

# SEATTLE'S COMMERCIAL ZONES

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Some areas have neighborhood-specific regulations that are not reflected here. Please consult the Land Use Code for individual projects.

## **THIS ZONING SUMMARY IS FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY**

This document describes development that is generally permitted in commercial zones. For specific regulations and exceptions, please refer to Chapter 23.47A of the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC). If you have additional questions, you may email a Land Use Planner at <http://web6.seattle.gov/dpd/LUQnA/>, or stop in to the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) Applicant Services Center (ASC) for a free 20-minute coaching session. For more detailed or project-specific information, please call the ASC at (206) 684-8850 to arrange for a paid appointment. Due to the complexity of the code, questions cannot be answered by phone.

## **Regulations common to all commercial zones**

### **Green Factor**

Green Factor is a scoring system that increases the quantity and improves the quality of landscaping. When required, landscaping must achieve a Green Factor score of 0.30 or higher. Credit is awarded for trees, planting areas, green roofs, vegetated walls, permeable paving, and other features.

### **Street Trees**

Street trees are generally required when new development is proposed. Existing street trees must be retained unless Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) approves their removal.

### **Amenity Area**

Amenity area is space that provides active or passive recreational opportunities. Residential uses must provide unenclosed amenity area equal to 5% of the total residential floor area. Minimum dimensions and other standards apply.

### **Motor Vehicle Parking**

No parking is required in urban centers, station area overlays, or urban villages within a frequent transit service area, except for hospitals. Where parking is required, the quantity depends on the land use. No parking is required for the first 1,500 square feet of any business.

### **Height Limits**

In commercial zones, height limits are indicated by the zone classification's numerical suffix. Height limits range from 30' to 200' depending on locational criteria. For example, NC3-65 means it is a Neighborhood Commercial 3 zone with a 65' height limit. Refer to the Zoning Map for site-specific limits. Changes to height limits require a rezone.

### **Floor Area Ratio (FAR)**

FAR is the relationship between a structure's total floor area and the size of the lot on which it was built. An FAR of 2 limits the floor area to 2 times the area of the lot. The applicable FAR is determined by the height limit and location within or outside a Station Area Overlay District. Higher FAR is allowed within Station Area Overlay Districts. Commercial FAR limits range from 2.50 to 8.25.

### **Design Review**

Development greater than 8,000 square feet is subject to design review. There are three types of design review: full, administrative, and streamlined. The project size and site characteristics determine which type applies. Full design review is conducted by a neighborhood Design Review Board. Administrative design review (ADR) and streamlined design review (SDR) are conducted by SDCI staff.

Projects may request departures or adjustments from a limited number of development standards if the resulting project better meets the intent of the adopted design guidelines.

### **Setbacks**

Setbacks may be required for new construction on a lot in a commercial zone that abuts or is across the alley from a lot in a residential zone. Additional upper-level setbacks are required for street-facing facades in zones with a height limit of 75' to 95'. Facades greater than 250' in width require additional setbacks for modulation.

### **Mandatory Affordable Housing (MHA)**

MHA requires new construction to include affordable housing or contribute to a City fund for affordable housing. New construction on lots in a commercial zone with an MHA suffix of M, M1 or M2 are subject to Chapters 23.58B and 23.58C. The MHA suffix determines the payment or performance amount.

# NC1

## Neighborhood Commercial 1

Small-scale shopping areas that provide convenience retail sales and services to the surrounding residential neighborhood. Characterized by an attractive pedestrian environment, small businesses and lot sizes, and limited transit service.

### Typical Land Uses

Small grocery stores, hair salons, coffee shops, and apartments.

### Building Types

Small commercial structures, multi-story mixed-use and residential structures. Non-residential uses typically occupy the street frontage.

### Street-level Uses

Non-residential uses may be required at street-level on street-facing facades. Residential uses may be limited to 20% of the street-level, street-facing facade.

### Street-level Non-residential Design

Transparency is required along 60% of a street-facing facade between 2-8' above the sidewalk. Non-residential uses greater than 600 square feet (sf) at street level must have an average depth of 30' and a minimum depth of 15', and have a minimum height of 13'. When a live-work unit is located on a street-level, street-facing facade, the area where business is conducted must be a minimum area of 300 sf, a minimum depth of 15', and located between the street and residential area. The live-work unit must contain a visually prominent pedestrian entry with direct access to non-residential areas, and an exterior sign with the name of the business.

### Street-level Residential Design

Residential uses must contain at least one visually prominent pedestrian entry. Dwelling units must be at least 4' above or 4' below sidewalk grade, or 10' back from a sidewalk, with some exceptions.

### Maximum Size of Commercial Use

10,000 sf for most uses.

### Parking Location

Parking must be located at the rear or side of a building, within a structure, or off-site within 800'. Parking between a building and a street is not allowed. Parking to the side of a building is limited to 60' of street frontage. Within a structure, street-level parking must be separated from the facade by another permitted use.

### Parking Access

Parking access must be from the alley, if feasible. If alley access infeasible, street access with limited curb cuts may be allowed.



# NC2

## Neighborhood Commercial 2

Moderately-sized pedestrian-oriented shopping areas that provide a range of goods and services to the surrounding neighborhoods. Compatible uses include housing and offices. Characterized by an attractive pedestrian environment, medium businesses and lot sizes, and moderate transit service.

### Typical Land Uses

Medium-sized grocery stores, drug stores, restaurants, coffee shops, customer service offices, medical/dental facilities, and apartments.

### Building Types

Single purpose commercial structures, multi-story mixed-use and residential structures. Non-residential uses typically occupy the street frontage.

### Street-level Uses

No limit on mix of residential and non-residential uses, except where P zones or other mapped areas limit residential presence at street level.

### Street-level Non-residential Design

Same as NC1 zone.

### Street-level Residential Design

Same as NC1 zone.

### Maximum Size of Commercial Use

25,000 sf for most uses; 50,000 sf for multipurpose retail sales facilities.

### Parking Location

Same as NC1 zone.

### Parking Access

Same as NC1 zone.



# NC3

## Neighborhood Commercial 3

Larger pedestrian-oriented shopping districts that provide a wide range of goods and services to the surrounding neighborhood and a larger community or region. Compatible uses include housing, offices, and business support services. Characterized by intense pedestrian activity, varied business and lot sizes, and good transit service.

### Typical Land Uses

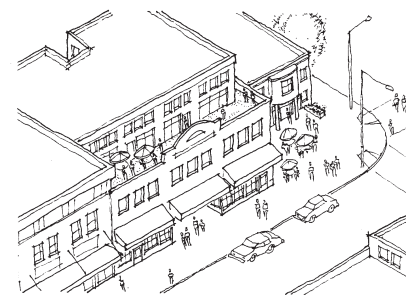
Supermarkets, restaurants, offices, hotels, clothing shops, business support services, and residences that are compatible with the area's mixed-use character.

### Building Types

Single purpose commercial structures, office buildings, multi-story mixed-use and residential structures. Non-residential uses typically occupy the street frontage.

### Street-level Uses

Same as NC2 zone.



### Street-level Non-residential Design

Same as NC1 zone.

### Street-level Residential Design

Same as NC1 zone.

### Maximum Size of Commercial Use

No size limits for most uses; 25,000 sf for wholesaling, light manufacturing and warehouse uses.

### Parking Location

Same as NC1 zone.

### Parking Access

Same as NC1 zone.

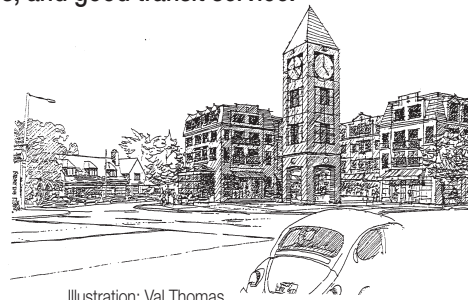


Illustration: Val Thomas

# P

## Pedestrian-Designated Zones

The P designation is a suffix applied to NC zones along pedestrian-oriented commercial streets. Areas are characterized by intense pedestrian activity, uninterrupted commercial frontage, many businesses per block, and excellent transit service. Access for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit is favored over the automobile.

### Street-level Uses

Along designated principal pedestrian streets, uses are generally limited to pedestrian-oriented, non-residential uses that have the potential to animate the sidewalk environment, such as retail, entertainment, restaurants, and personal services. Residential uses and live-work uses are limited to 20% of the street-facing facade. Drive-in or drive-thru businesses are prohibited.

### Street-level Non-residential Design

Continuous overhead weather protection with a minimum depth of 6' is typically required for 60% of the frontage of a principal pedestrian street. Adequate lighting for pedestrians is required.

All structures abutting a principal pedestrian street with more than 5,000 sf of street-level commercial uses are required to include small commercial spaces. Minimum dimensions and other standards apply.

### Parking Location

Same as NC1 zone; however, surface parking abutting a principal pedestrian street is prohibited.

### Parking Access

Parking access must be from the alley or a non-principle pedestrian street. If not feasible, parking access is limited to a single two-way curb cut on a principal pedestrian street.



# C1

## Commercial 1

Auto-oriented commercial areas that provide a range of retail and services to the surrounding neighborhoods and the larger community or region. Characterized by large parcels that favor automobile access over pedestrians and transit.

### Typical Land Uses

Large supermarkets, building supplies and household goods, auto sales and repairs, and apartments.

### Building Types

A variety of commercial building types and site layouts including one-story commercial structures with surface parking, and multi-story office or residential buildings.

### Street-level Uses

Same as NC1 zone.

### Street-level Non-residential Design

Same as NC1 zone for a structure containing a residential use or live-work unit, or when across a street from a residential zone. No requirements for non-residential structures, or when not across from a residential zone.

### Street-level Residential Design

Same as NC1 zone

### Maximum Size of Commercial Use

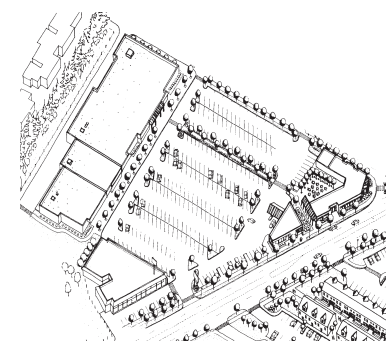
No size limits for most uses; 25,000-40,000 sf for warehouse and wholesale showroom uses; 35,000 sf or size of lot, whichever is greater, for office uses.

### Parking Location

When a development contains a residential use or is across a street from a residential zone, it must meet NC1 zone standards. Otherwise, no restrictions.

### Parking Access

When a development contains a residential use, includes a P designation, or is across a street from a residential zone, it must meet NC1 zone standards.



# C2

## Commercial 2

Auto-oriented commercial areas that provide a range of non-retail businesses to the larger community or region. Compatible uses include manufacturing and warehousing. Characterized by larger parcels that favor automobile access over pedestrian and transit, which may be adjacent to industrial zones.

### Typical Land Uses

Warehouses and wholesale, research and development, and manufacturing uses. Residential uses are allowed as an Administrative Conditional Use if specific criteria are met.

### Building Types

A variety of building types and site layouts, including single-story warehouse or manufacturing structures with surface parking and loading areas, and multi-story buildings containing office or other non-retail uses.

### Street-level Uses

Street-level uses must be non-residential, unless Administrative Conditional Use criteria are met. When a development includes a residential use, it must meet NC1 zone standards.

### Street-level Non-residential Design

Same as C1 zone.

### Maximum Size of Commercial Use

No size limits for most uses; 35,000 sf or size of lot, whichever is greater, for office uses.

### Parking Location

Same as C1 zone.

### Parking Access

Same as C1 zone.

