

EQUITY ANALYSIS MEMO

DATE: September 1, 2023

TO: Lindsey Channing | City of Sammamish

FROM: Sarah Keenan, PE | DKS Associates,
Ben Wallach, PE, PTOE | DKS Associates

SUBJECT: Sammamish Transit Study – Equity Analysis

The purpose of this memo is to identify the existing and future underserved communities in Sammamish and provide recommendations related to public transit. The Existing Conditions document reviewed demographic data from the most recent census and American Communities Survey (ACS). The Future Conditions document reviewed planned growth for Sammamish, which is in the process of being finalized at the time of this memo and may change.

EXISTING AND FUTURE DEMOGRAPHICS

EXISTING DEMOGRAPHICS

The Existing Conditions document has details about existing demographics within Sammamish. As of 2020, there were 67,455 people living in Sammamish with 22,544 total housing units¹. Sammamish is among the wealthiest communities in King County, with a median household income of \$201,370, compared with \$110,586 for King County as a whole². Sammamish has a home-ownership rate of 83.3%, compared with 64% county-wide³. Over 90% of homes in Sammamish are worth more than half a million dollars, with 41.5% worth more than one million dollars⁴. Sammamish has a median home value of \$939,600, compared with \$651,900 county-wide⁵. About 2.5% of Sammamish residents live in poverty, compared with 9.4% county-wide⁶. In addition, 2.5% of Sammamish residents live without healthcare, compared with 5.2% county-wide⁷. Only 1.1% of Sammamish households have no vehicle available, compared with 10.4% county-wide⁸.

¹ 2020 Decennial Census

² 2021 American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates

³ 2021 American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates

⁴ 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles

⁵ 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles

⁶ 2021 American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates

⁷ 2021 American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates

⁸ 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles

Sammamish has a higher percentage of Foreign-Born population than King County as a whole, with 36.3% Foreign-Born, compared to 25.0% county-wide⁹. In Sammamish, 35.2% of households speak a language other than English at home, compared to 29.9% county-wide¹⁰. Sammamish has 7.8% of residents over the age of 65, compared with 13.7% county-wide¹¹.

Overall, Sammamish has a higher income, home-ownership rate, and home value than King County as a whole. Sammamish also has a lower rate of poverty, zero-vehicle households, residents without healthcare, and population over the age of 65. Sammamish has a higher rate of Foreign-Born population and those who speak a language other than English at home, compared to King County as a whole.

FUTURE DEMOGRAPHICS

The trends seen under existing conditions are expected to continue in the future. Sammamish is expected to remain among the wealthiest cities in King County, with high average income, property value, and home-ownership rates. However, the City should continue to understand the location of elderly residents and low-income households in order to ensure that these populations have access to public transit. The percentage of the population over the age of 65 has more than doubled in the past 20 years (3.6% in 2000 to 7.8% in 2021), and this trend may continue. As the population continues to age, alternative transportation options will be important to continue to ensure mobility for all.

The City is currently working on affordable housing targets, including zoning goals related to more dense housing and affordable housing. This process is expected to result in affordable housing planned along the transit corridor on 228th Avenue NE near the existing commercial centers at NE 8th Street, Town Center, and Issaquah-Pine Lake Road SE.

PUBLIC TRANSIT EQUITY

King County Metro and Sound Transit run buses along 228th Avenue NE. King County Metro also runs Metro Flex, which provides on-demand transit service for a certain area of Sammamish (shown in Figure 1). This area will expand to include parts of Issaquah in October 2023.

Analysis shows that 7.6% of the low-income population and 13.8% of the low- or moderate-income jobs are within a quarter mile walk of a fixed-route transit stop. These numbers increase to 16.1% and 33.0% for a half mile walk of a transit stop, respectively. This data is shown in Table 1, along with the analysis for total population and total jobs. More low-income households and low- or moderate-income jobs are within the existing Metro Flex service area, as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

⁹ 2021 American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates

¹⁰ 2021 American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates

¹¹ 2021 US Census, 1-Year Estimates

TABLE 1 WALKSHED DEMOGRAPHICS AND JOBS DATA (2020)

Access to Transit					
Area [1]		Total Population (2020)	Low-Income Population [2] (2020)	Total Jobs (2020)	Low/Mod Income Jobs (2020) [3]
Total City		67,455	2,047	1,209	485
¼-Mile Walkshed	#	4,110	155	136	67
	%	6.1%	7.6%	11.2%	13.8%
½-Mile Walkshed	#	9,675	360	316	160
	%	14.3%	17.6%	26.1%	33.0%

Notes: [1] Demographics and jobs with ¼ or ½ mile access transit were calculated with an area-weighted sum of walksheds and Census block groups. [2] Low-Income population is based on the federal poverty line. [3] Low/moderate income jobs are based on monthly pay of up to \$3,333. [3]

Source: Population and demographics are from the American Community Survey, 2016-2020 Five-Year Estimates. Jobs are from the US Census Longitudinal Household Employer Dynamics (LEHD), 2020.

Figure 1 shows the City’s low-income population by block group with the fixed-route transit service and the existing Metro Flex service area. There are some areas of the City with low-income households that are not served by Metro Flex and that are not within a comfortable walking distance of transit. Future land use plans are expected to add more affordable housing close to the transit route and within the Metro Flex service area. Figure 2 shows the City’s low- and moderate-paying jobs by block group with the fixed-route transit service and the existing Metro Flex service area. The majority of the low-paying jobs in the City are either within a comfortable walking distance of transit or within the Metro Flex service area.

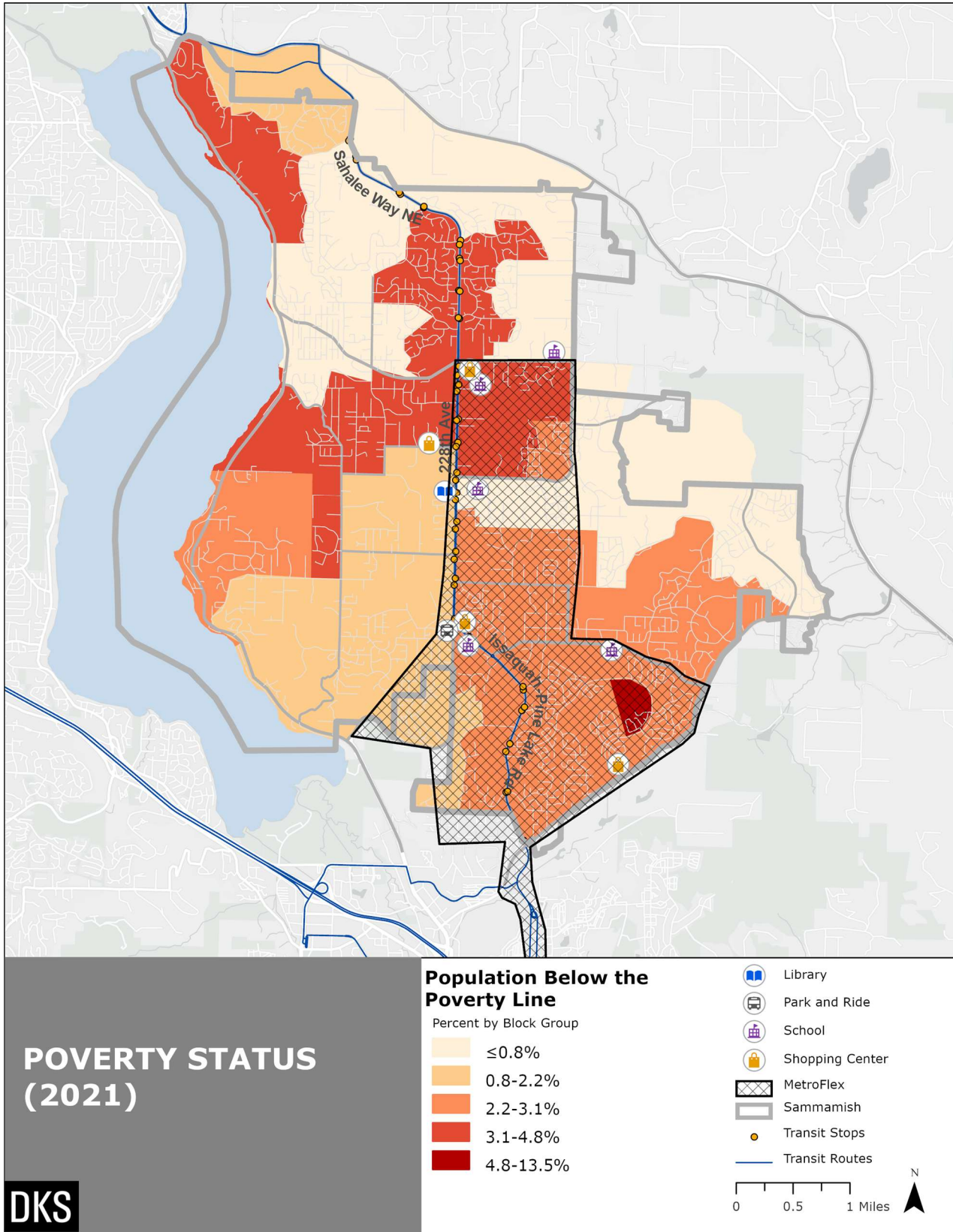


FIGURE 1: LOW INCOME POPULATION, TRANSIT STOPS, AND METRO FLEX

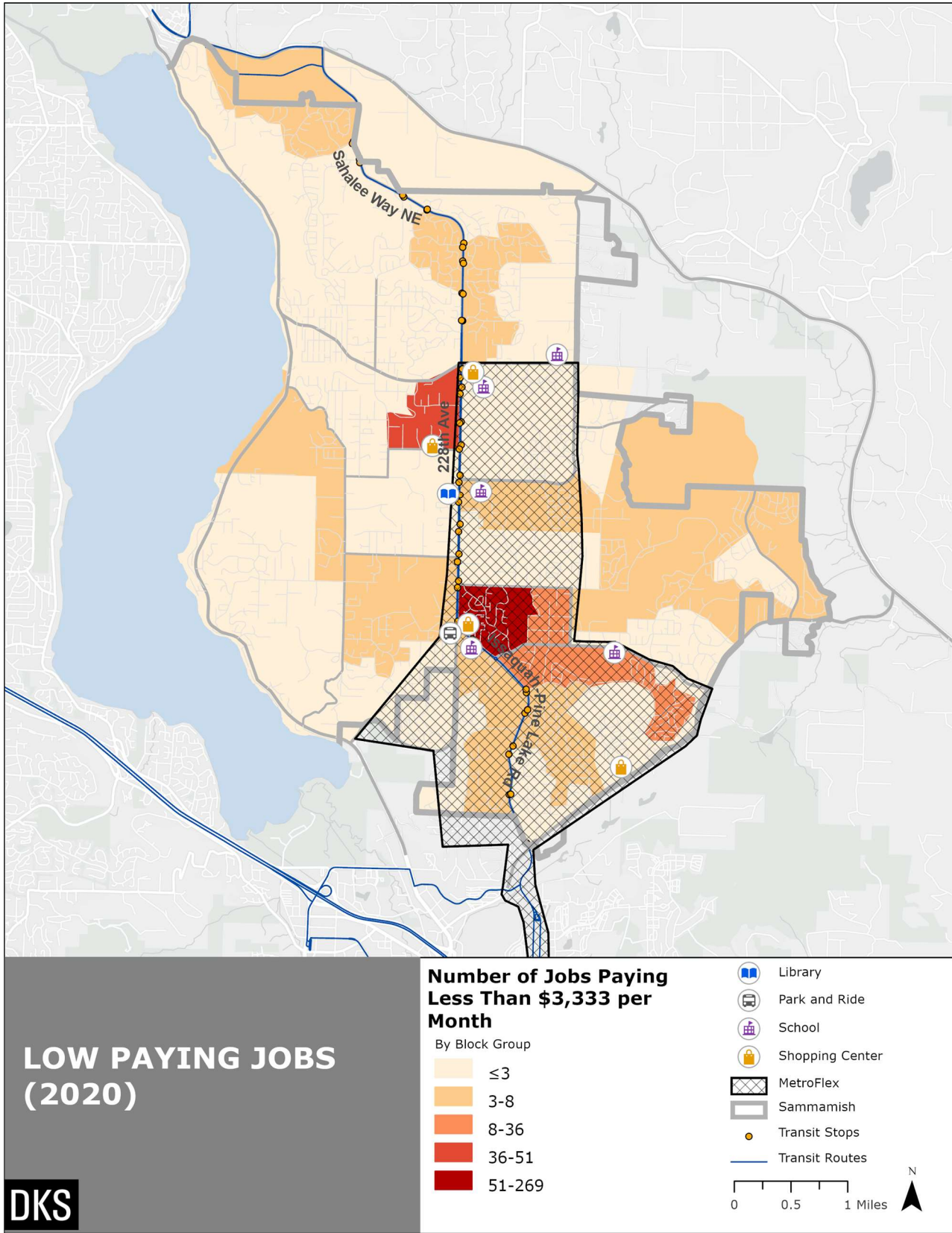


FIGURE 2: LOW- AND MODERATE-PAYING JOBS, TRANSIT STOPS, AND METRO FLEX

CONCLUSION

Sammamish is among the wealthiest communities in King County, however there are still equity concerns related to public transit. A small percentage of the population (2.5%) live in poverty, and the population continues to age. Currently, about 17.6% of the low-income population live within a half mile walk of a transit stop. Some of the low-income population, particularly in Klahanie and the area on the east side of 228th Avenue NE near NE 8th Street, is covered by the Metro Flex service area. Other areas with low-income populations that may not have great access to fixed-route transit or Metro Flex include the northwest corner of the City and areas around Louis Thompson Road SE. The majority of low paying jobs have good access to either fixed-route transit or Metro Flex.

Sammamish is currently in the process of adopting future land use, including affordable housing targets. Affordable housing is expected to be planned along the transit route near the commercial areas near NE 8th Street, near Town Center along 228th Avenue, and near Issaquah-Pine Lake Road.

The following are recommendations to enhance transit related equity in Sammamish:

- Sammamish should continue to plan dense housing, affordable housing, and mixed-use development near the transit route to provide this population with alternative transportation options.
- Sammamish should work with schools and employers to share information on Metro Flex and Transit. These programs could be advertised in schools, in Senior housing, in low-income or affordable housing, community gathering areas such as the King County Library and the YMCA, and at neighborhood pop-ups. The advertisements should be available in multiple languages. Some options that are already available that would benefit potential riders are:
 - Move Ahead Washington: This is a program, more commonly referred to as “Youth Ride Free”, that allows those under the age of 18 to ride transit for free. This includes all King County Metro and Sound Transit routes in Sammamish.
 - ORCA LIFT: ORCA LIFT is a transit card that provides low-income users a reduced fare.
 - Regional Reduced Fare Permit: This program allows those over 65 years old and those with certain disabilities to ride transit at a reduced fare.
 - Information on Metro Flex.
- Sammamish should prioritize non-motorized investments such as sidewalks, crosswalks, and bicycle lanes in neighborhoods with higher than average low-income households and low-paying jobs.