

The majority of the site is level. There is a 40% slope on the eastern portion of the site down to the 15th Avenue South right-of-way. The slope is approximately 10 feet high. The slope was created by grading activities associated with 15th Avenue South. The slope contains a concrete retaining wall and a concrete stairway and walkway. The site is located within an environmentally critical area due to this steep slope. The site is covered almost entirely by impervious surfaces with little vegetation other than ivy covering part of the steep slope.

Area Development:

Development in the vicinity consists of single-family homes, townhouses, and multifamily buildings.

Proposal Description:

The applicant proposes to remove the existing structure and construct one, 3-unit townhouse and one, 2-unit townhouse.

Public Comment:

The comment period for this proposal ended on May 28, 2008. During this period, one comment letter was received.

ANALYSIS – SEPA

The initial disclosure of the potential impacts from this project was made in the environmental checklist submitted by the applicant dated April 28, 2008. The information in the checklist, the supplemental information submitted by the applicant, and the experience of the lead agency with the review of similar projects form the basis for this analysis and decision.

The SEPA Overview Policy (SMC 25.05.665) clarifies the relationship between codes, policies, and environmental review. Specific policies for each element of the environment, certain neighborhood plans, and other policies explicitly referenced may serve as the basis for exercising substantive SEPA authority.

The Overview Policy states, in part, “Where City regulations have been adopted to address an environmental impact, it shall be presumed that such regulations are adequate to achieve sufficient mitigation” subject to some limitations. Under such limitations/circumstances (SMC 25.05.665) mitigation can be considered. A more detailed discussion of the potential impacts from this development proposal follows.

Short-Term Impacts

The following temporary or construction-related impacts are expected: temporary soil erosion, increased vibration from construction operations and equipment, emissions from construction vehicles, construction noise. These impacts are not considered significant because they are temporary and/or minor in scope (SMC 25.05.794).

City codes and/or ordinances apply to the proposal and will provide mitigation for some of the identified impacts. Specifically these are: 1) Street Use; 2) Building Code (construction measures in general); 3) Regulations for Environmentally Critical Areas, 4) Stormwater, Drainage and Grading Code (temporary soil erosion), and 5) Noise Ordinance. Compliance with these applicable codes and ordinances will be adequate to achieve sufficient mitigation and further mitigation by imposing specific conditions is not necessary for these impacts.

Long-Term Impacts

Long-term or use-related impacts are also anticipated from the proposal: greenhouse gas emissions, increased surface water runoff from greater site coverage by impervious surfaces; increased bulk and scale on the site; increased demand on public services and utilities; increased light and glare; loss of vegetation; and increased energy consumption. These long-term impacts are not considered significant because the impacts are minor in scope.

The long-term impacts are typical of single family residences and will be mitigated by the City's adopted codes and/or ordinances. Specifically these are: Stormwater, Grading and Drainage Control Code (stormwater runoff from additional site coverage by impervious surface); Land Use Code (minimum lot area, vehicle access to parking); and the Seattle Energy Code (long-term energy consumption). Earth-related impacts may result in the long-term and are mitigated by the Critical Areas Ordinance. An analysis of impacts associated with specific SEPA policies follows.

Air

Construction activities including construction worker commutes, truck trips, the operation of construction equipment and machinery, and the manufacture of the construction materials result in increases in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions which adversely impact air quality and contribute to climate change. The applicant submitted a greenhouse worksheet for this project which outlines the potential greenhouse gas emissions over the life of the project. While these impacts are adverse, they are not expected to be significant due to the relatively minor contribution of greenhouse gas emissions from this project. No unusual circumstances exist which warrant additional mitigation, per the SEPA Overview Policy.

Earth

The project site contains a steep slope environmentally critical area. The applicant submitted a geotechnical engineering report dated June 3, 2008, prepared by Cornerstone Geotechnical, Inc. The report examined the geologic conditions of the site and vicinity and provided recommendations for the construction of the project. The report indicates that grading on site will be minimal. The steep slope area is located on the eastern portion of the site adjacent to the 15th Avenue South right-of-way. This steep slope contains a concrete retaining wall. Several stairways will be constructed within the steep slope area. The report concludes that the site is compatible with proposed project. The report contains recommendations for construction including a recommendation that building foundations bear on the underlying glacial till or on structural fill that bears on the glacial till and that the foundations be set back 15 feet horizontally from the face of the steep slope. The report also contains recommendations for construction in wet weather, placement of fill, and drainage. The geotechnical issues associated with construction on this site will be evaluated during building permit review. No additional SEPA conditioning is warranted to mitigate for impacts of construction on the critical area.

