



City of Seattle

Edward B. Murray, Mayor
Department of Planning & Development
D. M. Sugimura, Director

**CITY OF SEATTLE
ANALYSIS AND DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
SEPA Threshold Determination
for revisions to Commercial Code, Seattle Municipal Code 23.48**

- Project Sponsor:** City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development (DPD)
- Location of Proposal:** The proposed amendments would affect certain properties in Seattle Mixed (SM) zones.
- Scope of Proposal:** The proposal is a set of Land Use Code amendments for adjustment to Seattle Mixed zoning development standards, specifically the way in which standards are organized in order to clarify where they apply geographically and clarifications regarding the intent of existing standards in order to enable simplification of the development review process.

BACKGROUND

Proposal Description

Seattle Mixed (SM) currently includes unique development standards for the South Lake Union (SLU) Urban Center, the West Dravus component of Interbay, and the North Rainier Urban Village interspersed throughout all sections of chapter 23.48, making it difficult to discern general SM provisions applicable to all projects in an SM zone from neighborhood-specific requirements. Reorganization of the existing chapter through separation of general SM provisions that apply to all projects in an SM zone from those that are unique to specific neighborhoods will accomplish the following:

- Clarify which provisions apply to potential projects;
- Provide a framework to include neighborhood-specific provisions that advance a community's vision for new development to be in keeping with the desired urban form and character for the area; and
- Identify how and where incentives for additional FAR and height are available both now and in the future.

Specific proposed amendments include:

- Creation of a general development standard subchapter;

- Creation of subchapters that specify development standards that are unique to three different neighborhoods: South Lake Union, Dravus, North Rainier; and
- A new table of contents identifying the numbering for each new subchapter and its components.

This is a non-project action: there is no specific site or development proposal. The proposed changes would apply to Seattle Mixed zoned areas across the city. The provisions of the proposed legislation are not likely to increase or decrease the amount of development that is likely to occur for SM zoned properties.

Public Comment

Proposed changes to the Land Use Code require City Council approval; opportunity for public comment will occur during future Council hearings.

ANALYSIS - OVERVIEW

The following describes the analysis conducted to determine if the proposal is likely to result in *probable significant adverse environmental impacts*. This threshold determination is based on:

- the copy of the of the proposed text amendment, as well as the description above;
- the information contained in the *SEPA checklist* (dated December 12, 2014);
- an analysis of the changes prepared by City staff; and
- the experience of DPD analysts in reviewing similar documents and actions.

ELEMENTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Short Term Impacts

Adoption of the possible amendments would result in no immediate adverse short-term impacts because the adoption would be a non-project action. The proposed changes may augment the size or density of development projects but not likely increase the number of projects that would be built in the affected zones. The discussion below generally evaluates the potential long-term impacts that might result from differences in future development patterns due to the proposed amendments.

Long Term Impacts

A. Natural Environment

Earth, Air, Water, Plants/Animals/Fisheries, Energy, Natural Resources, Environmentally Sensitive Areas, Noise, Releases of Toxic or Hazardous Materials.

Seattle Mixed zones are generally urban areas dominated with impervious surfaces (paving, rooftops, etc) with little vegetation (except for street trees and required landscaping on residential and mixed use properties) and few animals except common birds, insects and urban mammals. Each neighborhood that will be affected by these code revisions has a network of sewer/stormdrain utility systems to handle much of its surface stormwater runoff. Despite daily

traffic congestion, air pollutant levels rarely if ever exceed significant levels, due to the progressively improving emissions-reduction performance of the region's automobiles.

Within the context of the affected areas, there is minimal potential for additional future development as the proposed changes will not result in significant adverse natural environmental impacts. By following the established rules that require proper design of sewers/stormdrains, construction practices that minimize grading, drainage and dust impacts, and other applicable City regulations, the potential for significant adverse environmental impacts will be limited. Future project-related SEPA review would also afford the opportunity to identify and mitigate any site-specific impacts as anticipated in SMC 25.05.330.

Energy-intensive uses are those that use computers and other technical equipment requiring large amounts of electrically-powered heating, air conditioning and ventilation. In comparison, residential energy demands are relatively low. There is minimal likelihood that additional energy use from future development (related to this proposal) would cause significant adverse impacts on energy systems.

B. Built Environment

Land and Shoreline Use, Height/Bulk/Scale, Housing, Historic Preservation.

Land Uses

The proposed changes would continue to allow and encourage land uses compatible with the existing Comprehensive Plan and neighborhood plans. The proposal is intended to implement Comprehensive Plan land use goals and policies for a broad range of mixed use development. The proposed changes include the establishment of a minimum floor area requirement equivalent to roughly 50 percent of the existing maximum floor area requirements for the zone as per the Minimum Floor Area legislation that took effect in October. The proposed changes will not allow for developments larger than what is already permitted in the zone. The indirect, long-term cumulative impacts on land uses would be positive as the proposed changes further the preferred land use pattern as expressed in the Comprehensive Plan and transportation plans. The proposed regulation would not directly impact the city's shorelines as SM zones are not located within these areas.

Height/Bulk/Scale

Future buildings would not be larger than the maximum of what is anticipated by the Comprehensive Plan and the zoning code. The city's Design Review guidelines also provide for examination of height, bulk and scale issues and the possibility of mitigating potential impacts.

Housing

Future buildings would not be larger than the maximum of what is anticipated by the Comprehensive Plan and the zoning code. The proposed changes would not likely alter the feasibility or design of housing. No significant adverse impacts are anticipated as a result of this legislation.

Historic Preservation

The proposal does not encourage demolition of a landmark structure and would not disproportionately burden property owners whose property includes these buildings.

Noise, Shadows on Open Spaces, Light & Glare, Environmental Health, Public View Protection

Future buildings would not be larger than the maximum of what is anticipated by the Comprehensive Plan and the zoning code. SEPA regulations would continue to allow analysis and potential mitigation of projects that generate noise, shadow, light and glare, and environmental health issues. SEPA regulations would continue to allow for the review and mitigation of significant intrusions into public views.

Transportation, Parking, Public Services and Utilities.

Transportation and Parking

The proposed changes would not likely result in direct impacts to the city's transportation network. Areas with SM zoning are primarily in Urban Centers and Urban Villages that have higher use of transit and bike ridership due to the high concentration of commercial development and related employment. Some areas with SM zones are in station overlay zones with access to light-rail transit.

The proposed amendments would prohibit all principal use parking within the South Lake Union Urban Center. This proposal would reinforce the existing maximum parking limit for commercial structures in the South Lake Union Neighborhood and is consistent with transportation mitigation strategies set out in the South Lake Union Height and Density Environmental Impact Study.

Public Services and Utilities

No potentially significant adverse impacts are anticipated as a consequence of the proposed changes. Future development would not be larger than the maximums anticipated by the Comprehensive Plan and zoning regulations. Any additional future development may contribute to overall cumulative increases in demand for public services and utilities. However, the proposed changes are not expected to generate significant adverse impacts as a result of additional amounts or locations of potential future growth.

DECISION -- SEPA

- 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).

RECOMMENDED CONDITONS--SEPA

None

Signature: On File Date: 12/17/14
Jim Holmes, Senior Urban Planner
Department of Planning and Development
Land Use Services