Kirkland Way. The intersection of Kirkland Way and 6th Street is controlled by a four-way stop sign; as such, motorists and pedestrians do not spend much time waiting at this intersection. Viewer sensitivity from this viewpoint is, therefore, moderate to low.

The view has moderate vividness, as views of vegetation, the sky, and hills on the opposite side of Lake Washington are available on a clear day. Harmony and intactness for this view are low, however, because direct views of Lake Washington are obstructed by relatively recent mixed-use development. Overall visual quality is moderate. Existing conditions for View Corridor 3 are illustrated in Figure 3.2-5.

Light and Glare

Ambient light and glare are produced from a number of different sources, including exterior building illumination, automobile headlights, and street lamps.

Central Way and the Superblock are the portions of the analysis area likely to generate the most light and glare, because of high automobile traffic levels and the presence of many commercial properties, including gas stations and fast-food restaurants, which are often open until late in the evening. When in use during evening hours, lighting at the baseball field at Peter Kirk Park substantially adds to ambient light conditions near the intersection of Central Way and 3rd Street.

Lighting and glare conditions in the remainder of the analysis area are moderate by comparison. Many office buildings do not have staff present after business hours, and residences typically produce less ambient light than commercial areas.

Shading Conditions

A shade and shadow analysis was performed for the analysis area to establish existing conditions and to evaluate the potential effects on surrounding properties. Digital mass models of the existing and proposed development were created using Google SketchUp Pro. Sun angles and shadows were calculated for morning, noon, and evening hours on both the summer and winter solstices. A discussion of shade and shadow conditions for the different portions of the analysis area is presented below.

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Figure 3.2-4
View Corridor 2—Existing Conditions

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Figure 3.2-5
View Corridor 3—Existing Conditions

Superblock

Current development on the Superblock consists of low- and mid-rise commercial buildings of 1 to 6 stories. Setbacks from the property line are generous along Central Way and the Parkplace portion of 6th Street. The QFC building is located at approximately the minimum setback distance (10 feet) from the edge of the property adjacent to Peter Kirk Park. Most of the structures on the Superblock are in the range of 25 to 60 feet high, and cast relatively small shadows throughout most of the year. The tallest structure in the area, at approximately 88 feet, casts a much larger shadow, but it is located near the interior of the property. Existing development on the Watermark and Continental Plaza properties cast moderate winter shadows on the Parkplace property, as well as the commercial properties on the east side of 6th Street.

Post Office Site

Current development on the Post Office site consists of a single, one-story building located in the south-central portion of the site. The building does not shade adjacent buildings or streets in either summer or winter months, though the presence of trees and other natural vegetation along 5th Avenue does result in shading of the street during morning and evening hours.

CBD-1B Core Block

Current development on the CBD-1B Core Block consists of single-story commercial buildings less than 25 feet tall. Shading of adjacent streets and development is minimal in both summer and winter months.

CBD-7 Block

Current development on the CBD-7 Block consists of single-story commercial buildings generally less than 30 feet tall. Building footprints are small compared to lot area, and all shading generally occurs on the individual lots, with no off-site shading effects.

Substation Block

Current development in the Substation Block is of low intensity, the tallest structure being the 2-story Parkade office complex at the eastern end of the block. This building has the potential to shade the adjacent street during winter morning hours, but shading effects associated with buildings are otherwise minimal. Other shading effects in the area are the result of topography and vegetation, which results in variable shading across this portion of the analysis area.

Regulatory Overview

City of Kirkland Comprehensive Plan

Most of the analysis area is located within the Downtown area of the Moss Bay Neighborhood, as defined in the City of Kirkland Comprehensive Plan, while the Substation Block lies within the Norkirk Neighborhood.

The Superblock is located in a section of Downtown named the East Core Frame. The *Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan* indicates that development in the East Core Frame should focus on large, high-intensity, mixed-use projects. The Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan also identifies the Superblock

as comprising Design District 5, which allows heights of up to 5 stories. As stated in the plan, special emphasis is to be given to preserving a sense of openness, and urban design should focus on compatibility with, and forming connections to, Peter Kirk Park.

The CBD-7 Block forms the Northeast Core Frame of Downtown and is located in Design District 7. Development here is encouraged to consist of a broad range of commercial uses with single-story retail adjacent to the sidewalk and taller buildings set back from the street. Maximum height should be approximately 3 stories to preserve the open feel of Peter Kirk Park, which is located across Central Way.

The CBD-1B Core Block lies within the core of Downtown, which is intended to be the pedestrian heart of the city. Retail, restaurants, gift shops, and other pedestrian-oriented uses are encouraged. Design District 1 specifies heights of 2 to 4 stories, though incentives are in place for additional height for mixed-use projects with a residential component. Architectural design in this area should be highly focused on improving the pedestrian experience and generating foot traffic.

The Post Office site is not part of a design district, as it lies outside Downtown. As part of the Perimeter Areas of the Moss Bay Neighborhood, design requirements are less stringent than in the CBD. The Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan states that future development in PLA-5c, which includes the Post Office site, is intended to be professional offices and multifamily residential at densities up to 24 units per acre. For sites at least 1 acre in size, building heights up to 5 stories are considered appropriate.

The Substation Block is located in the Norkirk Neighborhood's industrial area, though this area is specifically identified as a future location of office development up to 3 stories, which would serve as a buffer between Downtown to the southwest and the rest of the industrial area further north (Policy N-7.1).

View Policies

The Community Character chapter of the City of Kirkland Comprehensive Plan contains two view-related policies:

Policy CC-4: 5 Protect public scenic views and view corridors.

This policy identifies public views of Kirkland, Seattle, surrounding mountains and Lake Washington as valuable scenic resources that should be enhanced and preserved. This policy also indicates that private views are not protected, except when specifically identified in a neighborhood plan.

Policy CC-4.6: Preserve natural landforms, vegetation, and scenic areas that contribute to the City's identity and visually define the community, its neighborhoods and districts.

This policy identifies the importance of topography, open space and vegetation, and the inherent value of the natural landscape. This policy also indicates that trees planted along roadways should minimize view blockage as they mature.

The Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan contains the following view related sections:

- **Public Views**. This section identifies key territorial and local views in Downtown, and particularly identifies the eastern gateway view (to the southwest) where Central Way intersects 6th Street.

- **Gateways**. This section identifies gateways into Downtown as a distinct sense of entry and that the topographic change functions as a visual entry.

The chapter concerning the Everest Neighborhood, located between the Moss Bay Neighborhood and Interstate (I)-405, contains the following view-related section:

- **Open space value of streets is to be recognized**. This section states that local and territorial views associated with public roadways serve as a valuable visual resource and that these view corridors should be identified, enhanced, and preserved. This section identifies a major view to the southwest at the intersection of NE 85th Street and Kirkland Way.

Design Review

Design guidelines in the City are applicable to developments located within a design district. As such, any future development on the Superblock, CBD-7 Block, or CBD-1B Core Block would be subject to such review, while development on the Substation Block or the Post Office site is not currently subject to design review. Chapter 142 of the Kirkland Zoning Code identifies those development activities subject to design review by the City. Projects located within a design district, new buildings greater than 1 story in height, new buildings more than 10,000 square feet in gross floor area, substantial building expansions, and alterations of buildings in designated historic districts are subject to review by the City's Design Review Board. City planning staff members also conduct an administrative design review for those projects not required to appear before the Design Review Board.

Design guidelines for Downtown are contained in Design Guidelines for Pedestrian-Oriented Business Districts, adopted by the Kirkland City Council in 2004. This document contains guidelines for new development with special attention paid to those features most likely to affect the pedestrian experience, such as sidewalks, natural features, exterior building materials, and scale. Adoption of these guidelines is intended to do the following.

- Promote a sense of community identity by emphasizing the City's natural assets, maintaining its human scale, and encouraging activities that make Downtown the cultural, civic, and commercial heart of the community.
- Maintain a high-quality environment by ensuring that new construction and site development meet high standards.
- Orient to the pedestrian by providing weather protection, amenities, human scale elements, and activities that attract people to Downtown.
- Increase a sense of continuity and order by coordinating site orientation, building scale, and streetscape elements of new development to better fit with neighboring buildings.
- Incorporate parks and natural features by establishing an integrated network of trails, parks, and open spaces; maintaining existing trees; and including landscaping features into new development.
- Allow for diversity and growth through flexible guidelines that are adaptable to a variety of conditions and do not restrict new development.

3.2.2 Impacts

Impacts Common to All Alternatives

Visual Character

Total office and commercial square footage in the analysis area, particularly on the Superblock, would significantly increase under all alternatives. All alternatives would result in increased building heights and lot coverage, which would make development more visually prominent. The increased visual mass could create a more intensive character along street frontages and property boundaries that may affect pedestrian comfort levels.

The application of design standards would be necessary under all alternatives to minimize conflicts of scale and ensure that new development is sensitive to the streetscape and surrounding development.

Views

Pedestrians and Bicyclists

Pedestrians and bicyclists who will view development associated with the Superblock Alternative and Off-Site Alternative are likely to notice changes to the visual landscape. Since these viewers travel at a slower rate of speed than automobiles, they tend to be more observant of their surrounding environment. As pedestrian and bicycle traffic will occur nearby or adjacent to new development, these viewers are considered to have moderate to high visual sensitivity.

Recreational Users

New development would create additional foreground visual elements for users of the sports field, pool, and other facilities at Peter Kirk Park. Recreational users participating in sports and spectators would likely be primarily focused on playing or watching the activities occurring at the sports venues and would, therefore, have only moderate visual sensitivity. However, recreational users going to the park for a picnic or to relax on a park bench may be more visually sensitive to their surroundings.

Nearby Residents and Business Occupants

Since the analysis area is highly developed and there are numerous existing large commercial/office buildings adjacent to it, the view for nearby residents and business occupants is typically filtered by buildings and vegetation in the foreground. Additionally, Policy CC-4.5 of the City's Comprehensive Plan indicates that private views are not protected.

Motorists along Local Roadways

One of the largest viewer groups in the analysis area comprises motorists traveling along local roadways. Motorists who travel the roadway generally possess low visual sensitivity to their surroundings and their attention is typically not focused on the passing views. At standard roadway speeds, views are of short duration and motorists are fleetingly aware of surrounding traffic, road signs, their immediate surroundings within the automobile, and other visual features.

The overall visual character of the roadway and surrounding area would be consistent with the visual character under existing conditions from the perspective of motorists, as urban development flanking the roadway is already the dominant feature.

However, motorists are one of the viewer groups that is most affected by the changes to View Corridor 1 looking southwest toward Downtown and Lake Washington from the intersection of Central Way and 6th Street. The larger visual mass of buildings under all alternatives would block views to portions of the sky visible to the southwest from this intersection.

Temporary Visual Changes Resulting from Construction

Construction under all alternatives would create temporary changes in views of the analysis area. Construction activities would introduce heavy equipment into the surrounding public roadways, and residential and commercial properties. Safety and directional signage would also be visible. Viewer groups in the analysis area and vicinity may not be accustomed to seeing construction activities and equipment; their sensitivity to such impacts is expected to be moderate.

Since these activities are short term, temporary impacts on viewers are not expected to be significant.

Light and Glare

Development under all alternatives has the potential to increase ambient light and glare throughout the analysis area, primarily through the increased presence of exterior building illumination and increased vehicular traffic. Impacts under each alternative differ in degree and are discussed in more detail in the following sections. The application of regulations would be necessary to ensure that development is compatible with surrounding uses.

Shading Conditions

All alternatives would allow for an increase in building heights over existing conditions. As such, all alternatives are likely to generate increased shading conditions on surrounding properties and streets. This increased shading would be most pronounced during winter, when days are shortest and the sun is lowest in the sky. During certain winter periods, the portion of Central Way adjacent to Parkplace could be in perpetual shadow under any of the alternatives.

Superblock Alternative

Visual Character

The Superblock Alternative would add 954,000 square feet of office and commercial development to the Parkplace site and adjacent properties to the south, which would increase building heights and lot coverages over both existing conditions and the No Action Alternative. Based on the square footages added to each of the lots on the Superblock in Table 2-1, future building heights were estimated and digitally modeled on realistic terrain and parcel patterns using Google SketchUp Pro.

Since no specific design proposal for the Superblock Alternative is under consideration by the City, the mass models of projected future development are intended to illustrate an approximate maximum envelope of development, based on the amount of development capacity assigned to the lot. Mass models for the Superblock Alternative were developed using the following development assumptions:

- All parcels in the Superblock would be rezoned to CBD-5A, resulting in a requirement for 25-foot interior lot line setbacks, zero-foot street setbacks, and a 55-foot setback where any parcel abuts Peter Kirk Park.
- All parking would be located in underground structures. Should developers find it impractical or undesirable to locate parking below grade and choose to use above-ground structures, this would reduce the ability to accommodate the total planned floor area or would require permitting building heights to be raised above their currently modeled levels.

In addition to these development assumptions, the following design considerations were incorporated into the digital models:

- Along street frontages, upper-story setbacks with a minimum depth of 6 feet were applied every 2 stories to approximate design review requirements for solar access and reduction of visual mass.
- The total square footage of each mass model includes a 20% allowance over allocated commercial space to account for internal circulation requirements, public spaces, and construction inefficiencies caused by specific site conditions. This is consistent with the 20% allowance for drive lanes included in the Proposed Action for the Parkplace site, previously analyzed in the 2008 EIS (LMN Architects and Hewitt Architects, Inc. 2008).

Based on the above assumptions, the Superblock Alternative would result in building heights ranging from 4 to 6 stories. The tallest buildings would be located at the Bungie and Emerald properties along Kirkland Way, and these properties would also experience the greatest increases in height over current conditions. Projected building heights for the Superblock Alternative are illustrated in Figure 3.2-6 and shown in Table 3.2-1.

Table 3.2-1. Height Comparison by Stories for the Superblock Alternative

Site	Existing Height	Design District Max Height	Projected CBD-5A Height	Proposed Height Change over Existing Conditions	Proposed Height Change over Current Code
Emerald	5	5	6	1	1
Bungie	1	5	6	5	1
Parkplace	1 – 6	5	4	-2 – 3	-1
Watermark	4	5	5	1	0
Continental	4	5	5	1	0
570	2	5	5	3	0

Source: City of Kirkland; ICF

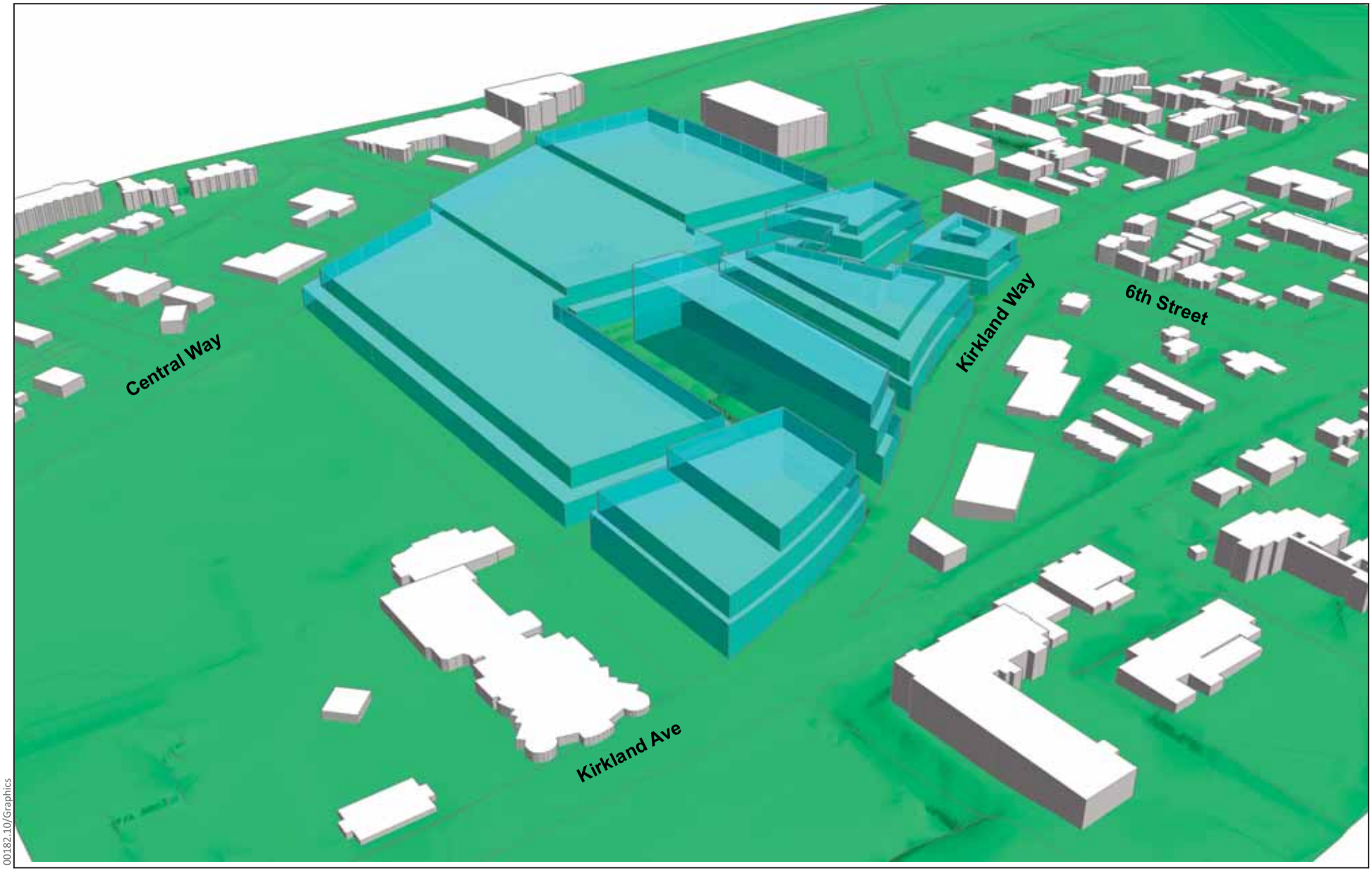

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Figure 3.2-6
Projected Building Heights—Superblock Alternative

Although the floor area ratio (FAR) is consistent across the Superblock at approximately 2.63, the combination of lot shape and size and setbacks results in variable building heights across the block. Thus the Bungie and Emerald properties achieve a FAR of 2.63 with 6 stories while other sites achieve the FAR of 2.63 at 4 to 5 stories in height.

While the Superblock Alternative would only represent a moderate increase in visual intensity for those properties at the corner of 6th Street and Kirkland Way, the Parkplace, Bungie, and Emerald properties would experience a dramatic increase in building heights and coverages compared to existing conditions. Buildings on the Superblock would need to maximize lot coverage to accommodate the projected growth and would, therefore, be located closer to the sidewalk than current development. The presence of these buildings so close to the street could negatively influence the pedestrian experience on Kirkland Way and 6th Street if design guidelines are not implemented to ensure design is scaled appropriately for pedestrians.

The currently established design district for the Superblock allows a maximum of 5 stories (Design District 5). While projected heights on the Parkplace site would be within these established limits, development on the southern portion of the Superblock would be inconsistent with the 5-story height limit if buildings on the Bungie and Emerald properties develop to the projected 6 stories. In addition to the application of design standards to minimize conflicts of scale and ensure that new development is sensitive to the streetscape, adjacent parcels, and the open character of the nearby Peter Kirk Park, it would be necessary for the City to amend the Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan to allow for additional height in the southern portion of the Superblock.

Views

Pedestrians and Bicyclists

The analysis area is highly urbanized and local roadways and sidewalks are already flanked by large commercial, office, and residential buildings. Vehicular traffic is a regular visual component of the analysis area. New development would occur closer to the sidewalk and roadway than currently exists, both along Central Way and 6th Street and Kirkland Way, thus encroaching on the visual environment of pedestrians and bicyclists and creating a visual impact. There would be less open space, but improved building design with better pedestrian orientation. Design standards would be applied to the analysis area in an effort to achieve a pedestrian-friendly, human-scale environment. Therefore, with design standards in place, pedestrians and bicyclists would not be significantly affected under the Superblock Alternative.

Territorial Views

View Corridor 1

The Superblock Alternative would allow for development on the Parkplace site to encroach further into the periphery of View Corridor 1 compared to existing conditions, creating an imposing visual element on the south side of the view corridor. Existing buildings and vegetation screen views of the waterfront and Lake Washington along the south side of this view, and the portion of the view with the highest visual quality would not be directly affected. However, new development under the Superblock Alternative could still potentially block views of portions of Lake Washington, the horizon, and the sky. A view simulation of the Superblock Alternative for View Corridor 1 is shown in Figure 3.2-7.

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Figure 3.2-7
View Corridor 1—Superblock Alternative

View Corridor 2

Development associated with the Superblock Alternative would be a visible middle ground element from View Corridor 2. Due to the elevation of the roadway at the vantage point, the maximum development height of 4 stories on the Parkplace site would be below the line of sight to the lake and mountains and would not obstruct views to these elements. The taller 6-story buildings on the southern portion of the Superblock would partially block views to Lake Washington, though this view is already partially obstructed by existing vegetation between the vantage point and the Superblock. The presence of this vegetation is likely to screen most new development from view, particularly during summer months. Therefore, no significant impacts on View Corridor 2 are anticipated under the Superblock Alternative. Winter and summer view simulations for View Corridor 2 are shown in Figures 3.2-8 and 3.2-9.

View Corridor 3

Development under the Superblock Alternative would directly affect View Corridor 3, creating a large visual encroachment on the north side of Kirkland Way. Although the view corridor possesses low visual unity and only moderate visual quality, the introduction of 5- to 6-story office buildings directly adjacent to the street would be in stark contrast to the large amount of vegetation observed currently on the south side of Kirkland Way, narrowing the view corridor and reducing the sense of openness. However, as views from this location are already heavily obstructed, development under the Superblock Alternative is not anticipated to adversely affect View Corridor 3, provided that design review is applied to future projects along Kirkland Way to enhance pedestrian orientation in the building location, bulk, and interface with the streetscape. A view simulation of the Superblock Alternative for View Corridor 3 is shown in Figure 3.2-10.

Light and Glare

Increased development under the Superblock Alternative has the potential to increase ambient light and glare, primarily through the increased presence of exterior building illumination and increased vehicular traffic on and around the site. While development along Central Way is already a significant source of light and glare, 6th Street and Kirkland Way are not. These areas, as well as the eastern edge of Peter Kirk Park, could be affected by increased lighting levels. However, development on the southern portion of the Superblock is anticipated to consist mostly of office space, which will reduce impacts in this area associated with traffic to and from the site, as these buildings will primarily be occupied during daylight hours. Ground-level retail development has the potential to generate additional light and glare in both daytime and evening hours, and the application of design guidelines and mitigation measures would be necessary to minimize impacts from increased exterior illumination.

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Figure 3.2-8
View Corridor 2—Superblock Alternative (Winter)

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Figure 3.2-9
View Corridor 2—Superblock Alternative (Summer)

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Figure 3.2-10
View Corridor 3—Superblock Alternative

Shading Conditions

The Superblock Alternative would result in taller buildings than currently exist on the site; therefore, shading conditions are anticipated to increase, since taller buildings cast longer shadows and have a higher potential to shade adjacent buildings or neighboring properties. Shading impacts resulting from the Superblock Alternative are anticipated to be most pronounced in the interior of the site, between buildings. Simulated shading conditions indicate that the space between the new 5- and 6-story buildings south of the Parkplace site is the area likely to see the greatest increase in shadows, particularly during winter morning and evening hours. Development on the Parkplace site is also anticipated to shade 6th Street and Central Way.

Simulated summer and winter shading conditions for the Superblock Alternative are shown in Figure 3.2-11.

Unified Ownership Alternative

Visual Character

The Unified Ownership Alternative would add 954,000 square feet of office and retail space to the analysis area, distributing it between the Post Office and the Parkplace sites as detailed in Table 2-2. The addition of development to these sites would result in increased building heights and lot coverages over existing conditions. Under the Unified Ownership Alternative, the Parkplace site is assumed to develop to the same level as under the Superblock Alternative. Like the Superblock Alternative, estimated maximum building envelopes were digitally modeled based on parcel size and the amount of development capacity assigned to each block; SketchUp modeling for the Unified Ownership Alternative was conducted under the same assumptions as for the Superblock Alternative.

Projected heights under the Unified Ownership Alternative represent a 4-story height increase for the Post Office property; projected heights on the Parkplace site are the same as under the Superblock alternative. Building heights for the Unified Ownership Alternative are illustrated in Figure 3.2-12 and shown in Table 3.2-2.

Table 3.2-2. Height Comparison by Stories for the Unified Ownership Alternative

Site	Existing Height	Design District Max Height	Projected CBD-5A Height	Proposed Height Change over Existing Conditions	Proposed Height Change over Current Code
Parkplace	1 – 6	5	4	-2 – 3	-1
Post Office	1	5	5	4	0

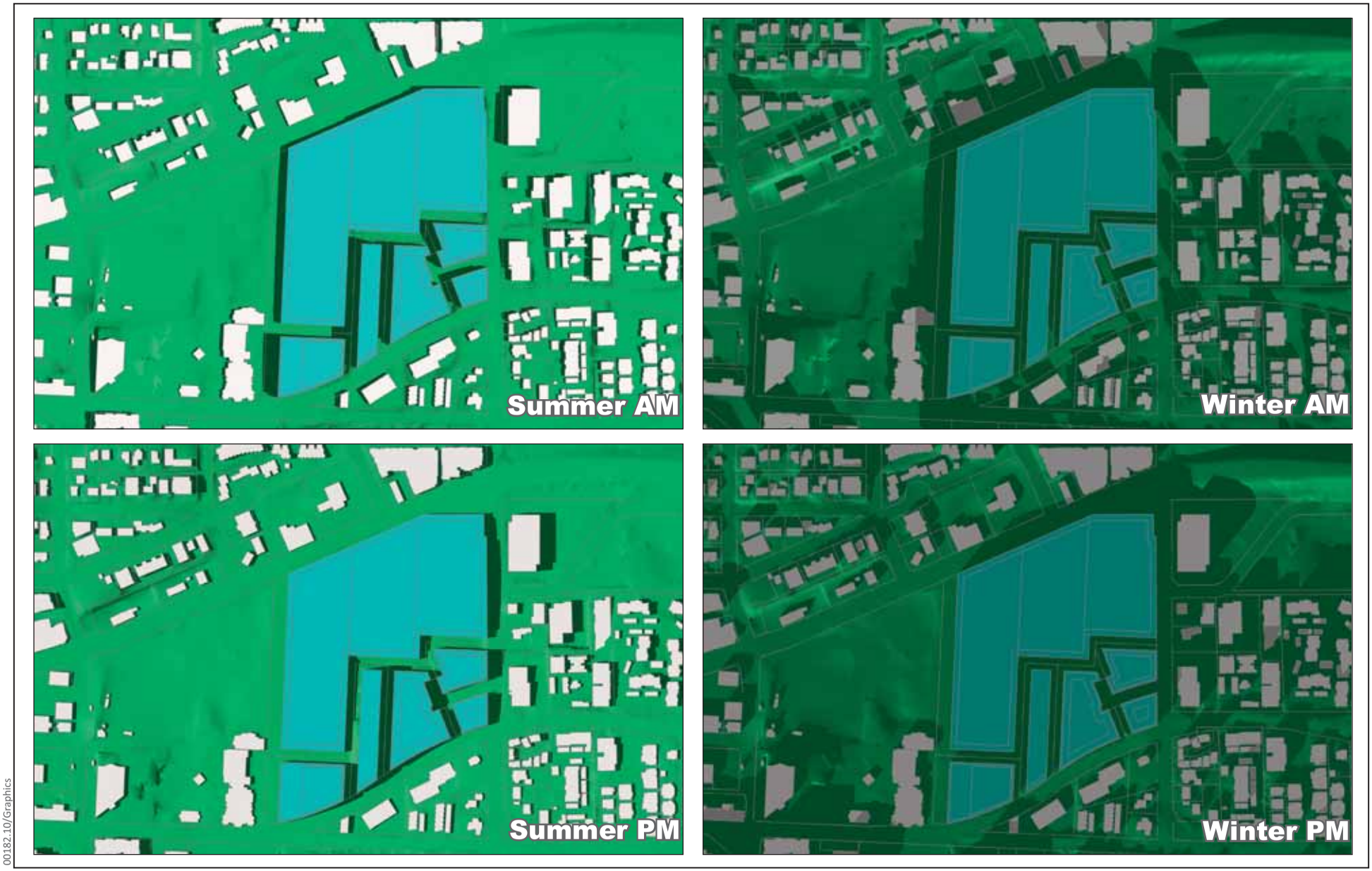

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Figure 3.2-11
Shading Conditions—Superblock Alternative

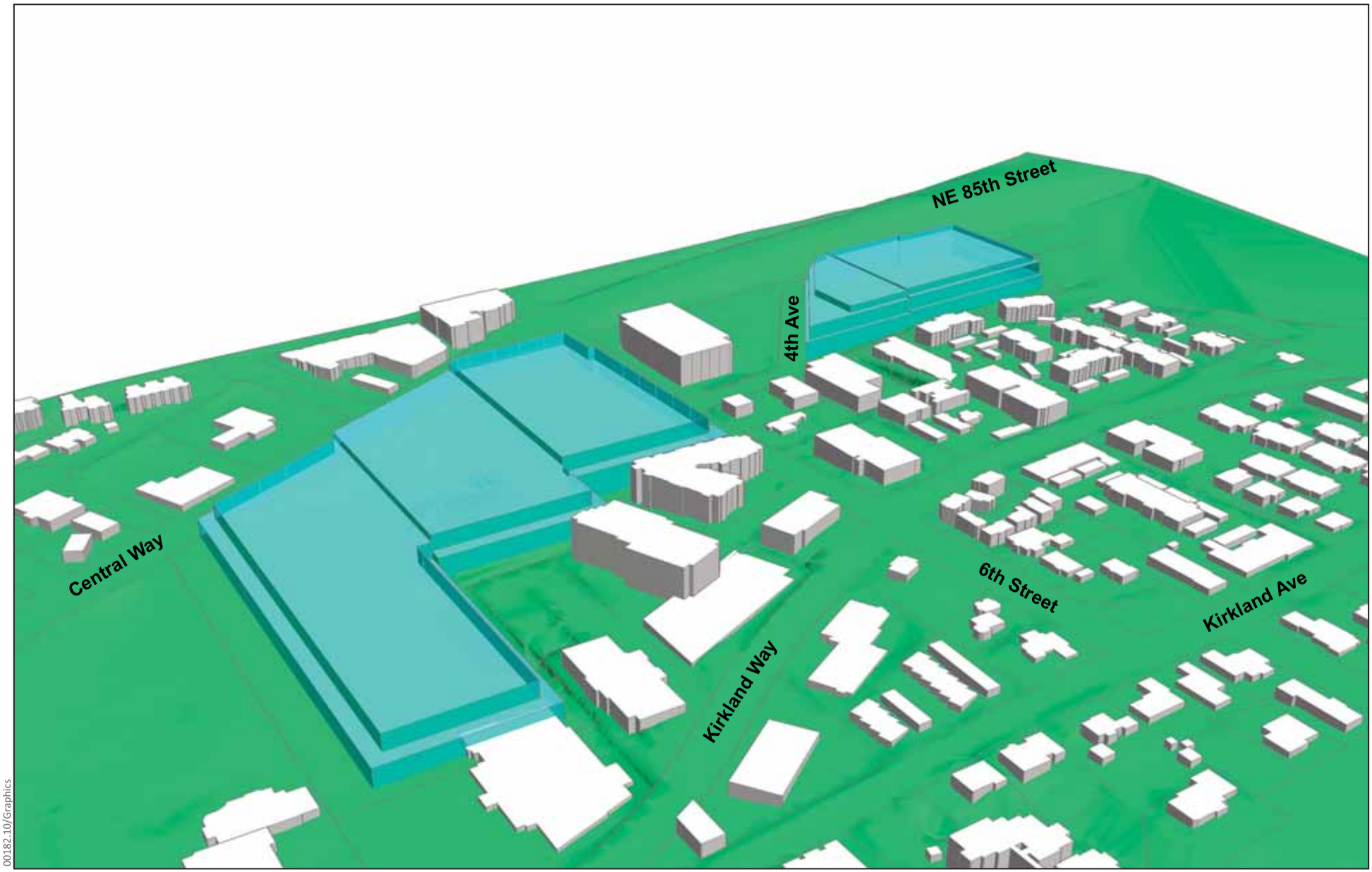

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Figure 3.2-12
Projected Building Heights—Unified Ownership Alternative

Both the Parkplace and Post Office sites would experience large increases in building heights and lot coverage compared to existing conditions. While projected building heights at both sites would be consistent with standards contained in the Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan, development on the Post Office site has a high potential to be inconsistent with current zoning, which limits heights in the area to 60 feet. Under current modeling assumptions, a 5-story building with ground-floor retail and 4 stories of office space would reach approximately 70 feet in height. While building design could be modified to reduce floor heights, the requirements for a tall ground floor to accommodate retail space could make it difficult to fit all five stories under the 60-foot limit imposed by current zoning. A complete discussion of the Unified Ownership Alternative's compatibility with current land use and zoning regulations is contained in Chapter 3.1 – Land Use.

Under the Unified Ownership Alternative, the implementation of design guidelines would be necessary on both the Parkplace and Post Office sites to reduce impacts on adjacent development and the pedestrian realm. As under the Superblock Alternative, development on the Parkplace site located so close to the street could negatively influence the pedestrian experience along 6th Street if design guidelines are not followed.

Views

Pedestrians and Bicyclists

The analysis area is highly urbanized and local roadways and sidewalks in the vicinity of the Parkplace site are already flanked by large commercial, office, and residential buildings. Development near the Post Office site is less intense, but the area still sees a high level of vehicular traffic from post office customers and employees at the nearby office buildings.

New development would occur closer to the sidewalk and roadway than currently exists along Central Way, 6th Street, and 4th and 5th Avenues, thus encroaching on the visual environment of pedestrians and bicyclists and creating a visual impact. Development on the Post Office site, in particular, would greatly increase lot coverage over existing conditions, but building design would be more oriented toward the pedestrian than the car, as is currently the case. Though not presently required on the Post Office site, if design standards are applied, pedestrians and bicyclists would not be significantly affected under the Unified Ownership Alternative.

Territorial Views

View Corridor 1

Under the Unified Ownership Alternative, development on the Parkplace site would develop to the same level as projected under the Superblock Alternative. This level of development would result in a visual encroachment on the south side of View Corridor 1, and associated impacts are anticipated to be the same as under the Superblock Alternative.

The Post Office site is located east of the vantage point for View Corridor 1 and would not be visible to potential viewers. As such, no impacts associated with the Post Office site are anticipated on View Corridor 1.

View Corridor 2

Development associated with the Unified Ownership Alternative would be a visible middle ground element from View Corridor 2. Due to the elevation of the roadway at the vantage point, the

maximum development height of 4 stories on the Parkplace site would be below the line of sight to the lake and mountains and would not obstruct views to these elements. The 5-story development on the Post Office site would be closer to the viewer and at a slightly higher elevation than the Parkplace site, making it more visually prominent, though much of the site would be screened from view by the roadway embankment. Development on the Post Office site would partially block views to Lake Washington, though this view is already partially obstructed by existing vegetation along the south side of the road. The presence of this vegetation is likely to screen most new development from view, particularly during summer months. Therefore, no significant impacts on View Corridor 2 are anticipated under the Unified Ownership Alternative. Winter and summer view simulations for View Corridor 2 are shown in Figures 3.2-13 and 3.2-14.

View Corridor 3

Development under the Unified Ownership Alternative would not be visible from View Corridor 3. As such, no impacts are anticipated.

Light and Glare

Increased development under the Unified Ownership Alternative has the potential to increase ambient light and glare, primarily through the increased presence of exterior building illumination and increased vehicular traffic on, and in the vicinity of, the Parkplace and Post Office sites. While development along Central Way is already a significant source of light and glare, 6th Street, 4th Avenue, and 5th Avenue are not. The vicinity of the Post Office site, in particular, could be affected by increased lighting levels, as the site borders a multifamily residential development to the south. While development on the Post Office site would consist mostly of office space—which would primarily be occupied during daylight hours—a retail component is anticipated and has the potential to generate additional light and glare in both daytime and evening hours. The application of design guidelines and mitigation measures would be necessary to minimize impacts from increased exterior illumination.

Shading Conditions

The Unified Ownership Alternative would result in taller buildings than currently exist on the Parkplace and Post Office sites; therefore, shading conditions are anticipated to increase, since taller buildings cast longer shadows and have a higher potential to shade adjacent buildings or neighboring properties. Shading impacts on the Parkplace site are anticipated to be most pronounced along Central Way (morning) and 6th Street (afternoon), similar to the Superblock Alternative. Shading impacts associated with development on the Post Office site would occur along 4th Avenue (morning) and 5th Avenue (afternoon). Increased building heights on the Post Office site also have the potential to shade the parking area of the office building across 4th Avenue, as well the office properties to the east.

Simulated summer and winter shading conditions for the Unified Ownership Alternative are shown in Figure 3.2-15.

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Figure 3.2-13
View Corridor 2—Unified Ownership Alternative (Winter)

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Figure 3.2-14
View Corridor 2—Unified Ownership Alternative (Summer)

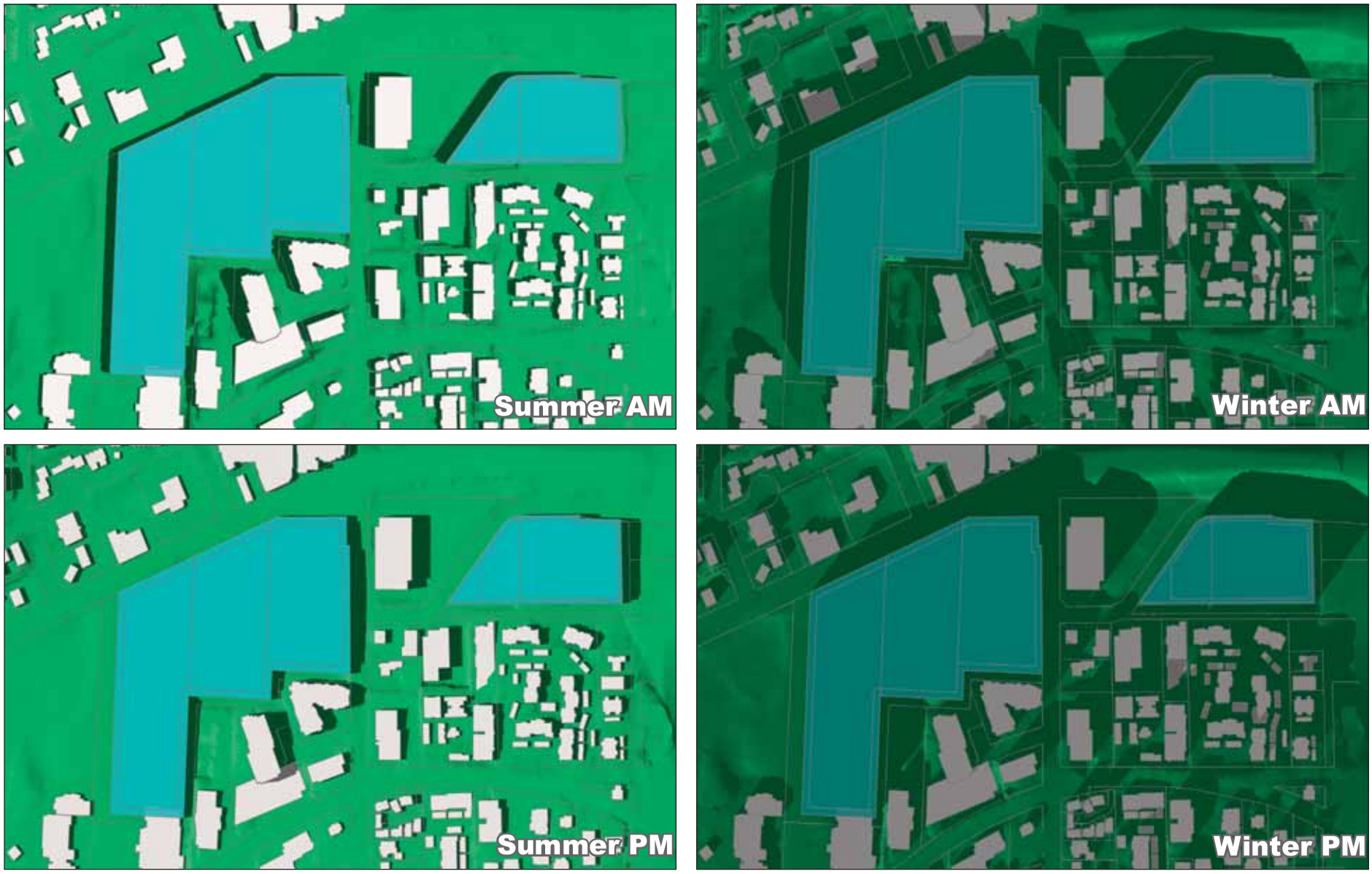

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Figure 3.2-15
Shading Conditions—Unified Ownership Alternative

Off-Site Alternative

Visual Character

The Off-Site Alternative would add 954,000 square feet of office and retail space to the analysis area, distributing it between the CBD-1B Core Block, CBD-7 Block, and Substation Block, as detailed in Table 2-2. The addition of development to these sites would result in increased building heights and lot coverages over existing conditions. Under the Off-Site Alternative, the Parkplace site is assumed to develop to the same level as under the No Action Alternative.

Like the Superblock Alternative, estimated maximum building envelopes were digitally modeled based on parcel size and the amount of development capacity assigned to each block; SketchUp modeling for the Off-Site Alternative was conducted under the same assumptions as for the Superblock Alternative. To capture a range of development possibilities, two scenarios were modeled for the Off-Site Alternative:

- One scenario assumed that future developers would consolidate lots wherever possible to compensate for smaller lot sizes, particularly in the CBD-7 Block.
- A second scenario assumed that lot consolidation would occur only where parcels were in common ownership or where site conditions would make development without parcel consolidation impractical.

The second scenario only affects the CBD-7 Block. Under both scenarios, the CBD-1B Core Block is assumed to consolidate into two developments, and the Substation Block is not anticipated to undergo a high degree of lot consolidation, as the street pattern and the location of the Parkplace North site and Puget Sound Energy (PSE) substation interrupt the lot pattern.

Projected heights under the Off-Site Alternative represent at least a 2-story increase over existing conditions on every lot and would result in development inconsistent with design district height regulations on the CBD-7 Block, which is currently limited to 3 stories. While not located within a design district, the Substation Block is identified in *the Norkirk Neighborhood Plan* as being intended for office development up to 3 stories; future development on the Parkade site and at the location of the Tire Factory and Brown Bear Carwash have a high potential to be inconsistent with this standard. A comparison of existing, allowed, and project heights for the Off-Site Alternative is included in Table 3.2-1.

Table 3.2-3. Height Comparison by Stories for the Off-Site Alternative

	Existing Height	Design District Max Height	Projected CBD-5A Height	Proposed Height Change over Existing Conditions	Proposed Height Change over Current Code
CBD-1B Core Block	1	4[1]	3–4	2–3	0
CBD-7 Block	1	3	-	-	-
Consolidated	-	-	4–5	3–4	1–2
Unconsolidated	-	-	4–6	3–5	1–3
Substation Block	1–2	3[2]	3–5	1–4	0–2

[1] Heights above 2 stories must be discretionally approved by the City.

[2] The Substation Block is not located within a design district. The Norkirk Neighborhood Plan states that this area is intended for 3-story office use (City of Kirkland 2004a).

Although the FAR tested on the CBD-7 Block of 2.5 is lower than the FARs tested on the CBD-1B Block (approximately 2.8) and the Substation Block (up to 3.3), the building heights are greater on the CBD-7 Block if properties are unconsolidated due to lot shape, site, and setbacks. In addition to greater building heights as a result of interior setbacks and differing lot shapes, a collection of small, unconsolidated parcels would produce less predictable aesthetic results than a consolidated option. Large, contiguous parcels, as seen in the consolidated option for the CBD-7 Block or under the Superblock Alternative, are more easily master planned for a cohesive aesthetic character.

In addition to the application of design standards to minimize conflicts of scale and ensure that new development is sensitive to the streetscape, implementation of the Off-Site Alternative would require the City to amend the Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan to allow for additional height in Design District 7, as well as amend the Norkirk Neighborhood Plan to allow taller buildings on the Substation Block. Regulations applicable to the CBD-1B Core Block would require amendment since the criteria for achieving 4 stories is based on upper-story residential uses rather than office and commercial uses.

Projected building heights for the Off-Site Alternative, under both the consolidation and non-consolidation scenarios, are illustrated in Figures 3.2-16 and 3.2-17.

Views

Pedestrians and Bicyclists

Under the Off-Site Alternative, new development would occur closer to the sidewalk and roadway than currently exists along Central Way, 3rd Street, and 6th Avenue/Central Avenue, thus encroaching on the visual environment of pedestrians and bicyclists and creating a visual impact. However, with the exception of the Substation Block, the analysis area is highly urbanized and local roadways and sidewalks are already flanked by large commercial, office, and residential buildings and vehicular traffic is a regular visual component of the analysis area.

In the Substation Block, current development is much less urban in character; therefore, new development under the Off-Site Alternative would create a greater visual impact on pedestrians and bicyclists than in other parts of the analysis area. In addition, development on the Substation Block is not currently subject to design review. To minimize effects on pedestrians and bicyclists, it would be necessary to conduct design review and apply design guidelines to future development.

Territorial Views

View Corridor 1

Development under the Off-Site Alternative would result in increased encroachment on the visual landscape by taller buildings on both the north and south sides of Central Way. The Off-Site Alternative would introduce 4- to 6-story buildings on both sides of the view corridor, which would partially obstruct views of Lake Washington, the horizon, and the sky. Development on the CBD-1B Core Block would also encroach on the view corridor, though most buildings in this location would be screened from view by development on the Parkplace site. Development in the Substation Block would have no effect on this view, as it is located behind the vantage point.

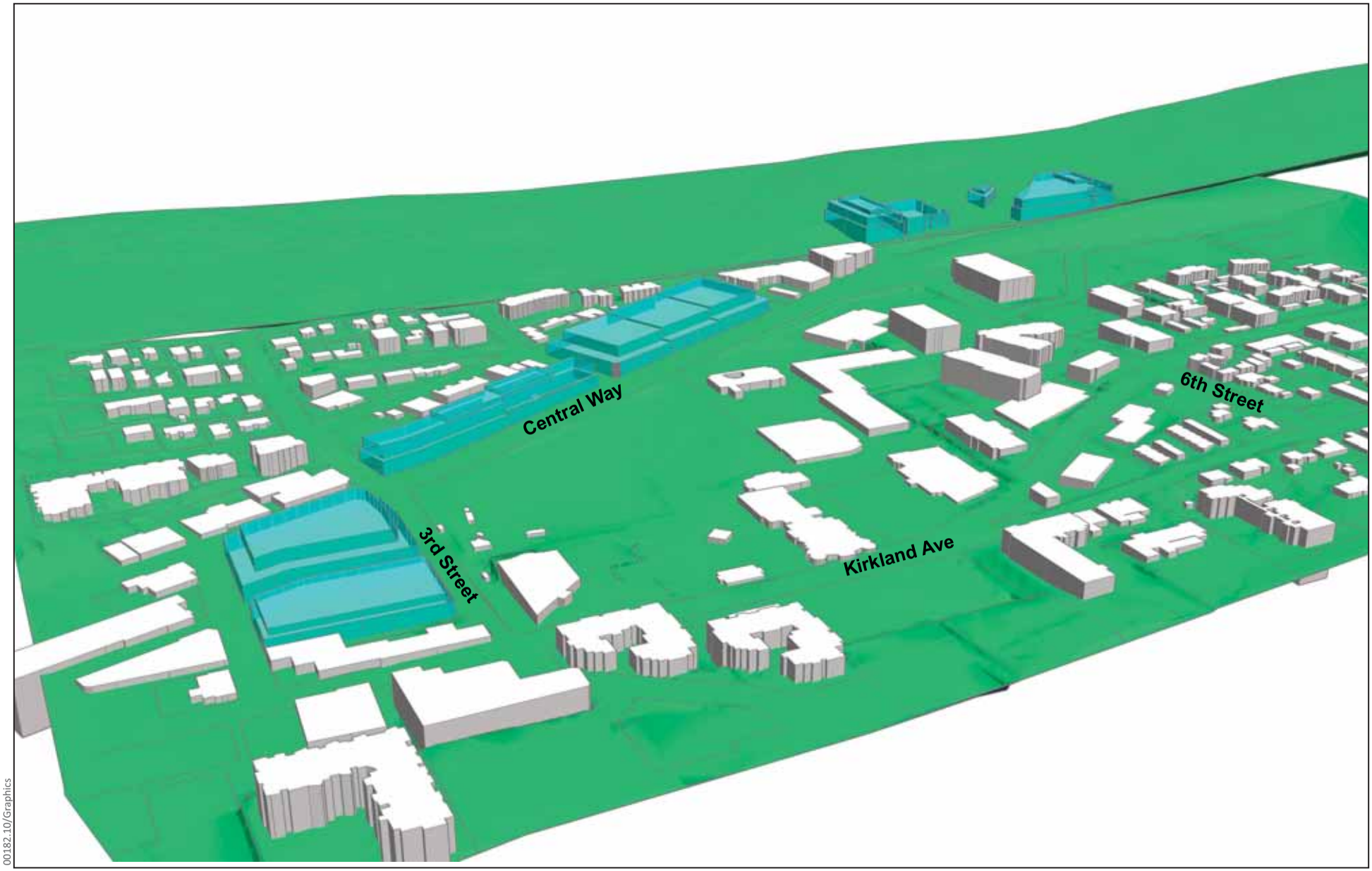

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Figure 3.2-16
Projected Building Heights—Off-Site Alternative (Consolidated)

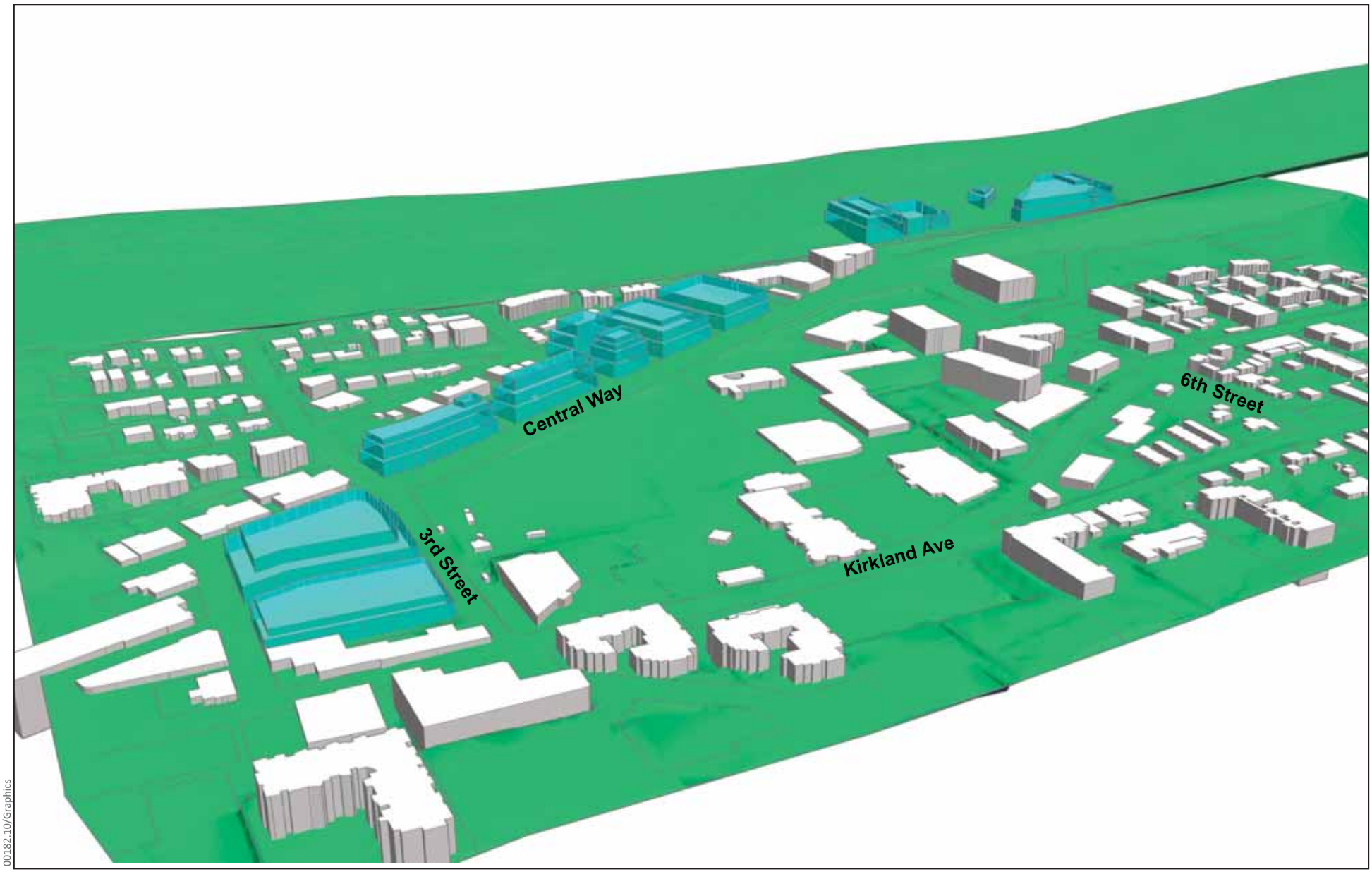

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Figure 3.2-17
Projected Building Heights—Off-Site Alternative (Unconsolidated)

While the portion of the view with the highest visual quality would not be directly affected, development along Central Way would encroach on the edges of the view corridor, narrowing it and reducing the feeling of openness and expansiveness. View simulations of the Off-Site Alternative, illustrating both Consolidated and Unconsolidated scenarios, are shown in Figures 3.2-18 and 3.2-19.

View Corridor 2

Development associated with the Off-Site Alternative would be a partially visible middle ground element from View Corridor 2. Most off-site development would be screened from view by vegetation, topography, or other development, though buildings in the CBD-7 Block would be visible from the vantage point. However, the projected building heights of 4 to 6 stories would be below the line of sight to the lake and mountains, and much of the development on the Park Place site would be screened from view by existing vegetation, particularly during summer months. Therefore, no significant impacts on View Corridor 2 are anticipated. Winter and summer view simulations of the Off-Site Alternative, illustrating both Consolidated and Unconsolidated scenarios, are shown in Figures 3.2-20 through 3.2-23.

View Corridor 3

Development under the Off-Site Alternative would not be visible from View Corridor 3. As such, no impacts are anticipated.

Light and Glare

Increased development under the Off-Site Alternative has the potential to increase ambient light and glare in the affected areas, especially along Central Way. The portion of Central Way between 4th Street and 5th Street would be exposed to additional light and glare generated by development in the CBD-7 Block, as well as the Parkplace site. The CBD-1B Core Block could also generate additional light and glare, which could have adverse effects on Peter Kirk Park located immediately to the east.

The Substation Block would also have the potential to generate increased ambient light and glare resulting from increased exterior illumination and increased vehicular traffic. However, development on this block is anticipated to consist mostly of office uses, which would be occupied primarily during daylight hours. However, ground-level retail development is anticipated on most properties in the Substation Block, with the exception of the PSE substation and Parkplace North. While the Substation Block would generate lower levels of light and glare than the blocks located in Downtown, these uses are likely to be open in the evenings, requiring a greater amount of exterior illumination than office uses.

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Figure 3.2-18
View Corridor 1—Offsite Alternative Consolidated

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Figure 3.2-19
View Corridor 1—Off-Site Alternative Unconsolidated

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Figure 3.2-20
View Corridor 2—Off-Site Alternative Consolidated (Winter)

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Figure 3.2-21
View Corridor 2—Off-Site Alternative Consolidated (Summer)

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Figure 3.2-22
View Corridor 2—Off-Site Alternative Unconsolidated (Winter)

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Figure 3.2-23
View Corridor 2—Off-Site Alternative Unconsolidated (Summer)

Shading Conditions

Shading conditions under the Off-Site Alternative are greatly increased over current conditions, since most buildings in the CBD-1B Core Block and CBD-7 Block are 1 story, and projected heights in the Substation Block are 2 to 3 stories higher than existing development. Simulated shading conditions indicate that few impacts are likely to be experienced during summer months. However, lower winter sun angles could result in the shading of adjacent properties in the CBD-7 Block, and the CBD-1B Core Block and Substation Block have a high potential to shade adjacent streets during winter morning and afternoon hours. Compared to the Superblock Alternative, shading impacts of the Off-Site Alternative are more outwardly directed, affecting adjacent properties and public areas such as streets and sidewalks, while the Superblock Alternative would affect mostly internal spaces.

Simulated summer and winter shading conditions for both the Consolidated and Unconsolidated scenarios of the Off-Site Alternative are shown in Figures 3.2-24 and 3.2-25

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, projected future development would be confined to the Parkplace site and the Parkplace North development in the Substation Block. The Parkplace site would experience an increase of approximately 600,250 square feet of commercial and office development, which would lead to greatly increased lot coverage and building heights over existing conditions. The Parkplace North (Primeau) development is an approved, though yet unbuilt, office development that is assumed to occur under all alternatives.

Visual Character

Parkplace

Development under the No Action Alternative is anticipated to result in an increase of approximately 600,250 square feet of office and commercial space over existing conditions. No changes to height limits or setbacks would occur, so with redevelopment, lot coverage is expected to increase. As discussed in the 2008 DEIS, a more intensive style of development is already present on the northwest corner of the intersection of 6th Street and Central Way, so greater lot coverage in this area would not be out of character. The application of design guidelines would be necessary to ensure that new development is sensitive to the streetscape and compatible with surrounding development.

Parkplace North

Construction of the Parkplace North development would convert an existing site in use as an equipment storage yard to a 3-story office building, and the project has been reviewed and approved by the City of Kirkland Planning Department. Another office complex presently exists nearby on the Parkade site. No significant impacts on visual character are anticipated.

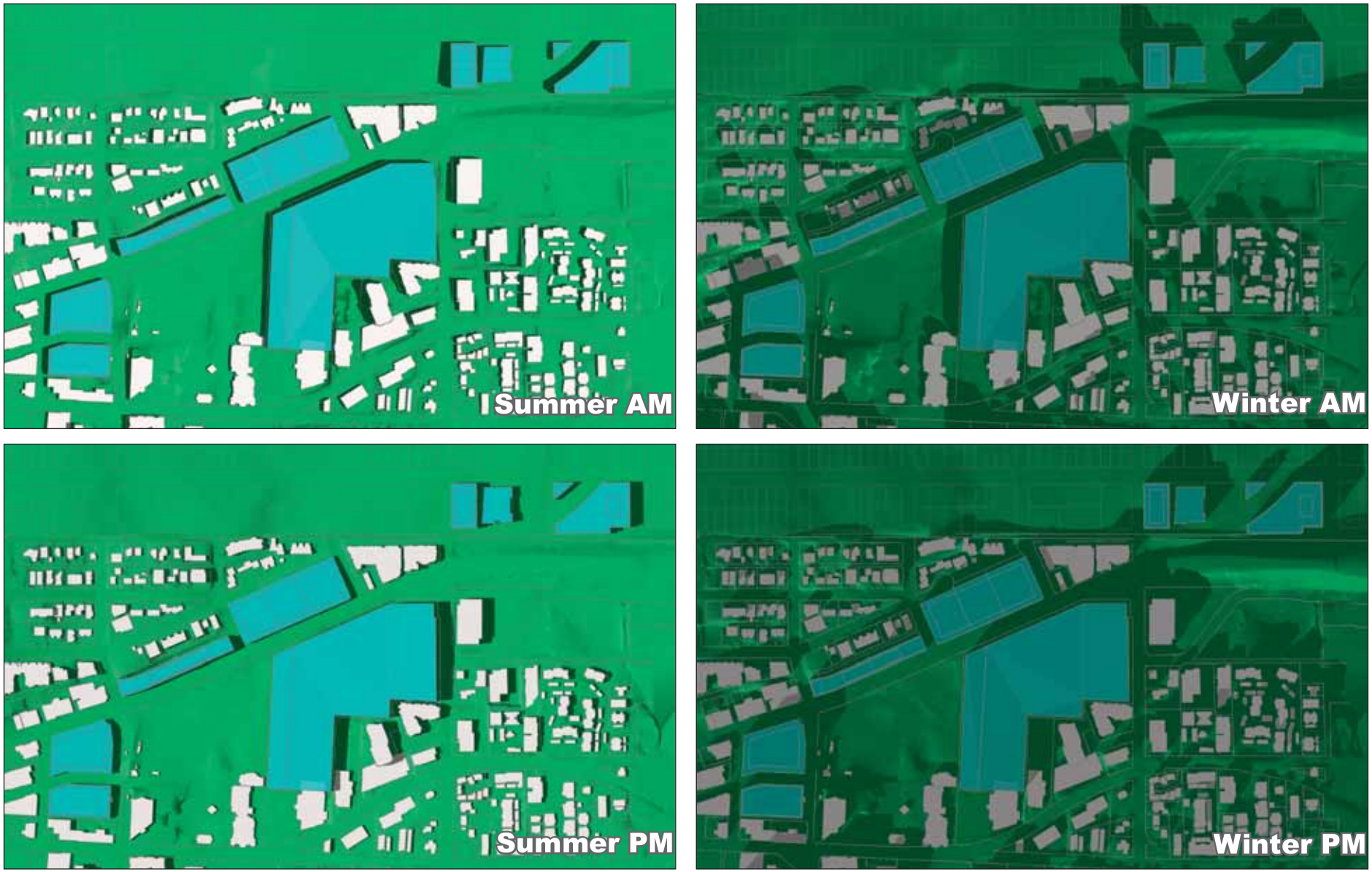

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Figure 3.2-24
Shading Conditions—Off-Site Alternative (Consolidated)

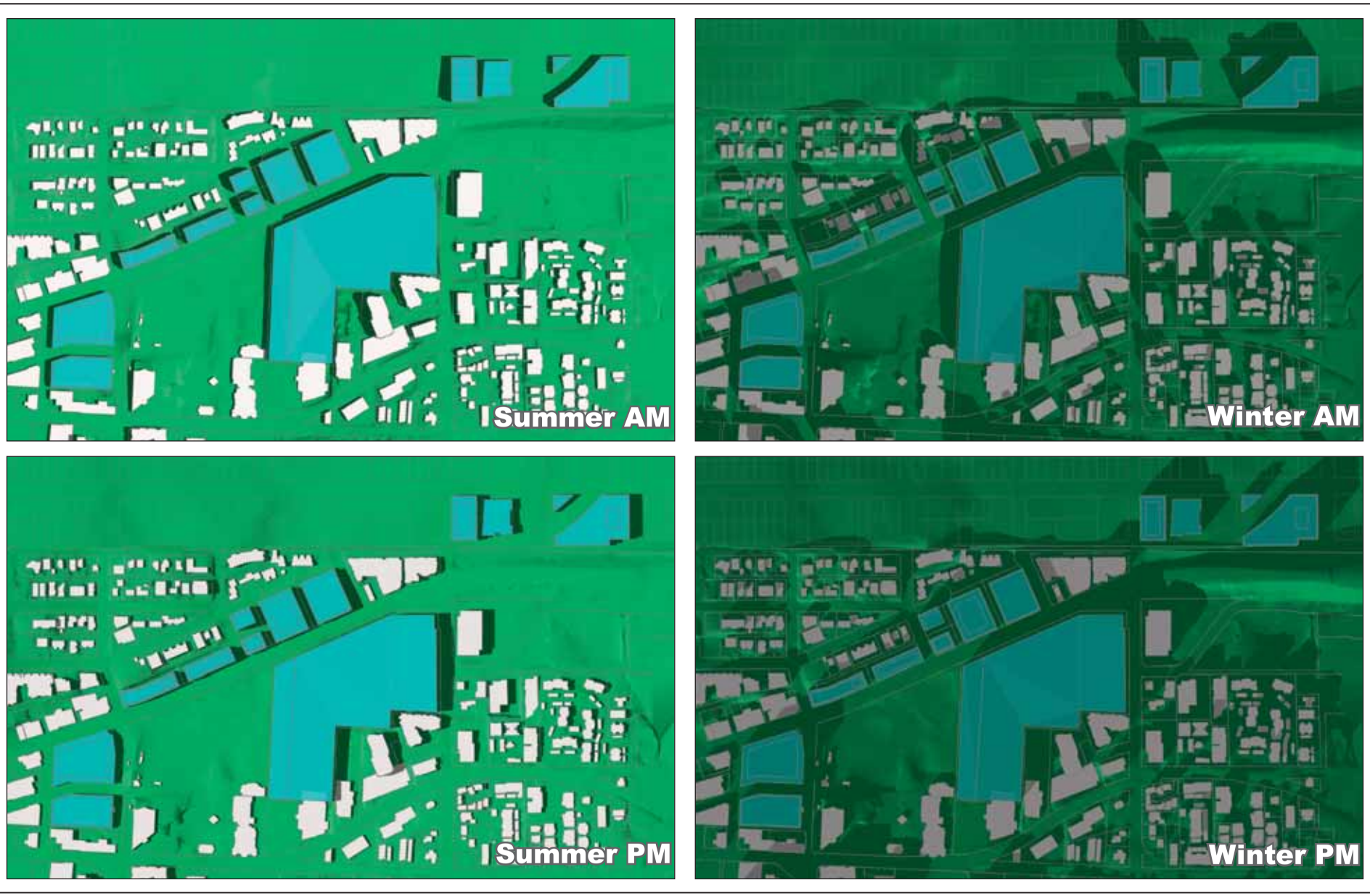

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Figure 3.2-25
Shading Conditions—Off-Site Alternative (Unconsolidated)

Views

Pedestrians and Bicyclists

Pedestrians and bicyclists who will view development associated with the No Action Alternative are likely to notice changes to the visual landscape. As mentioned previously, these viewers tend to be more observant of their surrounding environment than motorists and are considered to have moderate to high visual sensitivity.

New development under the No Action Alternative would be more expansive than existing conditions and would create a visual impact. However, since the analysis area is highly urbanized; local roadways and sidewalks are already flanked by large commercial, office, and residential buildings; and vehicular traffic is a regular visual component of the view the overall view experience of the analysis area will be consistent as under existing conditions. Therefore, pedestrians and bicyclists should not be significantly affected under the No Action Alternative.

Territorial Views

View Corridor 1

Development under the No Action Alternative would be more expansive than existing development, and would create a more noticeable visual element on the south side of View Corridor 1. Existing buildings and vegetation (even during winter months) screen views of the waterfront and Lake Washington along the south side of the view, so the portion of the view with the highest visual quality would not be affected by new development.

However, new development associated with the No Action Alternative would still encroach on the View Corridor 1 through increased building height and bulk and impact views from this vantage point. A view simulation for View Corridor 1 under the No Action Alternative is shown in Figure 3.2-26.

Because of differences in elevation and the presence of vegetation on the north side of NE 85th Street, the Parkplace North site is not visible from View Corridor 1 and would not interfere with views to the waterfront and Lake Washington.

View Corridor 2

Development under the No Action Alternative would be a visible middle ground element from View Corridor 2. However, because of the roadway's elevation at this vantage point, the top of the new development would be below the lake and mountains in the visual line of sight. Winter and summer view simulations for View Corridor 2 under the No Action Alternative are shown in Figures 3.2-27 and 3.2-28.

During the winter, existing vegetation would tend to filter much of the new development, so that it would be only partially visible in the middle ground. Summer views of the new development would almost entirely be screened by existing deciduous vegetation. Therefore, the No Action Alternative should not significantly affect views from View Corridor 2.

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Figure 3.2-26
View Corridor 1—No Action Alternative

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Figure 3.2-27
View Corridor 2—No Action Alternative (Winter)

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Figure 3.2-28
View Corridor 2—No Action Alternative (Summer)

Because of differences in elevation and the presence of vegetation on the north side of NE 85th Street, the Parkplace North site is not visible from View Corridor 2 and would not interfere with views to the waterfront and Lake Washington.

View Corridor 3

Development under the No Action Alternative on the Parkplace site would not be visible from View Corridor 3 and would, therefore, have no impact on existing views in this location.

Light and Glare

The increased square footage of office and retail space on the Parkplace site is anticipated to increase ambient light and glare along Central Way and 6th Street and at Peter Kirk Park, though to a lesser degree than under either the Superblock Alternative or Off-Site Alternative.

Construction of the approved Parkplace North (Primeau) development is anticipated to increase ambient light and glare in the Substation Block by increasing automobile traffic to the site and the amount of exterior illumination. However, since the development would be an office building, vehicular traffic would be limited primarily to daylight hours, and since the development would be located in a primarily office/industrial area, impacts from increased light and glare are anticipated to be less than significant.

Shading Conditions

The No Action Alternative would result in increased shading effects at the Parkplace and Parkplace North sites over existing conditions, but to a lesser degree than under the Superblock Alternative, Unified Ownership, or Off-Site Alternative. Simulated summer and winter shading conditions for the No Action Alternative are illustrated in Figure 3.2-29.

3.2.3 Mitigation Measures

Applicable Regulations and Commitments

Development in the analysis area, with the exceptions of the Substation Block and the Post Office site, would be subject to design review and required to comply with all applicable urban design principles set forth in the Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan, Design Guidelines for Pedestrian-Oriented Business Districts, adopted by the Kirkland City Council in 2004, and/or any new design guidelines established by the planned action ordinance.

In addition, the following location-specific design guidelines would apply.

Superblock Alternative

Development of the Superblock could also incorporate the following features outlined in the Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan.

- Development of the Superblock could maintain, enhance, and improve the definition of the major east–west pedestrian pathway between the Parkplace property and the rest of the Downtown shopping district, as well as provide pedestrian connections through the Superblock to 4th Avenue and 2nd Avenue (City of Kirkland 2004b:XV.D-7 and XV.D-17).

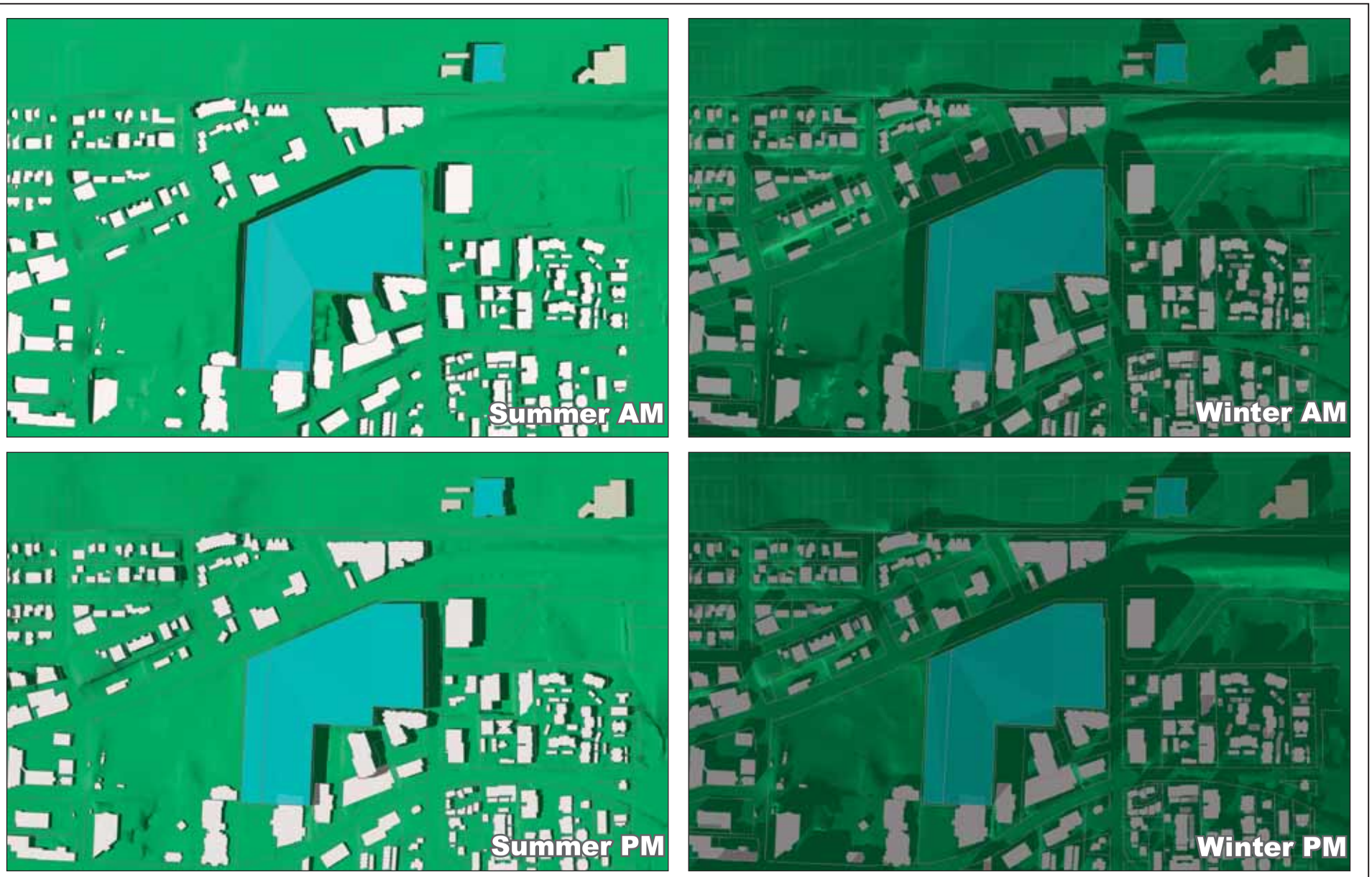

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Figure 3.2-29
Shading Conditions—No Action Alternative

- Development of the Superblock could strengthen the visual prominence of Peter Kirk Park and improve pedestrian connections between the Superblock and the park (City of Kirkland 2004b:XV.D-18).
- Enhancements to the pedestrian and vehicular circulation, and parking as outlined in the Circulation section of the Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan (City of Kirkland 2004b:XV.D-20) could be considered as part of the redevelopment of the Superblock.

The nearby intersection of Central Way and 6th Street is a designated gateway area, and the following design tools from the City's design guidelines could be employed to reduce impacts on visual character.

- **Vertical and horizontal facade modulation (p. 23-24).** These are useful tools for breaking the visual monotony of a building and reducing its visual mass. Vertical modulation consists of varying the height of a building, which often gives the impression of a collection of smaller structures, rather than a single mass. Horizontal modulation includes the use of pedestrian elements (awning, balconies, window details, etc.), as well as upper-story setbacks and varied roof forms. Upper-story setbacks are particularly important for reducing shading effects created by the increased height of development in the area.
- **Gateway feature (p. 15).** The intersection of Central Way and 6th Street has been identified as a gateway into Downtown, and the Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan states that development in this location should promote a positive image of the City. Street corners are centers of increased vehicular and pedestrian activity, and this portion of the area provides heightened visibility. Further discussion of appropriate design elements can be found in the City's design guidelines, in the section titled, Public Improvements and Site Features.

Unified Ownership Alternative

The Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan calls for the enhancement of pedestrian and bicycle pathways within the Moss Bay neighborhood, including a pedestrian way linking the Post Office site and areas to the east with Downtown (City of Kirkland 2004b:XV.D-30,31). Development on the Post Office site should include features to improve the ability of pedestrians and bicyclists to access the site, as well as connect with adjacent properties.

Off-Site Alternative

CBD-1B Core Block

The Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan states that development in Design District 1 should focus on pedestrian comfort and preservation of the human scale. East of Main Street, development "should combine modulations in building heights with modulations of façade widths to break large buildings into the appearance of multiple smaller buildings" (City of Kirkland 2004b:XV.D-10).

CBD-7 Block

In Design District 7, the upper portions of tall buildings should be set back from the street to foster pedestrian comfort, preserve the human scale, and maintain the sense of openness that surrounds Peter Kirk Park (City of Kirkland 2004b:XV.D-12).

Potential Mitigation Measures

In addition to the City's design guidelines, the following mitigation measures should be incorporated to reduce aesthetic impacts.

- Require setbacks, step backs of upper stories of taller buildings, and/or limits to maximum building heights in specific areas of each lot determined to be more aesthetically significant.
- To the greatest extent feasible, locate the tallest structures in the central portions of the Superblock, so as to reduce shading of and visual encroachment on Peter Kirk Park, Central Way, development on the north side of Central Way, and View Corridors 1 and 3.
- Encourage coordinated design between properties on the Superblock to preserve solar access to the interior areas of the site and take advantage of opportunities for pedestrian connections between developments.
- Use vegetation to soften and screen-built features.
- Shield light fixtures to minimize glare and up-lighting. Lights should be screened and directed away from residences to the highest degree possible. Lighting restrictions should be adopted to control façade illumination and excessive lighting. The number of nighttime lights installed should be minimized to the greatest degree possible. Light fixtures and poles should be painted; reflective surfaces should be avoided to minimize reflective daytime glare.
- Low-sheen and non-reflective surface materials should be used to the greatest extent possible to reduce glare; the finish should be matte and roughened.
- The City's Design Guidelines for Pedestrian-Oriented Business Districts, adopted by the Kirkland City Council in 2004, could be applied to the Substation Block, particularly the portions closer to 6th Street that are more visible. These design guidelines should also be applied to the Post Office property, particularly along 4th Avenue, which is likely to experience higher levels of pedestrian activity.

During construction the following measures should be taken to minimize temporary visual impacts:

- Screen storage and staging areas and locate in areas that minimize visual prominence to the greatest extent possible to reduce the temporary visual effects during construction.
- Use downcast lighting sources and shield roadway lighting to minimize light and glare effects associated with possible nighttime construction activities.

See also Section 3.1.3 regarding mitigation measures necessary to ensure consistency of the Superblock Alternative, Unified Ownership Alternative, and Off-Site Alternative with the City's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code.

3.2.4 Significant Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

The overall character, significance, or magnitude of visual impacts on the analysis area depends largely on the quality of the architectural and urban design features incorporated into the development, the degree to which the overall scale and form of the development incorporates features of the local setting, and the values and preferences of those viewing the change. However, even with mitigation incorporated, the amount of development anticipated occurring under the Superblock Alternative and Off-Site Alternative, Unified Ownership Alternative, and Off-Site Alternative would introduce building heights that would be inconsistent with height limits set forth

in the City's Comprehensive Plan, as well as have a high potential to alter the visual character and shading conditions of the analysis area's pedestrian environment.