

**CITY OF SEATTLE
DETERMINATION OF NON-SIGNIFICANCE BY
THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Applicant Name: The Department of Planning and Development

Address of Proposal: Various sites within the West Seattle Junction Hub Urban Village

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION

The proposal is to change the zoning on parcels in the West Seattle Junction Hub Urban Village, generally located along Fauntleroy Way SW and SW Alaska Street between 35th Avenue SW and 41st Avenue SW. Two alternatives have been developed; the more intensive alternative would rezone parcels from NC3-40, NC3-65, and C1-65 to NC3P-65 and NC3P-85. The less intensive alternative would rezone a smaller number of parcels and provide certain development standards, including upper level setbacks, maximum structure widths, and maximum lot coverage.

The following approval is required:

SEPA - Environmental Conditions - Chapter 25.05, Seattle Municipal Code.

SEPA DETERMINATION: Exempt DNS MDNS EIS

 DNS with conditions

 DNS involving non-exempt grading, or demolition,
 or involving another agency with jurisdiction.

BACKGROUND DATA

Background

The West Seattle Triangle planning area is located within the West Seattle Junction Hub Urban Village. The Department of Planning and Development has worked with members of the West Seattle community to identify preferred development direction for this area. The proposal and code amendments are based on the general guidance provided in the 1999 Junction Hub Urban Village Neighborhood Plan and subsequent analysis and public dialogue.

Proposal Description

The proposed rezone identifies two alternatives; both include parcels in the West Seattle Junction Hub Urban Village. Under either alternative, properties from SW Alaska Street to slightly north of Fauntleroy Way SW between 35th Avenue SW and 38th Avenue SW would be rezoned from Commercial 1 (C1-65) to Neighborhood Commercial 3 (NC3-65). A pedestrian (P) designation would be established along SW Alaska Street between 35th Avenue SW and 41st Avenue SW.

Alternative 1 would rezone parcels adjacent to SW Alaska Street between 38th Avenue SW and 42nd Avenue SW from Commercial 1 (C1-65), Neighborhood Commercial 3 (NC3-65), and Neighborhood Commercial 3 (NC3-40) to Neighborhood Commercial 3 (NC3-85) with a Pedestrian (P) designation.

Alternative 2, for areas west of Fauntleroy Avenue SW and south of SW Alaska Street, and for areas east of 38th Avenue SW between Fauntleroy Way SW and the alley located one block south of SW Alaska Street, would rezone parcels adjacent to SW Alaska Street between 38th Avenue SW and 41st Avenue SW from Commercial 1 (C1-65) and Neighborhood Commercial 3 (NC3-65) to Neighborhood Commercial 3 (NC3-85) with a Pedestrian (P) designation. Compared to Alternative 1, some areas currently zoned NC3-40 or NC3-65 would not be rezoned. Alternative 2 also would apply the following development standards:

- An upper-level setback of a minimum of 10 feet beginning at 45' in height along SW Alaska Street for structures exceeding 65' in height. Structures located within 100 feet of Fauntleroy Way SW would be exempt from this requirement.
- A building setback of at least 10 feet along 25% of the lot frontage along non-arterial north-south avenues.
- A maximum structure width of 275 feet.
- A maximum lot coverage limit of 80% for lots 40,000 square feet in size or greater.

Public Comments

Proposed changes to the Land Use Code require City Council approval. Public comment will be taken on the proposed amendments during future Council hearings.

ANALYSIS - SEPA

The initial disclosure of the potential impacts from this project was made in the environmental checklist dated July 12, 2011. The information in the checklist, a draft of the Director's Report and Recommendation, a copy of the proposed text changes, and the experience of the lead agency with review of similar legislative actions form the basis for this analysis and decision.

As noted above, two rezone alternatives have been developed. Alternative 1 would rezone a greater number of parcels and, unlike Alternative 2, would not restrict any existing development

standards. Potential impacts of Alternative 1 are analyzed below; it is expected that impacts of Alternative 2 would be somewhat less than those of Alternative 1.

Short-term Impacts

As a non-project action, the proposed amendment will not have any short-term impact on the environment. Future development affected by this legislation and subject to SEPA will be required to address short-term impacts on the environment.

Long-term Impacts

Most long-term impacts of this code amendment are expected to be minor. Impacts to noise, light and glare, shadows, air quality (including greenhouse gas emissions), and use of energy, natural resources, and most public services and facilities may slightly increase, due to larger structures and greater levels of activity on various sites, but are not expected to be substantial. Projects developing pursuant to these text amendments would be subject to environmental review if they meet or exceed environmental review thresholds. In addition, projects would need to comply with existing codes and regulations, including the Land Use Code, Environmentally Critical Areas regulations, and the Stormwater, Grading and Drainage Control Code.

The most likely adverse impacts of the proposed amendment would be to drainage; land use; height, bulk, and scale; and traffic and transportation. These topics are discussed further below.

Drainage

Seattle Public Utilities' assessment of the proposed zoning changes indicates that some of the combined sewer lines in the rezone study area may be capacity-constrained. An increase in density and/or changes in the existing conditions could result in near-capacity or over-capacity flow conditions during intense storm events. Such conditions could affect the Longfellow Creek watershed unless improvements are made to the combined sewer system.

Given the anticipated sewer capacity constraints, new development projects in the area could be required to analyze development-related impacts on the combined sewer system and, where necessary, to construct improvements to increase capacity and avoid service degradation. New developments also provide storm water control as required under Seattle's Stormwater, Grading and Drainage Code. These regulatory controls are expected to provide appropriate mitigation at the time of proposed development; no significant adverse drainage impacts from the proposed Land Use Code changes are anticipated.

Land Use

The Land Use SEPA policy states, in part, that "it is the City's policy to ensure that proposed uses in development projects are reasonably compatible with surrounding uses and are consistent

with any applicable, adopted City land use regulations, the goals and policies set forth in Section B of the land use element of the Seattle Comprehensive Plan regarding Land Use Categories, and the shoreline goals and policies set forth in section D-4 of the land use element of the Seattle Comprehensive Plan for the area in which the project is located”. In general, rezoning from Commercial to Neighborhood Commercial would slightly restrict the range of uses that could be developed. The proposed establishment of a Pedestrian zone for properties adjacent to SW Alaska Street would restrict the location of certain commercial uses otherwise allowed in Neighborhood Commercial zones. The uses that would be allowed under the proposed rezones are expected to be reasonably compatible with uses in adjacent zones. No portion of the proposed rezones is within the City’s Shoreline District.

The proposed rezone generally supports Comprehensive Plan goals and policies for Mixed-Use Commercial Areas. Specifically, the code changes are expected to facilitate the following:

- LUG-17: “Create strong and successful commercial and mixed-use areas that encourage business creation, expansion and vitality by allowing for a mix of business activities, while maintaining compatibility with the neighborhood-serving character of business districts, and the character of surrounding areas.”
- LUG19: “Include housing as part of the mix of activities accommodated in commercial areas in order to provide additional opportunities for residents to live in neighborhoods where they can walk to services and employment.”
- LU116: “Seek to focus development in transit and pedestrian-friendly urban villages while maintaining compatibility between new development and the surrounding area through standards regulating the size and density of development.”
- LU117: “Generally permit a greater intensity of development in pedestrian and transit supportive environments found in pedestrian-oriented commercial areas within urban villages than is permitted in general commercial areas or outside of urban villages.”

The increased density that could result in some parts of the study area from the proposed code changes is consistent with the goals and policies cited above. The proposed rezone area is entirely within the West Seattle Junction Hub Urban Village. This area is well-served by transit, with increased service expected by 2013 with the implementation of Metro’s RapidRide service.

- LU130: “Generally allow pedestrian-oriented commercial zones in urban villages to accommodate densities of development and mixes of uses that support pedestrian activity and transit use.”

This policy supports establishment of a pedestrian designation for properties adjacent to SW Alaska Street, as described above. Again, Metro’s upcoming RapidRide service will enhance a strong existing level of transit service.

The parcels being rezoned will be subject to design review. Design review considers the context and character of surrounding development in applying City design guidelines, thus providing an opportunity to address any potential incompatibilities between new development proposals and development on adjacent parcels. It is not anticipated that the proposed text amendments will result in significant land use impacts, pursuant to SMC 25.05.675 J.

Height, Bulk, and Scale

In general, the height, bulk and scale of projects developing pursuant to the proposed rezones would not be substantially different than what could be built under current zoning. No increase in height would occur east of 38th Avenue SW, except for some minor adjustments to zone boundaries to correct a small number of split-zoned lots. The greatest increases in allowable heights would be on several parcels that would be rezoned from NC3-40 to NC3-85. All of these parcels are adjacent to existing C1-65 and NC3-65 zoned parcels in the study area. On the southeast edge of the study area, a small number of parcels proposed to be rezoned to NC3-85 abut or are across an alley from parcels zoned LR2.

Bulk and scale impacts of projects proposed pursuant to this code amendment will be addressed by the City's design review process, which, as noted above, would apply throughout the areas proposed for rezone. Specific height, bulk and scale impacts of particular projects will be determined at the time of project review. The text amendments are not expected to have a significant impact on height, bulk, and scale, pursuant to SMC 25.05.675 G.

Transportation

The proposed text amendments will increase development capacity on various parcels in the affected area; projects developing pursuant to these rezones may generate higher volumes of traffic and have greater transportation impacts than projects proposed under the current zoning. The Department of Planning and Development has estimated the development capacity of the areas proposed for rezoning under existing zoning and development capacity under the proposed rezones. Existing zoning has an estimated capacity for 1,720 residential units and 905,537 square feet of commercial space. The proposed rezones would increase the development capacity of the affected parcels by approximately 17 residential units and 286,743 square feet of commercial space.

The Institute of Transportation Engineers' Trip Generation manual can be used to roughly estimate the likely increases in traffic that would result from this amount of additional development capacity. Actual additional traffic volumes would depend on a number of factors, including the mix of uses that would be proposed both on any individual development site and throughout the rezone area. A conservative mix of office, medical office, retail and restaurant uses in the commercial space is estimated to result in an increase of 11,160 daily vehicle trips, with roughly 860 trips occurring during the morning peak hour and 1,060 trips occurring during the afternoon peak hour. The additional housing units would be expected to generate about 110

new daily trips, with approximately 10 occurring in each of the morning and afternoon peak hours. These estimates would result in total additional daily traffic volumes of approximately 11,270 vehicles, with about 870 trips during the morning peak hour and 1,070 during the afternoon peak hour.

These estimates likely are high for several reasons. Data from the Institute of Transportation Engineers typically are drawn from suburban sites; isolated land uses, auto-centric development patterns, and lack of non-auto modes often lead to very high levels of auto use in such areas, compared to relatively dense, walkable, mixed-use areas such as the West Seattle Junction neighborhood. Additionally, these estimates do not take into account the high levels of transit service available in the neighborhood, which will increase following implementation of Metro's RapidRide service in 2013.

Seattle's Comprehensive Plan evaluates traffic effects on arterial streets using a system of screenlines. Screenlines aggregate the estimated capacities of groups of arterials; these capacities are compared to counts or estimates of traffic volumes traveling on the arterials. Volume-to-capacity comparisons are made for each direction of travel, and typically evaluate the PM peak hour. Volume-to-capacity ratios below 1.0 indicate that sufficient capacity is available for a given volume of traffic. The screenline closest to the area of the proposed rezones runs east-west south of SW Spokane Street from Beach Drive SW to W Marginal Way SW. The most recent transportation concurrency screenline counts indicate that PM peak hour traffic volumes are at least 5,000 vehicles below the directional capacity for both northbound and southbound travel at this screenline, indicating substantial available capacity.

Based on these screenline data, it is expected that arterials in the study area have sufficient capacity to accommodate moderate levels of growth. The additional traffic volumes that could occur from these rezones will be spread across a large number of development sites. The additional trips would not be concentrated on any one street or at any single intersection. Given the availability of alternate modes, the dispersion of trips throughout the study area, and the available arterial capacity, the proposed rezones are not expected to have a significant impact on traffic and transportation, pursuant to SMC 25.05.675 R. The transportation impacts of individual projects developing pursuant to these proposed text changes will be evaluated through SEPA review at the time of permit applications; if appropriate, mitigation will be required at that time.

Conclusion

The proposed code amendments to modify zoning in a portion of the West Seattle Junction Hub Urban Village are not expected to have significant adverse impacts. The allowed height, bulk, and scale of development on the affected parcels are not expected to substantially increase over what is allowed by current zoning. Design review will be required of projects over the size threshold, reducing potential height, bulk, and scale impacts. Increased trips will be spread across the arterial network in the study area, reducing impacts on any one corridor; additionally, existing and future transit service and the mixed-use nature of the area are likely to reduce levels

of auto traffic from development projects in the rezoned areas. Developments over the SEPA threshold will be subject to project-level SEPA review; mitigation based on that review would further reduce impacts from projects developing pursuant to these code amendments.

DECISION – SEPA

This decision was made after review by the responsible official on behalf of the lead agency of a completed environmental checklist and other information on file with the responsible department. This constitutes the Threshold Determination and form. The intent of this declaration is to satisfy the requirements of the State Environmental Policy Act (RCW 43.21C), including the requirement to inform the public agency decisions pursuant to SEPA.

- [X] Determination of Non-Significance. This proposal has been determined to not have a significant adverse impact upon the environment. An EIS is not required under RCW 43.21C.030 2c.
- [] Determination of Significance. This proposal has or may have a significant adverse impact upon the environment. An EIS is required under RCW 43.21C.030 2c.

RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS – SEPA

None.

Signature: _____ *signature on file* _____ Date: _____
John Shaw, Senior Transportation Planner
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