

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

Project Proposal: Amendments to the City of Seattle Land Use Code, Title 23, related to land use and zoning, allowing principal use parking lots as an interim use on eligible lots in all zones within the Station Area Overlay District and on lots occupied or owned by institutions within one-quarter mile of certain light rail stations, where principal use parking is not otherwise permitted, providing for waiver of development standards; amending Sections 23.42.040, 23.76.004, 23.76.006, and 23.76.032 of the Seattle Municipal Code.

Project Sponsor: City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development

Location of Proposal: The proposal is a non-project action, allowing interim parking in all zones within the Station Area Overlay District, and allowing interim parking on lots occupied or owned by institutions within one-quarter mile of certain light rail stations.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION

The proposal is a non-project action, allowing interim parking in all zones within the Station Area Overlay District and on lots occupied or owned by institutions within one quarter mile of certain light rail stations where these interim uses are not otherwise permitted, and providing for waiver of development standards.

The following approval is required:

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

SEPA DETERMINATION Exempt DNS MDNS EIS

DNS with conditions

DNS involving non-exempt grading or demolition or involving another agency with jurisdiction.

BACKGROUND

Proposal Description

The proposal would:

- Allow principal-use parking as an interim use on existing lots within the Station Area Overlay District in Southeast Seattle (North Beacon Hill, Mt. Baker, Columbia City, Othello, and Rainier Beach station areas) where such parking is not currently allowed;
- Allow principal-use parking on lots owned or occupied by institutions within one-quarter mile of these station areas;
- Allow such parking if a site has existing, legally established parking or has been cleared or otherwise prepared for construction as of June 1, 2010, providing that no existing principal structures may be demolished to facilitate establishment of interim principal use parking;
- Limit the number of parking spaces that may be established on a lot to 40;
- Limit interim principal use surface parking to property that is located outside of most types of Environmentally Critical Areas;
- Allow waiver of development standards for interim parking uses except: (1) surface parking lots would require at least a crushed rock surface or paving as needed to accommodate barrier-free parking; (2) exterior lighting shall be provided and shall be shielded and directed away from adjacent uses; (3) vehicle lights shall be shielded to minimize glare on nearby uses; (4) landscaping requirements for the zone in which the interim use is located will apply, or the Director of DPD may consider a proposal for temporary landscaping, in planter boxes or similar containers, as an alternative; and (5) other regulations, including Land Use Code development standards not specifically waived, would apply.
- Limit the term of interim use permits to a maximum of three years, with no renewal or extension option. The ability to apply for interim use permits would expire at the end of 2012.

Public Comment

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

ANALYSIS - SEPA

This proposal is an adoption of legislation and is defined as a non-project action. The disclosure of the potential impacts from this proposal was made in an environmental checklist submitted by the proponent, dated June 1, 2010. The information in the checklist, a copy of the proposed text changes, the Director's Report and Recommendation, and the experience of the lead agency with review of similar legislative actions form the basis for this analysis and decision.

This is a substantive change to the Land Use Code, to allow interim parking in all zones within the Station Area Overlay District and on lots occupied or owned by institutions within one quarter mile of certain light rail stations where such parking is not otherwise permitted, and to provide for waiver of certain development standards. This amendment may result in potential impacts and warrants further discussion.

ELEMENTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Natural Environment

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

The proposed changes would result in limited, if any, impacts to earth, air, water, plants/animals, fisheries, energy, natural resources, sensitive areas, noise, or releases of toxic/hazardous substances. Interim parking uses would not be allowed in most Environmentally Critical Areas, including riparian corridors, shoreline habitat, shoreline habitat buffer, wetlands, wetland buffers, steep slopes, and steep slope buffers. Interim parking in the Station Area Overlay District could be established on sites with existing, legally established parking, or on vacant lots suitable for parking. The interim parking uses would be authorized for a maximum of three years, and could not be renewed or extended. Since the amendments would apply to a variety of zones and sites, it is possible that elements of the natural environment on future sites could be impacted. However, given the proposed restrictions on which sites could be developed with interim uses and the temporary nature of these uses, it is expected that any such impacts would not be significant. Development of specific projects on individual sites is subject to the City's existing regulations, such as the Stormwater, Grading and Drainage Ordinance, the Environmentally Critical Areas Ordinance, and Noise Ordinance, and will be subject to environmental review (if they meet or exceed thresholds for environmental review).

Built Environment

Land & Shoreline Use, Height/Bulk/Scale

The intent of the proposal is to allow interim parking in all zones within the Station Area Overlay District and on lots occupied or owned by institutions within one quarter mile of certain light rail stations where such parking is not otherwise permitted, and to provide for waiver of development standards. Applications under these provisions would need to meet Land Use Code standards for the relevant zone, including regulations addressing height, bulk, and scale, unless such standards are waived or modified. Impacts to existing land uses will be limited, as no existing principal structures may be demolished to facilitate establishment of an interim parking lot use. The types of actions permitted through this text amendment, the temporary nature of the interim parking use, and applicable Code provisions are expected to limit any direct impacts of new uses relating to land and shoreline use or height, bulk, and scale. It is expected that any such impacts would not be significant. Development of specific projects on individual sites is subject to the City's existing regulations and will be subject to environmental review (if they meet or exceed thresholds for environmental review).

Transportation, Public Services and Utilities

Parking uses allowed on an interim basis may generate additional trips, including auto, transit, and non-motorized trips. In particular, traffic might increase through the allowance of interim principal-use parking within one-quarter mile of light rail transit stations (either within or outside of the Station Area

Overlay District). Such parking proximate to the light rail system could generate new auto traffic in the vicinity of a station, as well as new driveway trips at the specific principal-use parking locations. However, it is not expected that the additional traffic will be substantial, given the short-term nature of the allowed uses and the limit of 40 parking spaces per lot.

Whether allowing principal-use parking within one-quarter mile of light rail transit stations would have a substantial impact on the surrounding area depends on various factors. One is the likely demand that would be accommodated if such parking were provided. Currently, the large majority of on-street parking near stations is restricted, either with time restrictions or through residential parking zones, limiting non-residents to two-hour parking. One indication that unmet light rail parking demand may exist would be substantial amounts of on-street parking on streets just outside the restricted parking areas. Site visits to several station areas in February, 2010, found little evidence of such parking. In general, parking patterns on unrestricted blocks were very similar to parking patterns on adjacent or nearby restricted blocks, indicating that few light rail transit users appear to be parking beyond the edge of the restricted parking areas. The only notable exception occurred in the Rainier Beach Station area, where roughly 30 cars were parked on an unrestricted segment of Renton Avenue S immediately south of S Henderson Street; it is likely that many of these cars were parked there for proximate access to the Rainier Beach Station.

It is unknown how many off-street parking spaces would be made available to light rail transit users if this text amendment is adopted; such decisions would be made on a parcel-by-parcel basis by each property owner. Such parking, however, likely will need to be inexpensive to attract many light rail users, as ample free parking is available just over one-quarter mile from many stations. This may discourage some property owners from providing principal-use parking, particularly if the parking spaces would otherwise be used by customers or employees.

For sites that do provide principal-use parking, data from the Institute of Transportation Engineers Trip Generation (7th edition) can be used to estimate future traffic volumes. The most comparable use that provides peak hour trip rates is “park-and-ride lot with bus service”. AM peak hour rates from surveyed sites were 0.75 trips per parking space, with a PM peak hour rate of 0.62 trips per space. The number of potential spaces varies by station area, as noted in the SEPA checklist, from 390 (Columbia City) to 1,830 (Othello). However, not all of these spaces would be used for principal-use parking, because (a) a maximum of 40 spaces per lot can be used for interim principal-use parking; (b) site owners may opt to make available only a certain portion of their lots; and (c) the demand for such spaces is not likely to be substantial. The SEPA checklist notes that the number of sites that could establish new interim parking under this ordinance varies from nine sites near the Rainier Beach station to 15 near the Mt. Baker station. Given the parking cap of 40 spaces per site, the largest number of spaces that could be established near any one station would be 600, near the Mt. Baker station. Based on the peak hour rates noted above, this amount of parking would be expected to generate approximately 450 vehicle trips in the AM peak hour and approximately 372 in the PM peak hour.

It is very unlikely that this many trips will occur near any station, however, as the maximum of 40 spaces likely cannot be accommodated on every potential site. Additionally, as noted above, site owners may opt to not convert as many spaces to interim principal-use parking as could be established under this ordinance. Assuming that roughly 50% of the potential maximum spaces are established as principal-use parking, about 225 AM peak hour trips and 186 PM peak hour trips would be expected from the 15 sites near the Mt. Baker station. This amount of additional traffic, spread out over the

various parking sites, is not expected to have significant transportation impacts. Somewhat smaller traffic volumes would be expected in and around other station areas, also with non-significant impacts. Given the maximum of 40 parking spaces per site that could be used for interim principal-use parking, the peak trip volumes that would be expected from any one site would be 30 AM peak hour and 25 PM peak hour trips. These trip volumes are sufficiently low that they are unlikely to result in any substantial site-specific impacts.

Any impacts that do result from these text amendments would be relatively short-term, as permits authorizing these uses would be for no longer than three years, and the proposed legislation would expire at the end of 2012.

The proposed code amendments are not expected to change the potential demand for utilities. On interim surface parking lots, lighting will be regulated by specific height and spacing standards, and would be shielded and directed away from adjacent uses. No significant adverse lighting impacts are anticipated. A slight increase in demand for public services may occur, as parking in otherwise vacant lots could increase the likelihood of car prowls, leading to more calls to the police. Such an increase is more likely to occur in lots used only for parking under this ordinance, rather than in existing lots that are accessory to an active use. To some extent, car prowls are expected to be deterred both by the ordinance's lighting requirements and by the relatively small number of allowed spaces on a given lot, likely leading to greater visibility of each vehicle. This increase in demand on public services is not expected to be significant. Development of specific projects on individual sites is subject to the City's existing regulations and will be subject to environmental review (if they meet or exceed thresholds for environmental review). Overall, the code amendments are not likely to generate significant impacts on transportation, public services, and utilities systems.

Conclusion

The proposed code amendments to allow interim parking in all zones within the Station Area Overlay District and on lots occupied or owned by institutions within one quarter mile of certain light rail stations where these interim uses are not otherwise permitted, and provide for waiver of certain development standards, are unlikely to have substantial impacts. The parking use would be limited to three years and no more than 40 spaces per site, and would not be allowed in most Environmentally Critical Areas. Additionally, the legislation authorizing these uses would be in effect only through December 31, 2012. Existing regulations would apply after that date. No significant adverse impacts are expected from these proposed amendments.

DECISION - SEPA

This decision was made after review by the responsible official on behalf of the lead agency of a completed environmental checklist, code amendment, 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 requirement of the State Environmental Policy Act (RCW 43.21.C), including the requirement to inform the public of agency decisions pursuant to 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 CONDITIONS - SEPA

None.

Signature: _____ Date: _____
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Department of Planning and Development