

Principles to Guide Implementation of Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA)



Credit: Andrew Pogue Photography



Synthesis of Input from the HALA Community Focus Groups

August 2016

HALA
HOUSING AFFORDABILITY
AND LIVABILITY AGENDA

Principles to Guide Implementation of Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA)

Background

As part of the Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA), the City of Seattle is committed to a goal of building or preserving 20,000 affordable homes over 10 years. A critical part of achieving this goal is the implementation of Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA). MHA will create 6,000 homes affordable for 50 years to households earning no more than 60% of the area median income (AMI). Under MHA, multifamily and commercial development will be required to contribute to affordable housing, with additional development capacity allowed to minimize the impact of MHA requirements on the cost of new housing. These mandatory contributions are consistent with a state-approved approach for similar programs. (See <http://tinyurl.com/MHA-1Page> for background on MHA.)

Community Focus Groups

The Community Focus Groups comprise resident volunteers from neighborhoods across the city, who informed the HALA process. A key topic for the Community Focus Groups is land use and zoning changes that can affect neighborhoods.

- Community Focus Groups meet monthly, March–December 2016.
- Each of the four groups is composed of 20–40 people.
- Groups include representatives of every urban village and neighborhood area in Seattle.
- The meetings are intended to elicit constructive dialogue about housing programs.
- Meetings are open for other members of the public to observe and provide comment during a set time on the agenda.

The City values participation by a broad range of community members who reflect our City's diverse population. Focus Groups are assembled to provide balanced representation from a range of different demographics and perspectives including:

- Traditionally under-represented groups, including minorities, immigrants, refugees, and non-native English speakers;
- Renters;
- Households with children; and
- Experienced neighborhood advocates

The MHA Implementation Principles

The City is developing a set of Principles to help guide MHA implementation choices. The statements seek to reflect what the City has heard during months of in-person and online conversations in neighborhoods. When finalized, the Principles will guide choices about future changes to zoning or urban village boundaries for MHA implementation in neighborhoods.

Focus Group Input on the MHA Principles

This document synthesizes input on the MHA Implementation Principles from the Community Focus Groups. Given the volume of input received, it does not include every specific and individual comment Focus Group participants have made. It captures the main themes and highlights expressed in each group. It also identifies areas of agreement and places where opinions diverged.

We collected input on the MHA Principles from Focus Group members in the following ways:

- **May 2016 Meeting:** Focus Group members reviewed principles and participated in a dot exercise indicating agreement or disagreement with the MHA Principles. Participants then wrote their initial comments and questions.
- **Email Distribution:** Participants received the draft MHA Principles in an email to review and prepare for the June 2016 Focus Group meeting, and also received detailed responses from City staff to questions posed in May.
- **June 2016 Meeting:** Focus Group members participated in a small group exercise. The small groups engaged in dialogue and discussion supported by City staff. Comments and ideas were recorded on a large sheet on the table. The meeting concluded with a report-out from each group.



Focus Group participants record whether they agree or disagree with draft principles statements at a May meeting.

Principles to Guide Implementation of Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA)

The Draft Principles are grouped into the following three categories:

A. Principles that form the foundation of MHA

- These are essential to MHA.
- They include core values critical to HALA goals.
- Although comments on these foundational principles are welcome, it is unlikely that major changes will be made.

B. Community-generated principles that will help guide MHA implementation

(These principles were the bulk of the discussion at the 2016 meeting.)

- These are draft statements about how to implement MHA, based on community-generated ideas and preferences.
- These ideas will meaningfully shape MHA implementation choices.
- Comments may both improve current draft principles and propose new ones.
- This final set of principles will be used by the City, communities, and Focus Groups to evaluate choices for zoning changes.

C. Principles addressed outside of MHA

- These are important principles about housing and livability that cannot be addressed through MHA.
- Other existing or proposed programs will address these principles.

The End Result

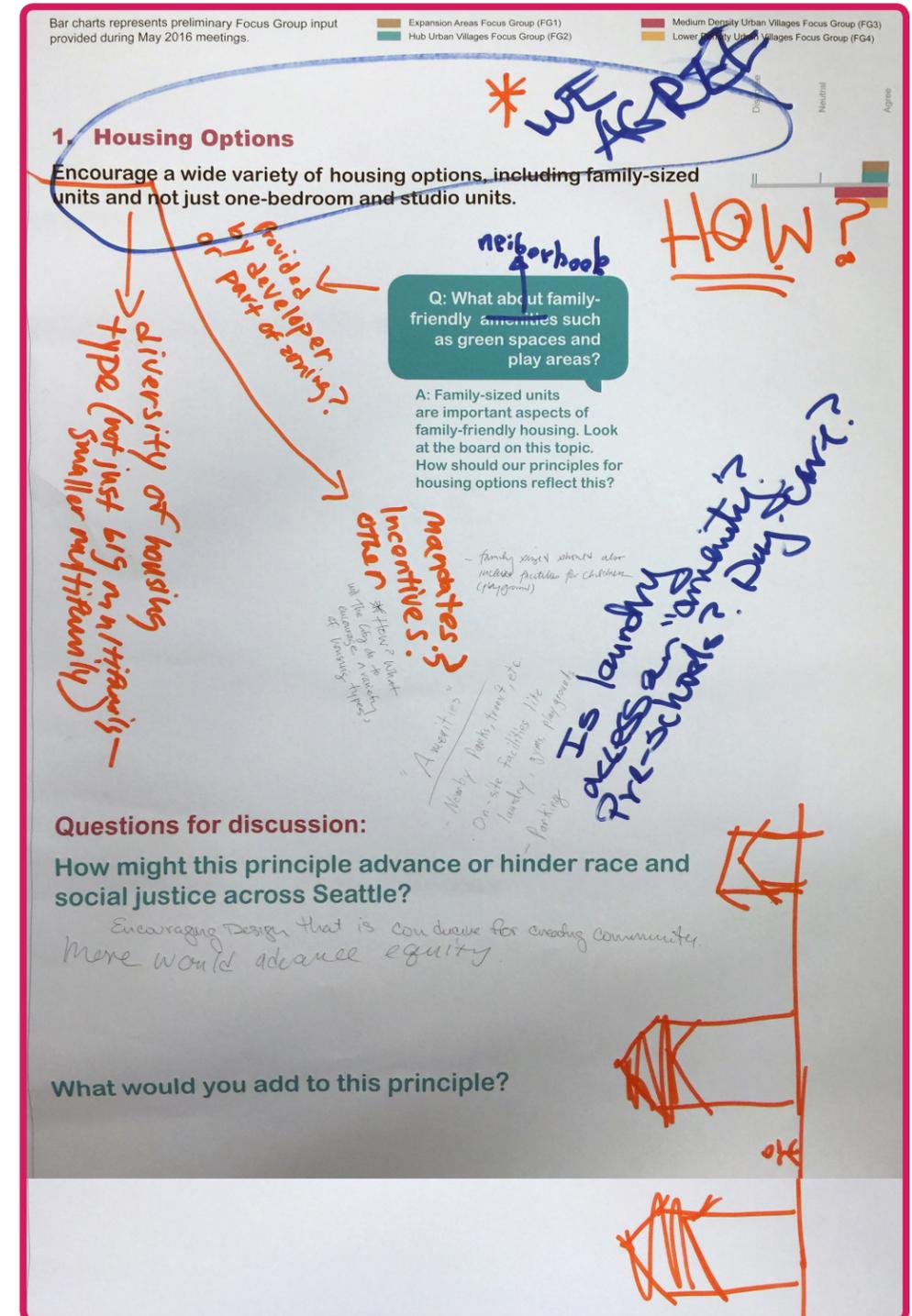
- After extensive community input through neighborhood meetings, Community Focus Groups, citywide conversations, and online engagement, the City will develop a final set of principles.
- Principles will be used to help shape and evaluate MHA implementation choices in coming months.
- Not everyone will agree with all of the final MHA Principles, but the goal is to reflect widely held community-based ideas.

Updates of the Principles

Based on Focus Group input these Principles (included in this document) have been updated and improved from the first draft. Improvements include better language for clarity and additional principles to reflect new suggestions and ideas.

Other Input on the MHA Principles

In addition to the Focus Groups, the City is receiving a lot of community input on the Principles. This includes the discussions at neighborhood meetings and events, including the April 14, 2016, *Livability Night Out* event held at MOHAI. We are also receiving input on the Principles through an online dialogue platform at HALA.Consider.It that hundreds of participants have used. A summary of input received via the Consider.It platform is included at the end of this document.



An example of notes and ideas recorded during small group discussion at a June Focus Group meeting.

Principles to Guide Implementation of Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA)

Focus Group Perspectives Vary

The four Focus Groups are grouped under urban villages with similar characteristics. The groups bring together community members from geographically separate areas of the city that nonetheless face similar issues (see the map at right).

While common themes and areas of agreement emerged through the process, the four groups have very distinct perspectives and areas of interest. We note topics of particular interest for each of the four Focus Groups below:

Urban Village Expansion Areas: Urban villages with a proposed expansion as part of the Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan Update. These areas typically include single family zoned areas that are proposed to be included in the MHA program. Key issues or areas of interest for this Focus Group include:

- Interest in investment in infrastructure, open spaces, etc. in areas experiencing growth
- Interest in avoiding displacement of vulnerable populations as neighborhoods grow
- Interest in small business and employment opportunities in addition to housing strategies

Lower Density Urban Villages: Urban villages with substantial amounts of lower-density or lower-intensity zoning, including existing Single Family zoning within an urban village, or large percentages of Low-rise zoning.

- Concern about urban design quality for new buildings
- Concern for local conditions and context considerations in zoning choices

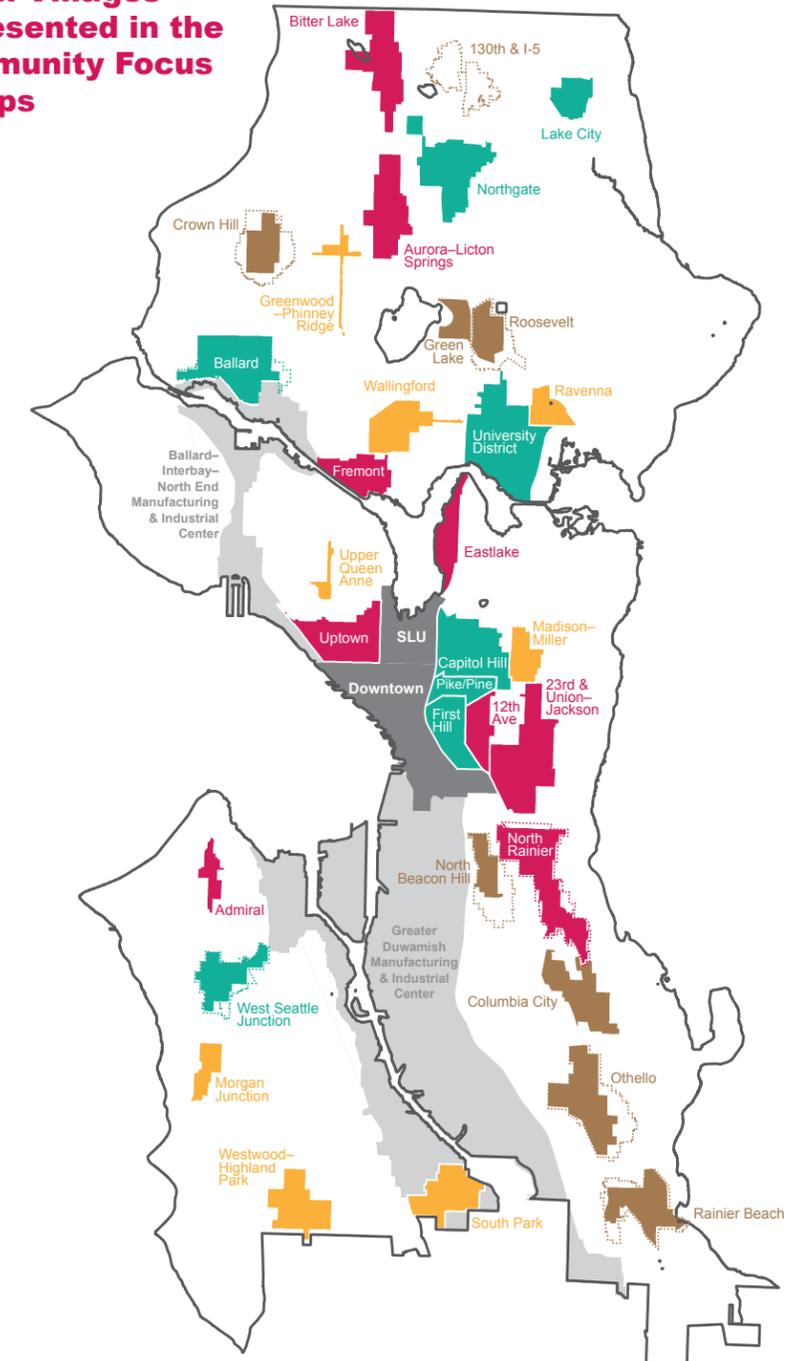
Medium Density Urban Villages: Urban villages where multifamily and mixed-use buildings comprise a substantial portion of the neighborhood. These villages generally have little or no single-family zoning within the urban village boundaries. Key issues or areas of interest for this Focus Group include:

- Preference for ensuring new affordable housing within the neighborhood
- A view that even more areas of Seattle should participate in MHA
- Desire for preparation of plans and design guidelines in areas that do not yet have them as well as updating guidelines in areas that do ensure new projects align with community objectives.

Hub Urban Villages: Places designated as a Hub Urban Village in the Comprehensive Plan. These areas typically include multifamily development and mixed-use buildings in the 4 to 6-story range. Key issues or areas of interest for this Focus Group include:

- Strong support for strategies that build more housing
- Relatively high level of acceptance for adding additional development capacity
- Support for high-quality and safe development
- Support for family-sized housing and housing that serves a broad spectrum of income levels

Urban Villages represented in the Community Focus Groups



Expansion Urban Villages (Urban Village boundary expansions proposed in Seattle 2035)
 130th & I-5
 (new Urban Village proposed in Seattle 2035)
 Columbia City
 Crown Hill
 Green Lake / Roosevelt
 North Beacon Hill
 Othello
 Rainier Beach

Hub Urban Villages
 Ballard
 Capitol Hill / Pike Pine
 First Hill
 Lake City
 Northgate
 University District
 West Seattle Junction
 Outside Area / At-Large

Medium Density Urban Villages
 12th Ave
 23rd & Union-Jackson
 Admiral
 Aurora-Licton Springs
 Bitter Lake
 Eastlake
 Fremont
 North Rainier
 Uptown

Lower Density Urban Villages
 Greenwood-Phinney Ridge
 Madison-Miller
 Morgan Junction
 Ravenna
 South Park
 Upper Queen Anne
 Wallingford
 Westwood-Highland Park
 Outside Area / At-Large



Principles that form the foundation of MHA



Although comments on these foundational principles are welcome, it is unlikely that major changes will be made.

Discussion

MHA implementation will:

1. Contribute to the 10-year HALA goal of 20,000 net new units of rent- and income-restricted housing. Specifically, the MHA goal is at least 6,000 units of housing affordable to households with incomes up to 60% of the area median income (AMI), units that will remain affordable for 50 years. In 2016, 60% of the AMI is \$37,980 for an individual and \$54,180 for a family of four.
2. Require multifamily and commercial developments to contribute to affordable housing.
3. Contributions to affordable housing will be provided by including affordable housing on site, or by providing a payment to the Seattle Office of Housing for creation of new affordable housing.
4. Ensure MHA program creates affordable housing opportunities throughout the city.
5. In alignment with a state-approved affordable housing based incentive zoning approach (37.70A.540), new affordability requirements are linked to allowing some additional development capacity in commercial and multifamily zones (in many cases this includes one additional floor).
6. Allow a variety of housing types in existing single-family zones within urban villages.
7. Expand the boundaries of some urban villages to allow for more housing near high-frequency transit hubs.
8. Maintain Seattle as an inclusive city by providing housing opportunities for everyone: people of all ages, races, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds and households of all sizes, types, and incomes.
9. Evaluate MHA implementation using a social and racial equity/justice lens.

Areas of general agreement

- Strong concurrence with principle A.4 — that affordable housing should be provided throughout the city. Some Focus Group members are concerned that affordable housing won't be located as frequently in high-cost, amenity-rich neighborhoods.
- Strong interest in making sure that MHA reflects the City's race and social justice principles. Some participants questioned how the RSJI lens would directly influence MHA program decisions, and how progress towards RSJI goals will be measured.
- Strong concurrence with principle A.8 concerning keeping Seattle affordable for a broad range of household types. Focus Group members suggested LGBTQ and disabled persons as additional populations for consideration.
- In response to principle A.3, participants suggested additional criteria or measures to make the payment option more palatable with community needs, though there remains interest in a performance-only option to concur with principle A.1.

Additional ideas

- Some Focus Group members regard the lack of consideration of additional Single Family areas outside of urban villages for MHA and zoning increases as a serious impediment to achieving full equity.
- Some Focus Group members are interested in weighing in on a wider range of HALA recommendations, in addition to MHA.
- Some questioned the income levels that MHA will serve per principle A.1 and suggested that the program should ensure lower income (i.e., households earning up to 30% AMI) are served.
- Others Focus Group members questioned why MHA will not serve other middle-income levels (i.e., 80-100% AMI).

B Community-generated principles that will help guide MHA implementation

Your input needed!
Your comments and suggestions will further shape these principles.

1. Housing Options

- a. Encourage or incentivize a wide variety of housing sizes, including family-sized units and not just one-bedroom and studio units.
- b. Encourage more small scale multi-unit housing, such as cottages, duplexes or triplexes, rowhouses, and townhouses, that are family friendly.

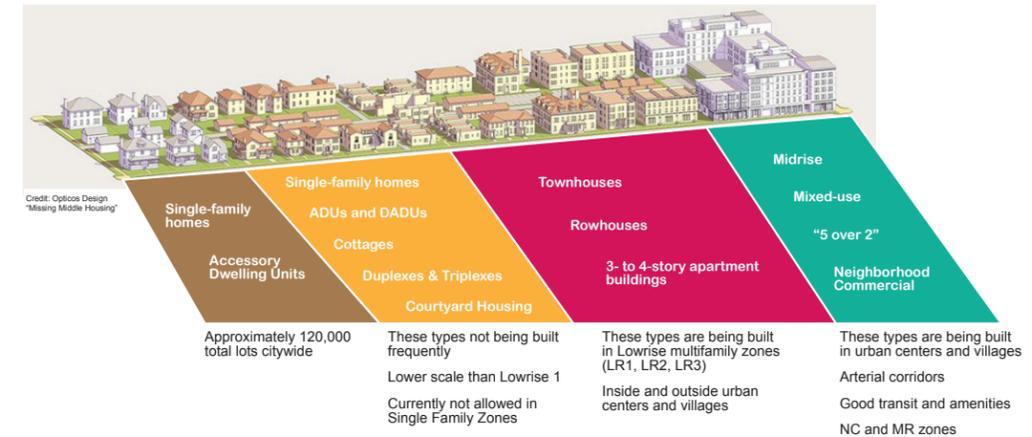
Discussion

Areas of general agreement

- The market is not currently producing much new housing suitable for families, in terms of size, number of bedrooms, shared spaces, and other characteristics.
- Very little “missing middle” housing — small multi-unit or clustered housing compatible in scale with single-family homes — is being constructed.
- Support for specific consideration of households and families of different ethnic or cultural backgrounds with different needs and desires.
- Access to child care, public schools, play areas, and open space is also very important in supporting housing for families.
- Remove some of the constraints related to accessory dwelling units and backyard cottages, specifically expedite the permit process.

Additional ideas

- Consider both larger, family-size units, as well as smaller efficiency dwellings (e.g., SEDUs, microhousing).
- Consider a range of homeownership models, including condominiums, co-ops, and smaller lot sizes.
- Be careful not to over-regulate unit size or housing type. We have an increasing number of single-person households. Consider two-bedroom units for low-income, non-related roommates.
- Encourage design that reinforces a sense of community.



Focus Group members generally supported changes to allow more small scale multi-unit housing that tends to provide family-friendly housing options.

B Community-generated principles that will help guide MHA implementation

Your input needed!
Your comments and suggestions will further shape these principles.

2. Urban Design Quality

Address urban design quality, including high-quality design of new buildings and landscaping.

- a. Encourage publicly visible green space and landscaping at street level.
- b. Encourage design qualities that reflect Seattle's context, including building materials and architectural style.
- c. Encourage design that allows access to light and views in shared and public spaces.

Discussion

Areas of general agreement

- Strong agreement that the design of new buildings is critical to building acceptance for additional housing and density. Reflecting the local context in new design is important.
- Encourage more attention to quality material; more variation in new buildings including style, massing and scale. Many new developments seem the same.
- Strong support for principle 2.c. Participants want to see the design of new buildings foster a sense of community by building more shared and public-facing spaces.
- Many participants expressed support for updated Design Guidelines or new guidelines for neighborhoods that do not have neighborhood specific design guidelines.
- Encourage ways to mix preservation of existing structures with new development.
- Upper-level setbacks are an effective way to make buildings feel more approachable (i.e., "wedding cake" setbacks).

Additional ideas

- Questions about how to define local context and style.
- Encourage healthy and sustainable development.
- Varied ideas about the value of street level landscaping and green space. Some supported principle 2.a, but others felt that good urban design can be achieved in other ways, and that such green spaces can decrease opportunities to create new housing.



Focus Group members suggested that variation in building massing and form, and higher quality materials can help larger buildings gain acceptance in local communities.

- Some participants were skeptical of the emphasis on urban design considerations, such as principles related to Urban Design Quality, Historic Areas, and Unique Conditions. They worried that these principles would make buildings more expensive and negatively affect affordability.
- Some participants believed that landscaped courtyards and roofs would be more usable as open spaces than landscaped buffers between buildings and streets or sidewalks.

B Community-generated principles that will help guide MHA implementation

Your input needed!
Your comments and suggestions will further shape these principles.

3. Transitions

Plan for transitions between higher- and lower-scale zones as additional development capacity is accommodated.

- Zone full blocks instead of partial blocks in order to soften transitions.
- Consider using low-rise zones to help transition between single-family and commercial / mixed-use zones.
- Use building setback requirements to create step-downs between commercial and mixed-use zones and other zones.

Areas of general agreement

- Strong agreement that providing transitions between higher and lower scale buildings is important to promote livability.
- Focus Group members agreed that the type of transition provided (i.e. 3.a, 3.b, or 3.c) should be based on specific local conditions and factors, and each of these may be appropriate in certain circumstances.
- Most Focus Group members sought assurance that the transition be provided within the Urban Village, rather than adding additional density outside of the urban village or center boundary.

Additional ideas

- Some Focus Group members expressed concern that transitions (particularly 3.c) may decrease new housing opportunities, which must be avoided.
- Some Focus Group members suggested adding additional at the outside edges of urban villages or centers.

Discussion



Here we see a zone boundary drawn in the middle of a block. Throughout Seattle, there are examples of adjacent lots with very different zoning, such as **Neighborhood Commercial** and **Single Family**.



To address this, one approach is to use a **Lowrise** zone to create a “step-down” in scale between the larger and smaller buildings.



Another approach is to create zone boundaries at a street. Here we extend the **NC** zone across the block. The width of the street right-of-way creates separation between zones.



Design features can also create a transition between zones. Requiring an upper-level setback can reduce the perceived scale of buildings where one zone is next to another.

B Community-generated principles that will help guide MHA implementation

Your input needed!
Your comments and suggestions will further shape these principles.

4. Historic Areas

- a. In Seattle's Historic districts, do not increase development capacity, even if it means these areas do not contribute to housing affordability through MHA.
- b. In other areas of historic or cultural significance, do not increase development capacity, even if it means these areas do not contribute to affordability through MHA.

Note: Focus Group input suggests revisions to these principles to better reflect the areas of agreement. However, we have not yet revised these principles because there is still a lot of discussion online and among historic preservation stakeholders about how to address these areas.

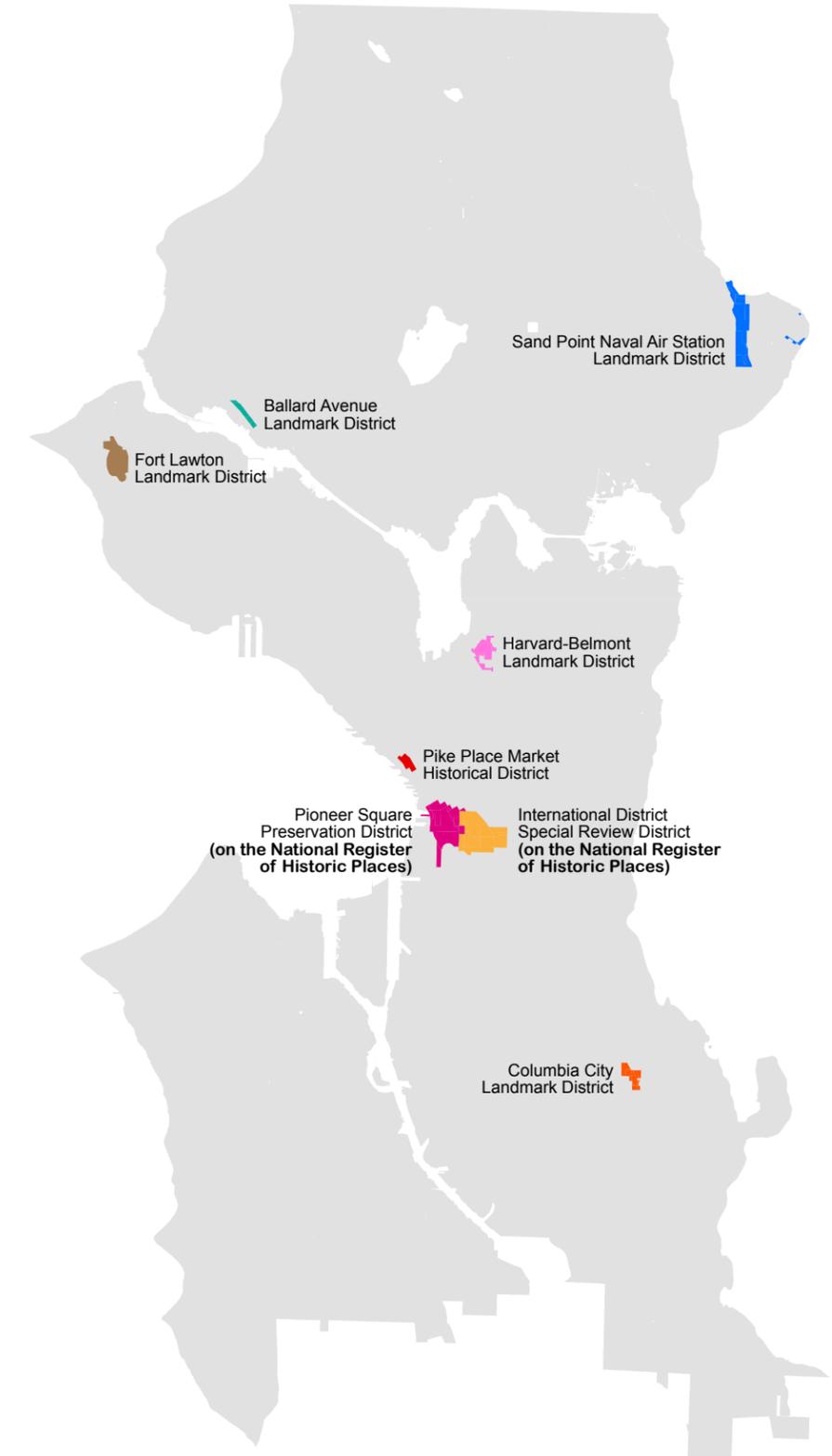
Discussion

Areas of general agreement

- Most Focus Group members agreed that MHA should be considered for Historic Districts. Regulations should be crafted carefully to encourage preservation of structures of historic value to specific neighborhoods and redevelopment of other infill sites to contribute to affordable housing.
- Consider cultural preservation to curb displacement and gentrification in neighborhoods such as the Central Area and Little Saigon.
- MHA considerations for historic districts must not only consider affordable land uses, such as small-scale retail spaces that support locally owned businesses, but also maintain an overall cohesive sense of place and identity of the existing historic fabric.

Additional ideas

- Preservation in Historic Districts can provide affordable commercial and residential spaces because of the characteristics and variety of the spaces. Therefore, Historic Districts should not have zoning changes, because these areas provide affordability anyway.



Locations of the City's Historic Districts

B Community-generated principles that will help guide MHA implementation

Your input needed!
Your comments and suggestions will further shape these principles.

5. Assets & Infrastructure

- a. Consider locating more housing near neighborhood assets and infrastructure such as parks and schools.

Discussion

Areas of general agreement

- Strong sentiment from Focus Group members (particularly in the Expansion Area group) that new investments in infrastructure and assets should be made in areas experiencing growth such as drainage, schools, parks, and transit.
- General agreement with principle 5.a, with an additional concern for growing lack of capacity for assets (i.e., schools) to meet increase in demand.

Additional ideas

- Interest in encouraging and preserving commercial assets in neighborhoods. There is interest in supporting small local business by providing and preserving spaces that are amenable to those businesses.
- Impact fees on development were discussed and supported by many participants.
- Ensure schools plan for adequate capacity in responding to the increase in housing demand.



Schools: Residents of multifamily housing near schools may have the benefit of their children attending a neighborhood school. Residents may also use school grounds informally outside of school hours for recreation, open space, and playground needs.



Parks: Multifamily housing next to or nearby a park enables residents to take advantage of the park to meet their open space needs — such as places for children to play.

B Community-generated principles that will help guide MHA implementation

Your input needed!
Your comments and suggestions will further shape these principles.

6. Urban Village Expansion Areas

- a. Implement the urban village expansions using 10-minute walksheds similar to those shown in the draft Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan update.
- b. Implement urban village expansions recommended in Seattle 2035 but with modifications to the 10-minute walkshed informed by local community members.

Consider the following conditions:

- Topography
 - “Natural” boundaries, such as parks, major roads, and other large-scale neighborhood elements
 - People with varying ranges of mobility
- c. In general, any development capacity increases in urban village expansion areas should ensure that new development is compatible in scale to the existing neighborhood context.

Discussion

Areas of general agreement

- Questions about the broader methodology and factors for establishing the 10-minute walkshed and recommendations for groundtruthing them.
- Strong agreement with principle 6.b, noting that various local conditions should be considered as boundaries are established.
- Ensure that urban village expansions are done in an equitable manner. Consider potential impacts on vulnerable populations.

Additional ideas

- Consider multiple nodes or centers for the measurement of a 10-minute urban village, rather than a single high-capacity transit station.

Note: Both 6.a and 6.b are described in this summary. Focus Group input was generally in favor of 6.b. Some stakeholders have expressed support for 6.a. We continue to collect input on this principle from other stakeholders outside of the Focus Groups.

B Community-generated principles that will help guide MHA implementation

➤ Your input needed!
Your comments and suggestions will further shape these principles.

7. Unique Conditions

- a. Consider location-specific factors such as documented view corridors from a public space or right-of-way when zoning changes are made.

8. Neighborhood Urban Design

- a. Consider local urban design priorities when zoning changes are made.

Discussion

Areas of general agreement

- Support for principle 7.a — consideration of location-specific factors — for designated viewsheds only.
- Ensure that unique conditions are considered in an equitable manner.
- Early community input in the Design Review process is a good way for considering local conditions and neighborhood design priorities before any new development.
- Many participants expressed support for updated neighborhood plans for areas that are currently non-existing to include tools and analyses for broader visioning, planning and zoning and specifically design guidelines.

Additional ideas

- Some participants expressed concern that neighborhood councils are being shut out of the process and stated that local preferences are not adequately considered in MHA implementation.

Principles to Guide Implementation of Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA)

Summary of Principles ‘Dot’ Exercise

During the May Focus Group meeting members participated in a dot exercise to record their initial thoughts on the Draft Principles for MHA implementation. For each statement, members placed a dot indicating whether they agreed, disagreed or were neutral about the principle. The responses for each Focus Group are summarized below.



1. Housing Options

Encourage a wide variety of housing options, including family-sized units and not just one-bedroom and studio units.

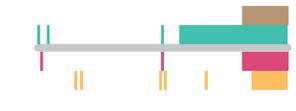


2. Urban Design Quality

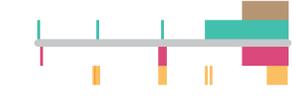
Address urban design quality, including high-quality design of new buildings and landscaping.



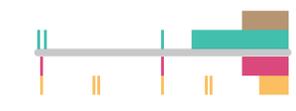
a. Encourage publicly visible green space and landscaping at street level.



b. Encourage design qualities that reflect Seattle’s context, including materials and architectural style.



c. Encourage design that allows access to light and views in shared and public spaces.



3. Transitions

Plan for transitions between higher- and lower-scale zones as additional development capacity is accommodated.



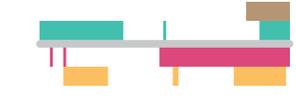
a. Zone full blocks instead of partial blocks in order to soften transitions.



b. Consider using low-rise zones to help transition between single-family and commercial / mixed-use zones.

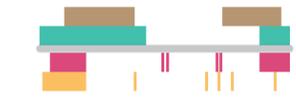


c. Use building setback requirements to create step-downs between commercial and mixed-use zones and other zones.

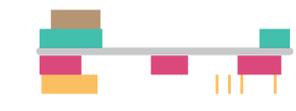


4. Historic Areas

In Seattle’s Historic districts, do not increase development capacity, even if it means these areas do not contribute to housing affordability through MHA.



In areas of historic or cultural significance, do not increase development capacity, even if it means these areas do not contribute to affordability through MHA.



5. Assets & Infrastructure

Consider locating more housing near neighborhood assets and infrastructure such as parks and schools.



6. Urban Village Expansion Areas

Implement the urban village expansions using 10-minute walksheds similar to what was shown in the draft Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan update.



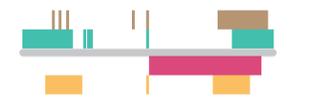
a. Implement urban village expansions recommended in Seattle 2035 but with modifications to the 10-minute walkshed that was informed by local community members.



b. Consider the following conditions:

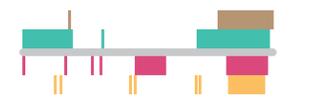
- Topography
- “Natural” boundaries, such as parks, major roads, and other large-scale neighborhood elements
- People with varying ranges of mobility

c. In general, any development capacity increases in urban village expansion areas should ensure new development is compatible in scale relative to the existing neighborhood context.



7. Unique Conditions

Consider location-specific factors such as documented view corridors from a public space or a right-of-way during zoning changes.

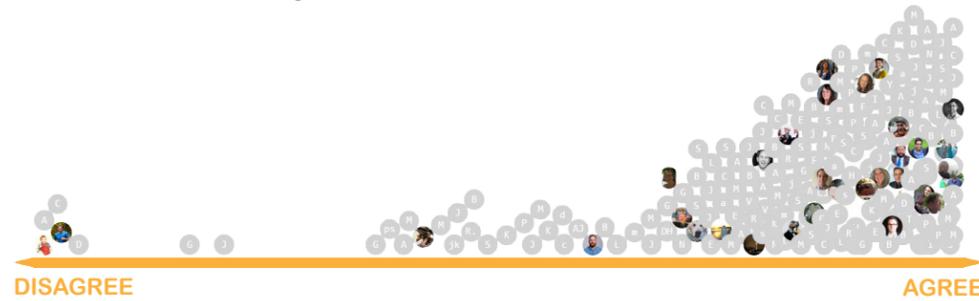


Note: Underlined text indicates language that was edited or added after the first draft of the principles.

Summary of Input from Consider.It

In addition to Focus Group input, we have collected public feedback on the draft MHA principles at [HALA.Consider.It](https://www.hala.org/consider-it). Visitors to the website could indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the principles statements and share comments about each principle. We adjusted some of the grouping and wording slightly for simplicity and accessibility. The following summarizes the input collected from the Consider.It online platform.

Encourage a wide variety of housing options, including family-sized units and not just one-bedroom and studio units.



"Let the market decide what is built. If people do not want to live in what is built then developers will adapt and build what people do want. PRIVATE PROPERTY is key to prosperity."

"My worry about this is what exactly 'encourage' means. Are there levers that can be used without micromanaging what gets built?"

"Unless there is a way to prove that there's demand and specific supply shortage that isn't being met, I see no reason why the city should speculate on what each neighborhood needs."

"Some types of developments are not suitable for all neighborhoods. Housing variety is important, but oversized apartment buildings don't belong in single family neighborhoods."

"One of the things that makes these neighborhoods so great is that they are 'livable' (i.e., lower density). Should the city now allow me to live on the water front because it is more desirable and I want that? Absolutely not."

"Family-sized units support more than just families. The lack of family-sized units also makes it harder for younger people wanting to share larger units with roommates to save."

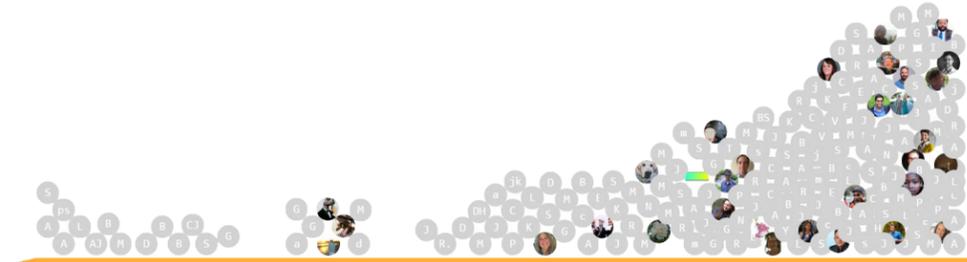
"Family-sized housing is absolutely a need. But there also needs to be a pairing of family-sized housing with the amenities that make a place 'livable' for a family, like access to play space, day cares, and proximity to schools. There should be some sort of incentive for developers if they add (or fund) these sorts of uses near affordable housing."

"Yes, and put them in all neighborhoods so that affordable housing is integrated throughout the city."

"As long as we continue to restrict housing, developers will aim at single-occupancy luxury units. Let more building happen and other parts of the market will be served."

"Absolutely key for keeping a diversity of families in the city."

Consider locating more housing near parks, schools and other community assets.



"Single Family Zones in our city are what makes it livable. Upzoning around transit hubs makes sense. But lets upzone on main arterials first and keep parks surrounded by SFZ."

"...but the City drastically needs more Parks /open spaces. Seattle has exploded in size yet there has been virtually no addition of parks or community assets."

"As long as it does not involve upzoning. Reading these comments makes is seem like this is a back-door way of gettign rid of some single-family zoning, which is on eo fht emain things keeping Seattle such a nice area."

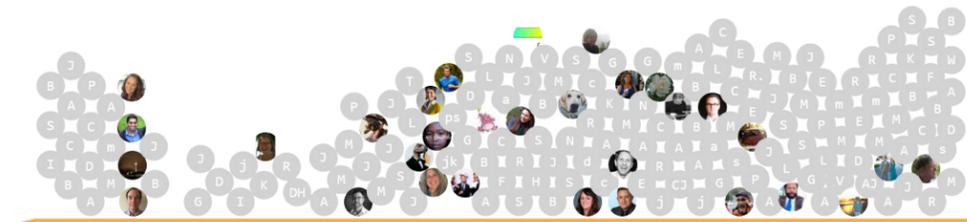
"Yes, and this means in a place like Roosevelt that has beautiful parks, transit infrastructure, and schools."

"The flip side is that we should also prioritize putting schools, parks, and community assets in areas of denser housing."

"SF housing has their green space — a yard. Put MF housing near parks makes sense!"

"Also transit! There's no reason Capitol Hill should be 6 stories around the light rail station. Lots of people want to live there — let them!"

Use building setback requirements to create step-downs between commercial and mixed-use zones and other zones.



"Again, this is another smokescreen for pushing additional up-zoning. It is neither functionally nor aesthetically necessary nor desirable."

"Confusing statement. These are important but not excuse for up zoning single family neighborhoods."

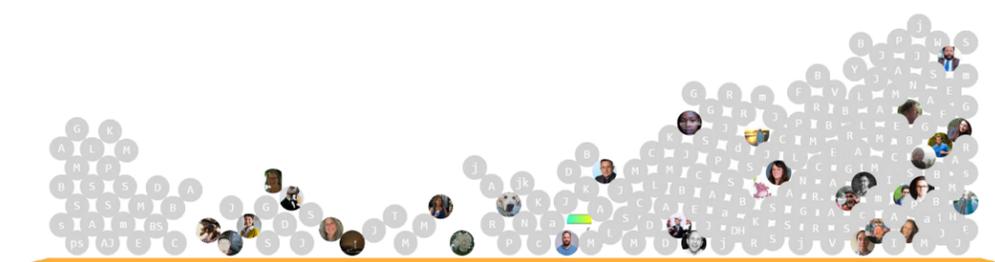
"Set backs and greenspace should be required for all new develoment, and not a trade-off or an excuse for additional density if they are provided."

"Set backs with yards, trees and permeable surfaces are very important."

"Permeable surfaces are fine, but keep in mind that dense apartment buildings have much less pavement-per-person than the same number of people living in single-family homes. Also, denser living means less driving, less pollution in general."

"Not in all situations. I think lotline development (with porches, maybe, for ground floor units) can look better than small empty front yard space."

Consider using lowrise zones (up to 3-stories) to help transition between single-family and commercial / mixed-use zones.



"There is neither a functional nor aesthetic reason to create such transitions. This is simply another smokescreen rationale for more unnecessary up-zoning."

"Should we be this prescriptive about how every block is built? In cities that micromanage less, dense uses cluster together because that's what people choose."

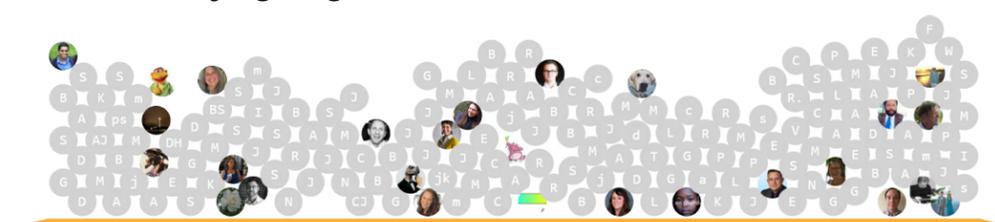
"More high-density housing everywhere - we all deserve a safe, affordable place to live, regardless of income. I worry that 'transition zones' are just trying to avoid controversy."

"We need more 3-flats and multi-family *family-sized* housing in these transition zones, and not just super-expensive 3-story townhomes."

"Anything that brings more housing by slightly increasing density in single-family zones is a good thing. We can't afford to sacrifice people's housing for simple aesthetics."

"I believe in increasing density, it's environmentally beneficial and will allow for more people to have access to services."

Zone full blocks instead of partial blocks to soften transitions between varying heights.



"I worry that this is an excuse to upzone entire blocks of SF neighborhoods if one or two older multifamily buildings are on the block."

"Upzone! Provide more opportunities for density. No need to apologize for it."

"This is another cookie cutter one size fits all solution. Every block is different. My block is enormous and the surroundings are very different at one end than another."

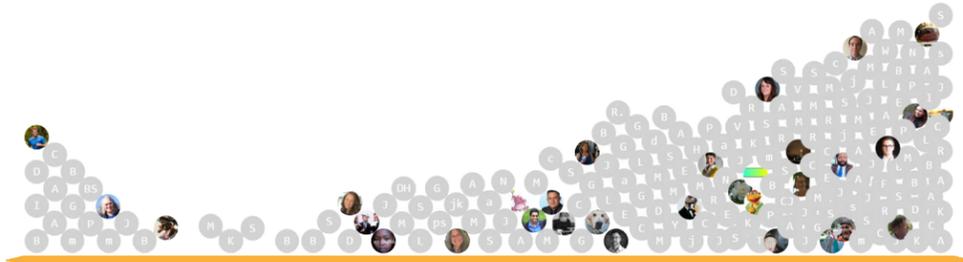
"A tough call that depends upon the specific situation. In general, I'm for streets being consistent and the transition taking place within the block."

"Where the line gets drawn between zones is a little bit of art & science so a blanket statement like this doesn't make sense. If upzoning a full block such that the new zoning will create a better transition to surrounding context than if it weren't upzoned, then this strategy could be a positive. If upzoning an entire block at a significantly more intense zone than across the street, without any consideration for transitions/setbacks, this wouldn't be a good strategy."

Principles to Guide Implementation of Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA)

Summary of Input from Consider.It

Incentivize design that allows access to light and views in shared and public spaces.



“A fine goal, but right now the lack of housing doesn’t leave room for these extra rules. Permit lots more housing so we can afford to be picky about how it’s built.”

“This cannot be used as a reason to not increase building heights, however. We can have both good access to air/light AND increased density and heights.”

“Views for existing neighbors? Or for residents of new high rise buildings? I disagree with design that effects light and yard/garden spaces for existing SFH.”

“With the dark skies and long nights in Seattle, livability must include access to light & views.”

“Aesthetics matter a lot to people! Designing to include light, views, and greenery makes neighborhoods much more liveable. People are more inclined to support development if it adds beauty and is done well.”

“This is especially important for affordable housing which should be as attractive and liveable as more expensive units.”

Incentivize design qualities that reflect Seattle’s context, including materials and architectural style.



“Sounds nice, but design and architecture are not processes that should be done by law. Imagine if painting or sculpture had to pass Design Review.”

“Urban density is not only a housing affordability issue, it is a climate change issue. Sorry, a big thumbs down to neighborhood review. It’s just an excuse to perpetuate the status quo and prevents innovation from taking place. As long as a building is safe and isn’t an energy hog, we need it being built. There is an urgency to this that cannot be underestimated.”

“There is no single Seattle context. Seattle’s neighborhoods were developed — and have evolved — at different times and have different architectural and cultural styles. Context should be a factor in design, but it’s misleading to think there’s a Seattle context.”

“Design Review is important to encourage good design that fits into its context--that does not need to mean Craftsman styling has to prevail in all new buildings.”

“Design Guidelines are often loosely written for architectural style, but do recommend material types and design quality. They are vital for good design. Without design guidelines you will forever see shortcuts made by developers. If you have them developers do not mind complying with them at all. And character & quality of materials is important for long lasting projects that are going to develop the urban fabric of Seattle as it changes. Disagreeing with this principle is bothersome and short sighted.”

“Yes, and keep design review as is, so that communities can participate in this process.”

Consider location-specific factors such as documented view corridors from a public space, street or pathway when zoning changes are made.



“A view corridor seems like a short-sighted, (pun intended), consideration. The built environment of cities change and evolve and let’s not get distracted by ephemeral things.”

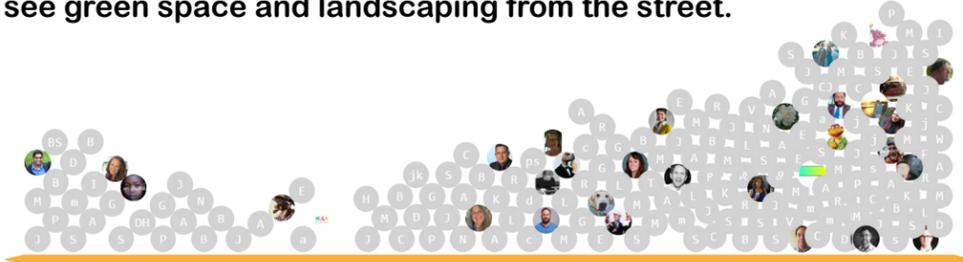
“View corridors are a luxury for some people, but prevent the construction of necessary housing for others. We could preserve view corridors if more housing was allowed in areas that don’t obstruct views. Unfortunately, “preserving the view” is often used as a tool to prevent the construction of any new housing.”

“Maintaining PUBLIC view corridors is a fine goal, but should not be used liberally to stop new housing choices.”

“View corridors should be considered when possible to preserve livability for all.”

“Yes AND the definition of “view corridor” needs to be expanded. Why are protecting the Space Needle at all cost but not the vistas of the mountains and water?”

Incentivize publicly visible green space and landscaping at street level. When a person walks by a building, they should be able to see green space and landscaping from the street.



“Every neighborhood should have access to some green space...that doesnt mean every building needs direct access. This seems excessive.”

“Green space is nice! It doesn’t need to be prescribed by law, though. Look at the streets of Paris, Greenwich Village, Barcelona — they’re beautiful without green space.”

“I don’t understand why being able to see greenspace from the street is so important. For me this distracts from the bigger problem of not enough housing in the city.”

“We have real storm-water concerns to consider here. We need it just to prevent oil from entering Puget Sound.”

“And also use setbacks from the sidewalk, so that there is a more spacious feel, like plazas, courtyards, etc.”

“This should include yards and saving old trees.”

“Trees and plants are very important in a city. They offer many benefits to the environment besides just beauty.”

New development in expansion areas should prioritize a broader mix of housing types to provide more choices, including rowhouses, townhouses, and 3 story apartment buildings.



“Three story apartment buildings and the like are out of place for existing single family neighborhoods.”

“Not all of the expansion areas are not currently well served by transit and there is not plan to enhance service. Crown Hill has no light rail-rapid ride from NW does not work.”

“The problem is that racial disparity does exist, and the intensity of development in high risk of displacement areas will mean that some communities will have no where else to go.”

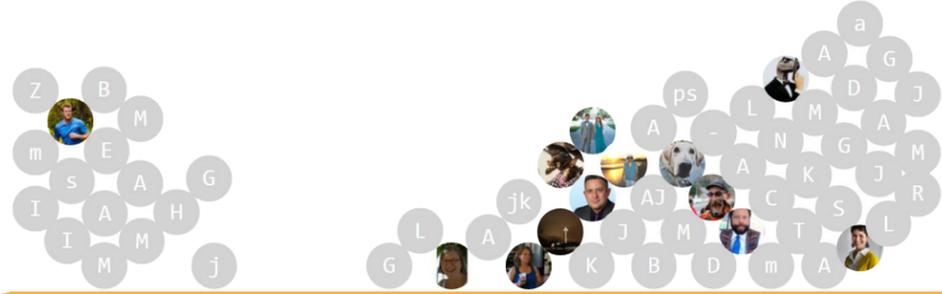
“Done well, this can provide more housing in walkable communities while retaining the existing character of the neighborhood. We have many examples of rowhouses and three-story apartment buildings that blend in nicely with single-family homes in their neighborhoods. The key is to make sure the buildings are of a quality and character consistent with the context.”

“Only if this is done OUTSIDE of Single Family zones. Lets also preserve the choice to live in a single family house in a single family neighborhood. Incentivize ADU/DADU instead.”

Principles to Guide Implementation of Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA)

Summary of Input from Consider.It

When zoning changes are made, consider urban design ideas expressed in an adopted neighborhood plan or neighborhood-based planning effort.



“Neighborhood plans provide far too much control by small groups of active homeowners, resulting in plans that frequently don’t represent renters’ needs, such as more housing.”

“While it’s possible to get a good outcome out of neighborhood-based planning efforts, in the current divided atmosphere I don’t think it can happen.”

“Neighborhoods will resist change, but the city needs broad efforts to tackle the housing issues it faces. Our housing needs outweigh neighborhood preservation.”

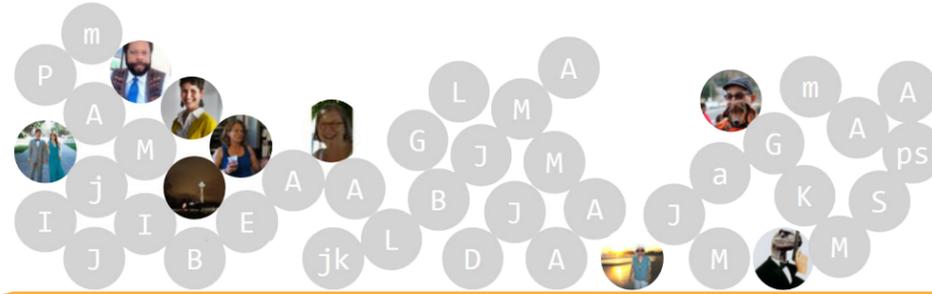
“People who care deeply about their neighborhoods put a lot of effort into those plans with the understanding they’ll be used.”

“Sure, just make sure the entire neighborhood really participated in creating the plan. Seems like often it’s just a few well-off activists.”

“The choice to live in a single family home in a neighborhood without large buildings should also be preserved.”

“We can consider the ideas in neighborhood plans without adhering to them blindly.”

For districts designated in the National Register for Historic Places, do not increase development even if redevelopment in these areas would not create affordable housing through MHA.



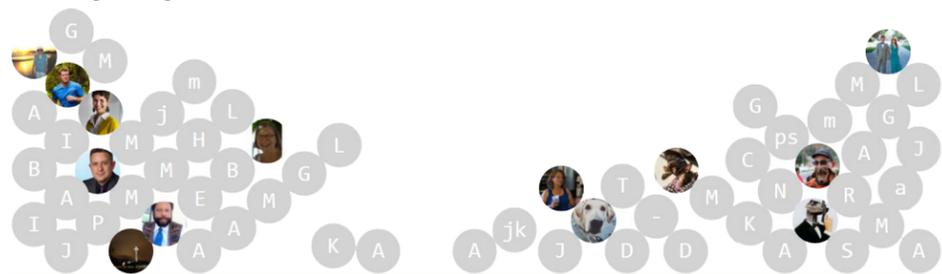
“If we’re going to preserve some districts, we need to compensate by allowing much more housing elsewhere in the city.”

Historical designation is a tool often used to block development. Buildings of little historical worth are preserved by rules and regulations that are used as a pretext to slow competitors, maintain monopoly rents, and keep neighborhoods in a kind of aesthetic stasis that benefits a small number of people at the expense of many others.”

“Agree, based on the additional information provided. But it shouldn’t just be “hands off” historical neighborhoods. The policy should include supports for existing low/moderate income housing.”

“The designated districts are very limited. I agree that they should be protected. I probably wouldn’t agree with other districts being so protected.”

In general, development capacity increases in urban village expansion areas should be compatible in scale relative to the existing neighborhood context.



“Seattle’s housing need is immense and immediate. We cannot afford to enforce gradual changes to all neighborhoods. We need many more housing units, and we needed them years ago.”

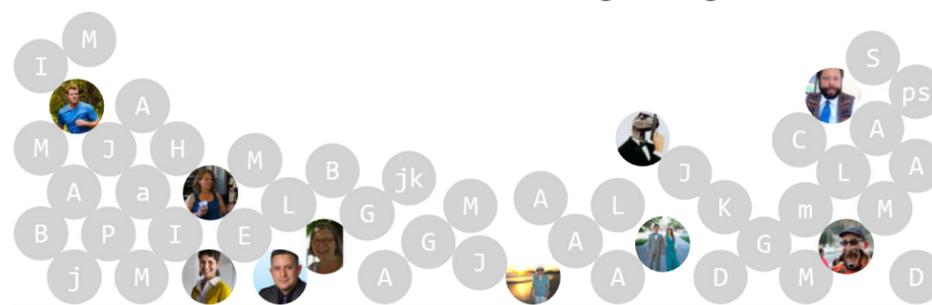
“Multifamily buildings exist next to single family homes in places like Capitol Hill. Let’s do that all over the city.”

“LR3 isn’t dramatically different. Three stories of height fits in well with single-family homes.”

“In expansion areas, intensified zoning not compatible in scale can highly impact the most vulnerable communities identified as a high risk of displacement. This must be avoided!”

“I am cautious of giving developers free reign to make as much money as they can without consideration for a neighborhood’s character.”

For other sites that have historic and cultural significance, do not increase development capacity even if redevelopment in these areas would not create affordable housing through MHA.



“Historical preservation is frequently abused to prevent the construction of any new housing. Preserving historic parts of town is fine, but only if it doesn’t preclude new housing.”

“There are umpteen examples of historical preservation done well that incorporate new urbanist design principles while providing necessary affordable housing thresholds.”

“Looking at the PDF, the percentage of land not allowed for development is a tiny fraction of total area.”

“Seattle’s oldest neighborhoods with old single homes should also be considered for historic preservation. Removing owner occupancy rules for ADU/DADU is a better compromise.”

Principles addressed outside of MHA

 **We welcome your input.**
Your comments and suggestions will further shape these principles.

Other HALA strategies and City initiatives address the many other housing and livability issues of importance to the community. **The following Part C principles addressing topics outside of MHA are drawn from community input and Focus Group input to date.** Information provided below each statement outlines how other HALA actions and City efforts are addressing these principles.

1. Concurrency

a. **Address need for parks, open space, transit, and infrastructure as the city grows**

Parks & Open Space

The Seattle Parks District was approved by the voters in 2015 and provides ongoing funding for the acquisition of parks and open spaces throughout the City. The Parks Department's acquisition program targets areas in need of park space as identified in Seattle Parks and Recreation's 5 year [Development Plan](#), with updates coming in 2017.

Transit

Proposition 1, approved by voters in November 2014, led to the largest increase in transit service in more than 40 years. Today, more than 70 percent of Seattle residents live within a short walk of frequent bus service. Additionally, the \$930 million *Levy to Move Seattle*, approved by voters in 2015, provides funding to improve safety for all travelers, maintain our streets and bridges, and invest in reliable, affordable travel options for a growing city over the next nine years. See the Seattle Department of Transportation's [10-year Strategic Vision](#) for Transportation for more details.

Other Infrastructure

In January 2016 the City implemented the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) to ensure that the City supports thriving communities with a mix of amenities, open space, transportation, affordable housing, and educational and economic opportunity by coordinating the City's planning and investments to meet community needs.

2. Homeless and Low- and Middle-Income Populations

a. **Address Seattle's homelessness crisis**

The City of Seattle is committed to addressing the homelessness crisis in Seattle. On any given night in Seattle, nearly 3,000 people are living unsheltered in our community. To address this, each year HSD spends \$40.84 million to assist single adults, youth, young adults, and families, survivors of domestic violence, older adults and veterans who are currently at-risk of or experiencing homelessness. In November 2015 Mayor Murray signed a Proclamation of Civil Emergency and Executive Constantine signed a Local Proclamation of Emergency in response to the growing crisis. Mayor Murray also outlined a \$5.3 million package to respond to the growing demand for services. In June 2016, Mayor Murray took action through Executive Order directing the creation of a low-barrier, one-stop service center for individuals without shelter to receive the customized support they need to move from the streets back into permanent homes. See more of the [City of Seattle's Key Actions Addressing Homelessness](#).

b. **Preserve existing housing that serves low-income people**

The City of Seattle's Office of Housing funds acquisition and rehabilitation of existing affordable apartments, and rents those units to low-income households. The Office of Housing's investments focus on households earning up to 85% of [Seattle's Area Median](#)

[Income \(AMI\)](#), with direct investments serving the lowest income households, at 60% AMI or less. The 2009 voter-approved [Housing Levy](#) produced or preserved 2,184 apartments affordable to low-income renters. The Housing Levy expires this year, and a proposal to renew and double the levy will be up for public vote in August 2016. Through HALA, the City is also pursuing a Preservation Tax Exemption through the state legislature that will provide a property tax incentive to landlords who keep 25% of a building's units affordable to households earning less than 50-60% of the Area Median Income. (50% of AMI in Seattle for 2016 is \$31,650 for an individual and \$45,150 for a family of four.)

c. **Produce and preserve existing housing that serves middle-income people**

The City of Seattle's Office of Housing manages Incentive Zoning (IZ) and Multifamily Tax Exemption (MFTE) programs aimed at producing new housing affordable to low- and middle-income households. These voluntary incentive programs serve households earning 60-85% of the Area Median Income (AMI). Through MFTE there are nearly 4,000 affordable units across Seattle, and IZ has resulted in construction of nearly 1,000 affordable units that otherwise would not have been built.

d. **Address displacement as Seattle grows**

Seattle's Comprehensive Plan ([Seattle 2035](#)) directs the City to expand housing choice throughout Seattle, especially in areas where displacement risk is high. Payments made through MHA will be invested in a way that builds on the Office of Housing's 35-year track record of supporting housing in neighborhoods experiencing displacement pressure and rising housing costs. The City is also pursuing programs that would allow rental-housing owners to access financing to rehabilitate their properties without increasing rents for current residents.

Principles addressed outside of MHA

 **We welcome your input.**
Your comments and suggestions will further shape these principles.

e. **Address rising property taxes for homeowners**

f. **Restrict rent increases**

Restricting rent increases (i.e., rent control) is illegal in Washington State ([RCW 35.21.830](#)). The Tenants Union of Washington State explains that “landlords can raise the rent as much as they see fit as long as they comply with the appropriate notice period and have not issued the notice to discriminate or retaliate against the tenant.”¹ The City, however, can now help ensure that housing meets certain code standards if a landlord chooses to increase residential rents at the conclusion of a lease term. In June 2016 the City enacted a tenant protection ordinance which delays allowable rent increases on housing units that do not meet minimum code standards ([Council Bill 118678](#)). See the [Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance \(RRIO\) checklist](#) for conditions which would trigger this delay, indicated with an asterisk. This new law helps protect tenants against rent increases on substandard housing.

3. **Green Building/Sustainability**

a. **Encourage or require new development to be green and sustainable.**

4. **Single-Family Areas**

a. **Allow more housing diversity in single-family areas outside of urban villages.**

In May 2016 Seattle City Councilmember Mike O’Brien proposed legislation to make it easier for Seattle homeowners to add accessory dwelling units and backyard cottages on single-family lots. Referred to in the land use code as Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and Detached Accessory Dwelling Units (DADUs), this type of housing offers homeowners the opportunity to create a rental unit on their lot, the extra rental income from which can increase overall affordability for owners. Because they have no additional land cost, ADUs and DADUs can provide a more affordable rental housing option for a range of household types who might otherwise be unable to access certain neighborhoods.

b. **Find ways for single-family areas to contribute to housing affordability.**

5. **Affordable Commercial Space**

a. **Address affordability of retail/commercial spaces.**

In April 2016 Mayor Murray announced the launch of a [Commercial Affordability Advisory Committee](#) to address rising costs of commercial space for small businesses.

6. **Historic Preservation**

a. **Provide strategies for preserving places of cultural significance.**

Through the City’s [Equitable Development Initiative](#) and community development planning processes, the City helps facilitate projects such as the Multicultural Community Center in the Othello neighborhood.

¹ “Rule Changes and Rent Increases.” [www.tenantsunion.org](http://www.tenantsunion.org/en/rights/rule-changes-rent-increases). Tenants Union of Washington State. Web. Undated. Accessed 06/10/2016. <<http://www.tenantsunion.org/en/rights/rule-changes-rent-increases>>