CITY OF SEATTLE
ANALYSIS AND DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Applicant Name: Department of Planning and Development

Address of Proposal: Upper Queen Anne, Uptown Neighborhoods

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION

The proposal is a legislative action to amend Section 23.41.010 of the Seattle Municipal Code approving Neighborhood Design Guidelines for the Upper Queen Anne, and Uptown neighborhoods.

The following approval is required:

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

SEPA DETERMINATION: ☐ Exempt ☒ DNS ☐ MDNS ☐ EIS

Proposal

The Department of Planning and Development (DPD) is recommending that amendments to SMC Chapter 23.41 be undertaken to adopt neighborhood-specific design guidelines for the Upper Queen Anne Hill, and Uptown neighborhoods.

Public Comments

The development of neighborhood-specific design guidelines reflects an extensive community effort to build support for guidelines that address the unique conditions of the Upper Queen Anne, and Uptown neighborhoods. The neighborhoods spent many volunteer hours to develop these guidelines. Neighborhood guidelines are specifically intended to augment the existing citywide *Design Review Guidelines for Multifamily and Commercial Buildings.*

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

What is Design Review? The design review process, as provided for in the Land Use Code Chapter 23.41, is intended to be a forum for community members, developers, architects, and city staff, aided by citizen design review boards, to identify design-related concerns early in the design development of a project to ensure that new development makes positive contributions to Seattle's neighborhoods. Design Review is a component of a Master Use Permit (MUP) application and is required for new commercial, multi-family and mixed-use developments that exceed SEPA thresholds in specific zones. The design review process provides flexibility in the application of development standards through the granting of "design departures." Departures are granted when it is demonstrated that the modification of a prescriptive Code standard would

result in a better overall building design through an improved response to unique site conditions or the compelling character of the surrounding area.

Design Guidelines. Citywide Design Guidelines apply to all proposed new development subject to design review. Citywide design review guidelines for multifamily and commercial buildings are a compilation of broad urban design principles intended to address such aspects of development as site planning, height, bulk and scale relationships, architectural elements, landscaping, and the pedestrian environment. Zoning rules and prescriptive standards are intended to establish the primary use, intensity and scale of development in a specific zone. Design guidelines and the design review process help to ensure through application of applicable design guidelines and flexibility in requirements that new development responds appropriately to the context of its surroundings.

As part of a citywide neighborhood planning process, many neighborhoods expressed an interest in augmenting the citywide Design Review Guidelines. Neighborhood design guidelines are intended to reveal the unique character of a given neighborhood, to call one's attention to the specific goals for neighborhood development, the key locations for important design considerations, and thereby protect, to the extent feasible, the qualities and values that a specific neighborhood shares in the face of change. Where the City Council has adopted neighborhood design guidelines (University Community, Roosevelt, Pike-Pine, Ballard Municipal Center area, West Seattle Junction, Admiral and Green Lake, Northgate, South Lake Union, Wallingford, Othello and Greenwood/Phinney and other neighborhoods) new development must respond to both the *neighborhood* and the applicable *City-wide Design Guidelines.*

The Upper Queen Anne Hill, and Uptown Neighborhood Design Guidelines are the nineteenth and twentieth sets of neighborhood-specific design guidelines to be considered for adoption by the City Council. The design guidelines are a key implementation strategy of the respective Neighborhood Plans.

Residents, businesses, and property owners in the neighborhoods outlined a vision to guide the future development of the neighborhood as a mixed use, pedestrian environment, accessible by efficient transportation services. The neighborhoods anticipate that design guidelines will be an additional tool to enhance the neighborhoods' pedestrian scale and character.

ANALYSIS - SEPA

The initial disclosure of the potential impacts from this proposal was made in an environmental checklist prepared by DPD. The information in this checklist, review of the proposed text changes and the proposed design guidelines, and the experience of the lead agency with review of similar projects, form the basis for this analysis and decision.

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 will be reviewed under existing laws and substantial development projects will be subject to SEPA to address short-term impacts on the environment.

Long-term Impacts

Zoning in the Upper Queen Anne Hill, and Uptown neighborhoods establishes the rules that govern how much development can occur. Zoning defines the overall height, bulk and scale of development and the density of development whether office, retail or residential. Parking amounts, location, and access are set under zoning, as well. Design guidelines refine a building that might otherwise meet zoning standards and address, for instance, how the design of the building may influence the perception of the scale of the building or might suggest ways that a building improve its orientation to the street and the pedestrian who may be most affected by the scale of new development. The Design Guidelines may also recognize the character of a neighborhood and ensure that a new building's architecture or expression through materials, architectural features, or siting enhances the character of its surrounding, rather than imposing itself upon the surrounding area. Therefore, no significant adverse, long-term impacts are anticipated. Although no long-term impacts are anticipated, further discussion of various elements of the environment is warranted.

The Upper Queen Anne Hill neighborhood is designated Residential Urban Village under the City's Comprehensive Plan, and Uptown is designated Urban Center. Each is composed of a mix of moderate density residential, and neighborhood serving commercial uses. The zoning in the neighborhoods, is predominantly multifamily and neighborhood commercial. The zoning encourages a mix of housing types, with commercial development that serves the community in a pedestrian friendly environment. Current zoning maintains the historic mix of uses that have characterized the neighborhoods for many years. Street level retail sales and service uses are encouraged on commercial streets to provide a vital pedestrian street front and services to surrounding residences.

The proposed guidelines for the neighborhoods provide a mechanism for ensuring a new development's pedestrian orientation, recognizing the higher density and unique character and pedestrian orientation of much of the neighborhood. The guidelines augment the Citywide Design Guidelines for Site Planning, Height, Bulk and Scale, Architectural Elements and Materials, the Pedestrian Environment, and Landscaping. The intent of these guidelines is to identify important features and help reinforce the neighborhood character; improve the quality of new development; address the visual impacts of growth; indicate desirable and undesirable approaches to design; increase neighborhood awareness of design issues and options; and increase community involvement.

The proposed guidelines are not anticipated to result in adverse impacts on any element of the environment. The guidelines reflect the objectives of the respective Neighborhood Plans, and the City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan in encouraging and supporting mixed-use urban environments in which housing, commercial uses and essential neighborhood goods and services are located in close proximity to promote walking, bicycling and transit use. These guidelines encourage the pedestrian environment to be of high design quality, safe, accessible, and interactive. On the whole, this type of environment should encourage greater substitution of pedestrian trips for automobile trips, helping to limit transportation impacts of future development.

The proposed Neighborhood Design Guidelines, through provisions for an enhanced pedestrian environment, appropriately designed streetscape, and focus on the architectural expression and character of new development will have the affect of reducing impacts on the neighborhood and

promoting compatibility of new development with existing development where the neighborhood context is a positive expression of the neighborhood's vision. Where the existing context is inconsistent with the future vision of the neighborhood and with the City's Comprehensive Plan Urban Centers and Villages strategy, the proposed guidelines will aid in the positive evolution of the neighborhood as new development is proposed.

DECISION - SEPA

The decision was made after review by the responsible official on behalf of the lead agency or 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.

Signature M Podowski

Mike Podowski
Department of Planning and Development

Date 10-8-08