

CITY OF SEATTLE

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

SEPA Threshold Determination for the 2013 Comprehensive Plan Annual Amendments

- Project Sponsor:** City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development (DPD)
- Location of Proposal:** The amendments relate to the City's Comprehensive Plan, which pertains to the entire City.

BACKGROUND

Proposal Description

The proposal consists of various amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, as summarized below. DPD recommends approval of these amendments. The City Council will review the proposed amendments at a later date.

Amendment A: Central Area (23rd Avenue S. @ South Jackson-Union Residential Urban Village)

- New and revised policies (Attachment A-1)
- Recommended FLUM change (Attachment A-2)

This proposal changes the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) category of seven parcels (less than one acre of land) fronting on 23rd near Cherry Street. These parcels would remain within the Urban Village but their FLUM designation would change from Multi-family to Commercial /Mixed Use. In addition, goals and policies in the neighborhood plan for the "23rd Avenue S. @ S. Jackson-Union Residential Urban Village" are updated and edited. These modified policies, reflect DPD's recent community engagement process. The policies articulate new and refocused neighborhood priorities on topics such as economic development, community services for the youth and elderly, coordination with major public projects such as the light rail station at I-90, and preservation of the diverse, multi-cultural character of the neighborhood. (see Attachments A-1 and A-2 to the Checklist)

Amendment B: BINMIC

- Recommended FLUM change

This modification of the FLUM would remove less than one acre of land (three parcels) near the intersection of 16th and Bertona. (see Attachment C) This area is within the Ballard Interbay Northend Manufacturing / Industrial Center (BINMIC) and currently designated for Industrial use on the FLUM. The proposal would change the designation to Commercial/Mixed Use and

remove the land from the BINMIC, adjusting the boundaries accordingly. This change would not affect existing industrial uses nor create any nonconformities. (see Attachment B to the Checklist)

Amendment C:

- Urban Village Element: New policies regarding land use and zoning within Manufacturing / Industrial Centers

This proposal adds two new policies to the Urban Village Element. One policy identifies criteria relating to removal of land from the Duwamish and BINMIC Manufacturing/Industrial Centers. Another new policy would prohibit new Industrial Commercial zoning within those Centers. (See Attachment C to the Checklist)

Amendment D: Stadium District

- Land Use Element: New goals and policies for the Stadium District
- Recommended FLUM Change to create a category titled “Stadium District”

This proposal creates a new category on the FLUM map titled “Stadium District.” This would be a new designation in the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan with new associated goals and policies. Most of the land where this designation would be applied is currently in the Duwamish Manufacturing/Industrial Center, and the remainder is in the Downtown Urban Center. The new policies would recognize that the large spectator sports facilities in this area, among other characteristics, make it a unique place in the city. If adopted, two specific land uses, which are currently prohibited in Industrial zones, would be permitted in this area – lodging throughout the Stadium District, and residential in two limited locations within the district. (See Attachments D-1 and D-2 to the Checklist)

Amendment E: University Community Urban Center Plan

- Revised goals and policies

The proposal includes revised goals and policies for the University Community Urban Center. Largely, these are updates and edits to the goals or policies that either are duplicative of other adopted plans, regulations and policies or no longer express the community’s vision. (See Attachment E to the Checklist.)

ANALYSIS - OVERVIEW

The following describes the analysis conducted to determine if the proposal is likely to have a probable significant adverse environmental impact. This threshold determination is based on:

- the proposal, as described above and in memoranda;
- the information contained in the SEPA checklist;
- additional information, such as analyses prepared by City staff; and
- the experience of DPD analysts in reviewing similar documents and actions.

ELEMENTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Adoption of the proposed amendments would result in no immediate adverse short-term impacts because the adoption would be a non-project action. As a non-project action, the analysis generally evaluates the potential long-term and cumulative impacts that might conceivably result from any major difference in the rate or intensity of development with consequences for the natural or built environment. The analysis is organized to address these different types of impacts for all five amendments.

Amendment A: Central Area (23rd Avenue S. @ South Jackson-Union Residential Urban Village)

- New and revised policies (Attachment A-1)
- Recommended FLUM change (Attachment A-2)

Amendment B: BINMIC

- Recommended FLUM change

Amendment C: Urban Village and Land Use Elements:

- New policies regarding land use and zoning within Manufacturing / Industrial Centers

Amendment D: Stadium District

- Land Use Element: New goals and policies for the Stadium District (Attachment D-1)
- FLUM Change to create a category titled "Stadium District" (Attachment D-2)

Amendment E: University Community Urban Center Plan

- Revised goals and policies

Natural Environment (Checklist Section D): Impacts on air, water, energy, plants, animals, fish or marine life

Information from the checklist dated October 31, 2013 suggests that the proposed amendments will produce no probable significant adverse impacts on the natural environment. Questions 1 to 4 in Section D of the checklist ask for information about impacts on air, water, energy, plants, animals, fish or marine life. These questions also pertain to impacts on protected or sensitive environments; such as parks, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, threatened, or endangered species habitat, historic or cultural sites, wetlands, floodplains, or prime farmlands. Because no development or construction is proposed as part of this non-project action, the answers to these questions on the checklist do not disclose any non-speculative impacts on these aspects of the natural environment.

Discussion of Amendments B, C and E with respect to the Natural Environment

Impacts on the natural environment are especially unlikely to result from adopting Amendments B, C and E. These amendments propose only revisions to goals and policies or very minor adjustments to the FLUM.

Amendment B (BINMIC) proposes a small modification to the FLUM map, removing less than one acre of land (three parcels) and adjusting the BINMIC boundary accordingly. The FLUM designation of that area would be Commercial/Mixed Use if the amendment were adopted. The existing uses near this area are a large grocery store and an office building, neither of which are likely to be replaced by more traditional industrial uses, as the current designation contemplates. No impact on the natural environment is likely to occur from this change. No existing industrial use would be displaced by this changed designation nor any nonconforming use created.

Amendment B is based on a DPD community planning and sub-area study. The study and related community discussions address land use and transportation changes in a much larger area. Over time, as a result of actions taken based on the study or other factors, the zoning in this area may change. No rezone to this particular area is planned now. At the time a rezone is proposed, that proposal will be subject to more specific environmental review and any impacts on the natural environment will be appropriately addressed.

Amendment C (New policies about land use and zoning within M/I Centers)
Adoption of these proposed policies would not accelerate the rate or intensity of development and thus is unlikely to have any effect on the natural environment. One proposed policy would add criteria to the Urban Village Element restricting the future removal of lands from a designated Manufacturing/Industrial Center. A complementary policy in the Land Use Element would prohibit any new Industrial Commercial zoning in the Center.

Discussion of Amendment D (Stadium District) is deferred to the Built Environment section of this decision. Any impacts on the Natural Environment would only occur if development-related impacts on the Built Environment occurred in this highly-urbanized area.

Amendment E (University) proposes revisions to policies in the University Community Urban Center Plan. These revisions largely re-state, combine and update statements of community priorities. No increase in the rate, intensity or location of development is likely to occur if these revised policies are adopted and thus no impact on the natural environment is likely.

Discussion of Amendment A with respect to the Natural Environment

Amendment A's (Central Area) revisions to goals and policies, similar to those in Amendment E, would have no likely impact on the natural environment. These text changes are largely updates, clarifications and editing changes to the community priorities in this Residential Urban Village plan. The policies place some increased emphasis on community identity, community services, and encouraging economic development that can help in preserving the multi-cultural and diverse character of the neighborhood.

Amendment A also proposes a change to a FLUM category. Changing the FLUM category of this small area (less than one acre of developable land) from Multi-family to Commercial/Mixed Use would recognize long-standing and non-conforming commercial uses. Although no rezone is proposed, such a proposal would be subject to more specific environmental review. Any impacts on the natural environment will be appropriately addressed at that time.

Built Environment (Checklist Section D): Impacts on land use, transportation, public services and utilities

Discussion of Amendments A, B, C, D and E with respect to the Built Environment

Amendment A (Central Area), as described above, proposes text changes to the neighborhood plan's goals and policies. Largely updates and clarifications, the proposal also includes some increased emphasis on community identity, community services, and economic development. None of these changes to current policies are likely to impact the built environment.

Amendment A also proposes a FLUM change to a small area (less than one acre of developable land) that is currently categorized as Multi-Family. The new FLUM category for this area is Commercial/Mixed Use. No rezone is proposed at this time. Should such a proposal be made, a rezone from the current low-rise zoning to a commercial zone would likely be consistent with adopted land use plans and policies – e.g., the rezone criteria for commercial zones could be met.

Since there are long-standing and non-conforming commercial uses already active in this area, a rezone would not have undue impacts on land use, transportation, public services and utilities. Over time, some slight increase in the demand for public services and utilities is possible, if all of this small area were rezoned. However, this is unlikely to occur at a much faster rate or intensity than currently contemplated. Any such increase in demands would be analyzed at the project level and impacts would be mitigated as appropriate.

If adopted, Amendment B (BINMIC) will not create any nonconforming use or displace existing industrial uses. The Amendment is thus generally consistent with the adopted plans and policies for M/I Centers. Although changing the category on the FLUM would make a rezone to a commercial zone possible, any resulting new commercial uses would likely be similar to those nearby (grocery stores, office buildings) and thus are likely to be the same even if the FLUM category is not modified as proposed. Over time, the uses and intensity of development in this area may change in such a way to create potential conflicts with industrial uses in the greater area, but no such change to this particular area is planned now. Should such a change be proposed, appropriate environmental review would be conducted and any impacts on land use, transportation, public services and utilities will be appropriately addressed.

Amendment C (New policies about land use and zoning within M/I Centers)

This Amendment adds one new policy to the Urban Village Element (regarding criteria for removing parcels from an M/I Center) and one new policy to the Land Use Element (prohibiting future Industrial Commercial zoning in M/I Centers.) Although these policies, if adopted, would not have any direct impact on the built environment, they could reduce the potential rate or intensity of future development on parcels within the M/I Centers, thus maintaining the available supply of land for more traditional industrial uses and lessening market pressure for office and retail uses. These policies would be consistent with adopted plans and policies by protecting scarce and valuable industrial lands.

Amendment D (Stadium District) proposes a new category on the FLUM, titled “Stadium District.” Any impacts to the Natural Environment would only arise from impacts of development on the Built Environment – thus, the potential impacts of this amendment on both types of environment are analyzed here together.

As shown on Attachment D-2, this new area would be made up of lands removed from the M/I C (a total of 59 acres south of Royal Brougham Way and the WOSCA site) and removed from the Downtown Urban Center (36 acres north of Royal Brougham on the site of CenturyLink Field and over the railroad tracks.)

No rezones are known to be planned at this time, and significant further work will be required to identify the development standards and other zoning characteristics for this area before a rezone can be proposed. Adopting this amendment will thus not increase the expected rate or intensity of development in this area unless the new zoning standards are significantly different than current zoning, which is not known at this time.

Much of the current zoning in this area is Industrial Commercial, and that zoning permits spectator sports facilities. The IC zoning in this area provides a generous 3.0 Floor Area Ratio, and, with an exemption of retail uses from that FAR limit, already encourages substantial commercial development. Thus, creation of the category “Stadium District” on the FLUM is not likely, considered on its own, to significantly increase the rate of intensity of commercial development at a faster pace than could happen under the current zoning.

The most notable change that would be permitted by the proposed Stadium District goals and policies is a specific and limited change in the uses that are allowed. Currently, residential uses are not permitted in industrial zones, with very limited exceptions. The Stadium District proposal would allow residential uses, but only in two small areas – the northern half of the WOSCA site (approximately 2 acres) and a portion of the “Overtracks” site that is already zoned to allow lodging or residential uses as part of the Pioneer Square 85 – 150 foot zoning. In this portion of the Overtracks site, commercial uses are already entitled to a height of 85 feet. Residential uses are entitled to a height of 150 feet.

Lodging uses (which are categorized as a type of commercial use) would be newly allowed in the Stadium District. These uses are not allowed in the Duwamish M/I Center under current regulations, but they are currently allowed as conditional uses in other industrial zoned areas in the city. Allowing these in the Stadium District would not be a major change, but would be consistent with the type of commercial development typically associated with sports facilities and reasonably expected to occur.

It is possible, over time, after the zoning standards are defined, that rezones would be proposed in the Stadium District area that, if implemented, would result in a higher rate or intensity of development than is anticipated (for the portion taken from the Duwamish M/I Center) under current zoning. Should such proposals be made, there will be opportunities for environmental review of any direct impacts to the natural or built environment. In addition, several of the Stadium District Amendment proposals speak to the need to carefully monitor any

incompatibility between new development in the Stadium District and the existing and valuable industrial uses nearby, such as the Port of Seattle's Terminal 46. Thus, these policies, if taken together and adopted with those in Amendment C, can strike a policy balance that will help prevent any impacts to the built environment or inconsistency with adopted plans and policies.

Amendment E: (University Community Urban Center) proposes revisions to neighborhood plan goals and policies that are largely updates, clarifications and edits. If adopted, these revisions would not impact the built environment and are consistent with adopted plans and policies.

SUMMARY

Taking into account the overall potential for cumulative impacts arising from the proposed amendments, no significant adverse impacts on the natural environment or the built environment are anticipated nor is any inconsistency with adopted plans and policies identified. Some amendments would change the FLUM category and thus make rezone proposals possible, although not guaranteed. Future environmental reviews for those proposals would provide an opportunity to review any impacts at a finer level of detail.

DECISION

- [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.(2)(c).
- [] 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(2)(c).

Signature:



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Department of Planning and Development

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Nov 1, 2013

