

Frequently asked questions about Pedestrian Zones:

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What’s a Pedestrian Zone?

The pedestrian zone (P Zone) designation, also referred to as Pedestrian Retail Areas, is intended to “preserve or encourage intensely retail and pedestrian-oriented shopping districts where non-auto modes of transportation to and within the district are strongly favored.” Pedestrian zones are typically designated in areas already zoned Neighborhood Commercial (NC). The designation does not impact the development capacity of the area i.e. does not increase or decrease the permitted height or density for new development).

Existing Pedestrian Zone Development Standards	Proposed changes / New Development Standards
A limited menu of active uses must occupy 80% of the street-level façade, along a principal pedestrian street	Allow a broader range of uses at the street level to help building owners to be less susceptible to vacancies and provide a variety of shops and services
	Limit design review departures to help ensure that street-level spaces are designed for a variety of commercial uses and can transition over time
Drive-ways may not cross the sidewalk on a principal pedestrian street, unless it’s the only means of access	<i>No change proposed</i>

Parking areas must be located to the rear, or within the building	<i>No change proposed</i>
Parking requirements for required street-level uses are reduced or waived	Eliminate waivers to parking requirements for required street-level uses specific to pedestrian zones (rely on existing, base parking requirements)*
Businesses with drive-in lanes are prohibited	<i>No change proposed</i>
In a pedestrian zone that is within urban centers or villages, or Station Area Overlay Districts, require a minimum size (floor area ratio) for new development	<i>No change proposed</i>
	Require overhead weather protection for new development along a principal pedestrian street
	Require, in live-work units, that the work area is fronts the main street and extends at least 15 feet into the unit
	Clarify the transparency requirements to specify that transparent areas must allow views into and out of the structure

* Since parking waivers specific to Pedestrian zones were first adopted, the city has taken steps to implement a citywide approach to minimum parking requirements. Further, this project is the first time that the Pedestrian zone will be used extensively outside of urban centers and villages and outside areas with existing or planned frequent transit service.

Why is this zoning tool used in neighborhood commercial zones?

Allowing variety and flexibility in uses and densities is important in creating vibrant urban neighborhoods. Equally important is preserving and promoting pedestrian retail areas that serve the daily needs of neighborhood residents and businesses. The emphasis is on pedestrian-retail because no matter how you arrive to the area—walking, biking, transit, or cars — you are, at some point in the trip, a pedestrian.

Some types of commercial uses generate more pedestrian activity and interest than others. Businesses and services located on the ground floor that fulfill many residents’ daily needs attract pedestrian interest and activity — such as restaurants, parks, schools, grocery stores, and libraries. Areas where these businesses cluster allow

people to run errands without a car and play a key role in creating vibrant neighborhood business districts.

Ground floor pedestrian-oriented businesses also play a key role in generating natural public surveillance that can help reduce crime and improve one’s feeling of safety, contributing to a neighborhood that people want to live, work and play in. Regulating where and how parking is located and accessed creates a more interesting pedestrian environment and minimizes auto conflicts with pedestrian traffic.

What types of uses are allowed at the street level?

Uses that occupy the storefronts of new development along a street are among the most critical elements of a pedestrian-oriented business district. In a Pedestrian zone, ground floor space facing the main street of the business district must cater to pedestrians, with uses such as retail, medical offices and banks. Some uses that are otherwise allowed, such as residential and live-work units, are restricted to 20 percent of the building façade at the street level when facing a Principal Pedestrian Street. In addition, drive-in businesses are not allowed.

The intent is to prohibit uses at street-level that disrupt the retail character of the street, that discourage customers from walking from shop to shop and that may lead to car/pedestrian conflicts. The table below summarizes the uses that are currently permitted or prohibited at street-level along a Principal Pedestrian Street.

Street-level uses in Pedestrian zones

Required Uses at street level along a Principal Pedestrian Street		Prohibited Uses at street level along a Principal Pedestrian Street
General sales and services Major durables retail sales Eating and drinking Lodging Theaters & spectator sports Indoor sports and recreation Medical services Rail transit facilities Museum	Community club or centers Religious facility Library, Elementary or secondary school Parks and open space Arts facilities (in Pike/Pine) Automotive retail sales and service (in an existing structure in Pike/Pine)	Residential use and live-work (limited to 20% of frontage) Gas stations and other businesses with drive-in lanes (prohibited anywhere in a Pedestrian zone) Surface parking (prohibited as the principal use anywhere in a Pedestrian zone)

All neighborhood-commercial areas are intended to be pedestrian-oriented mixed-use commercial districts. However, the Pedestrian designation promotes the greatest level of pedestrian access to goods and services in a neighborhood by requiring a mix of active commercial uses along the main streets. Over the years the nature of the retail and service market has changed, with many retail needs being met by ecommerce, while other businesses, once considered less pedestrian-oriented, are now more attractive and desired within neighborhoods, such as small craft producers or store front-lawyers and architects.

As DPD engaged in conversations with the community about adding Pedestrian zones to neighborhood-business districts around the city, many people expressed support for requiring street-level commercial uses to provide goods and services to the neighborhood. Other people expressed concern that the existing mix of uses is too limited and may lead to vacant storefronts.

Some neighborhood business districts may take time to mature to the point that street-level uses can be sustained. When they do, however, demand can change and sometimes one or two new businesses can transform a small district. With that in mind, DPD reviewed the use regulations in Pedestrian zones and proposes to allow a broader range of uses. The table below outlines the proposed new uses to be added to the list of permitted uses at street level. These businesses would have to comply with the pedestrian-oriented development standards for any non-residential uses, such as transparency (windows) and height and depth provisions.

Proposed additions to street-level uses in Pedestrian zones

Additional Uses recommended at street-level	Rationale	Definition (SMC Ch. 23.84A – DEFINITIONS)
AGRICULTURAL USES		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Garden 	Parks and open space are already permitted in a Pedestrian zone. Outdoor community gardens can add similar vibrancy and opportunities for social interactions in a community.	"Community garden" means a use in which land managed by a public or nonprofit organization, or a group of individuals, is used to grow plants and harvest food or ornamental crops from them for donation or for use by those cultivating the land and their households.
COMMERCIAL USES		
Food processing and	Small food processing and craft uses often provide interesting	"Food processing and craft work" means a commercial use in which food items and craft

Additional Uses recommended at street-level	Rationale	Definition (SMC Ch. 23.84A – DEFINITIONS)
craft work	activity and jobs in a business district. In NC1-NC3 zones, these uses are limited to a maximum size of 10,000 – 25,000 square feet.	work are produced without the use of a mechanized assembly line and includes but is not limited to the following: 1. "Custom and craft work" 2. "Food processing"
Offices	Office uses have traditionally been thought of as less active at the street level. However, new storefront style office uses, such as small architecture firms and lawyers, provide services and activity that neighborhoods have requested. DPD proposes allowing office uses but with a limit on the size (limiting the width of the frontage along the main street) to ensure that larger, less active, office spaces do not dominate the street frontage.	"Office" means a commercial use that provides administrative or professional services to individuals, businesses, institutions and/or government agencies primarily by phone or mail, by going to the customer's home or place of business, or on the premises by appointment; or in which customers are limited to holders of business licenses, but not including facilities where medical services are provided or customer service offices. Examples of services provided include general contracting, janitorial and housecleaning services; legal, architectural, and data processing; broadcasting companies, administrative offices of businesses, unions or charitable organizations; and wholesalers and manufacturer's representatives' offices.
Sales and Services, heavy • Retail sales and services, non-household	As with other uses described above, this category can provide complimentary services to surrounding uses and, if all development standards are met, can operate similar to general retail sales and service uses.	"Retail sales and services, Non-household" means a heavy sales and service use in which goods and services are provided primarily for businesses, institutions and/or government agencies, rather than for households. Examples include but are not limited to business support services, and the sale of office or restaurant supplies. Examples of business support services include but are not limited to blueprint companies, medical laboratories, merchant banks, assaying services and microfilming and copying services.
INSTITUTION USES		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult care center • Childcare center¹ • College / University • Family support center • Institute for 	Several institutional uses are permitted in a Pedestrian zone today, including community centers, museums and libraries. Expanding this list will allow a variety of uses and activities to provide interest and draw	"Institution" means structure(s) and related grounds used by organizations for the provision of educational, medical, cultural, social and/or recreational services to the community..."

¹ In addition to the rationale described above, allowing childcare centers at the street level could be helpful for preschool providers as they form or expand to take advantage of the Seattle Preschool Program (if adopted by City Council and approved by voters).

Additional Uses recommended at street-level	Rationale	Definition (SMC Ch. 23.84A – DEFINITIONS)
advanced study • Private Club • School, vocational or fine arts • Arts facility	people to business districts and provide services to the neighborhood.	

How much parking is required for street level uses in a Pedestrian Zone?

The Land Use Code identifies the minimum number of parking spaces required based on the type and size of a use. In the 1980's parking waivers specific to areas in a Pedestrian zone were introduced in order to encourage businesses to locate in the area and facilitate business turn-over.

These waivers were introduced at a time when the citywide minimum parking requirements were higher and prior to changes to reduce or eliminate minimum parking requirements in urban centers, urban villages and light rail station areas.

2006 - Commercial Code (Neighborhood Business District Strategy) changes to parking:

- Reduction to minimum parking requirements throughout commercial areas.
- Minimum parking requirements were eliminated in urban centers and station areas.
- Parking waivers were introduced for all nonresidential uses.
- Parking requirements were waived up to 20 spaces for businesses locating in an existing business.

2012 - Additional changes to parking in the Commercial Code:

- Extending the no-minimum parking requirements to non-residential uses in urban villages where frequent transit service is available within a quarter mile.
- Eliminating minimum parking requirements for non-residential uses, except hospitals, in urban centers, and urban villages that have frequent transit service.

- Reducing minimum parking requirements up to 50 percent for development on properties outside of urban centers and villages where there is frequent transit service within a quarter mile.

DPD is proposing to eliminate parking waivers specific to Pedestrian zones.

Since parking waivers specific to Pedestrian zones were first adopted, the city has taken steps to implement a citywide approach to minimum parking requirements that implement Comprehensive Plan goals and the urban village strategy. Further, this project is the first time that the Pedestrian zone will be used extensively outside of urban centers and villages and outside areas with existing or planned frequent transit service where there may be a greater need for parking.

What are the Pedestrian Zone rules about parking and driveway placement?

In a Pedestrian Zone, surface parking is prohibited abutting the street lot line along a principal pedestrian street. Parking must be located behind or beneath the building.

Access to parking must be provided from the alley if the property has alley access. If access cannot be provide from an alley, driveway access must be from a street that is not a principal pedestrian street. If a property only has access from a principal pedestrian street, access is limited to a single two-way curb cut.

How much of the street level of a building can have blank walls?

In all neighborhood commercial zones, regardless of the pedestrian zone designation, windows are required at the street level for nonresidential uses, and there are limits on the amount of street level wall that be blank. This creates visual interest for pedestrian, more compelling commercial spaces to encourage business and safety as businesses are able to see what is happening on the street. Blank walls, walls without items such as windows or doors or other similar features, cannot exceed 20 feet in width.

What are some of the related City projects and policies?

Creating and preserving vibrant pedestrian-oriented districts requires a coordinated approach in both the public and private sectors. All of the components are important, which is why we partner with the community to develop and implement multiple tools that address different components. Additional policies and tools that the City uses include, but are not limited to:

- The [Design Review](#) process that considers multiple aspects of a building and its site, such as the relationship to the street and pedestrian access.
- Office of Economic Development's [Only in Seattle](#) initiative offering support to business districts
- The [Pedestrian Master Plan](#)
- The [Transit Master Plan](#)
- The [Bicycle Master Plan](#)
- Parking Management [resources](#)
- Other [Land Use Code requirements](#), including requirements applicable to all property in NC zones related to window and visibility requirements, blank walls, building location, parking, etc.