



August 2008

The latest news from Seattle's Department of Planning and Development
(formerly the Department of Design, Construction and Land Use)

**Vol. 6
No. 8**

Seattle Stormwater Code Revisions Underway

The Washington State Department of Ecology has mandated that Seattle adopt additional stormwater control regulations as a condition of the City's National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for its stormwater systems. To be compliant, the City's regulations must be equivalent to Ecology's Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington. To meet these requirements, Seattle is revising the existing Stormwater, Grading and Drainage Control Code (SMC 22.800-22.808) and its associated Directors' Rules. The Directors' Rules contain more detailed requirements specifying the methods to be used to comply with the code. These Directors' Rules will be administered jointly by DPD and Seattle Public Utilities (SPU).

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Monthly Highlights

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Earthquake Safety

Unreinforced masonry buildings may not be safe during an earthquake. The City is organizing a new committee to advise on possible new regulations to strengthen brick buildings.

See page 4 for details.

New Condo Conversion Ordinance

On August 1, 2008, a new ordinance will go into effect regulating condominium conversions; amending Seattle Municipal Code Section 22.206.160 and Chapter 22.903, and adding new sections.

There are three significant changes:

- Developers will be required to pay the equivalent of three month's rent to tenant households earning 80 percent or less of the area median income based on household size.
- Elderly (65 and older) and special needs tenants can qualify for up to an additional \$1,500.00 if they are otherwise eligible to receive relocation assistance (for additional relocation costs).

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**A
S
C** **SERVICE
ALERTS**
*Helping applicants navigate
the permit process*

**SDOT Temporarily
Extends Street
Improvement Plan
Reviews**

Due to an increased number of Street Improvement permit applications and a shortage of resources, formal circulation and design guidance review cycles may experience delays up to two weeks.

All new Street Improvement permit applications will be scheduled for an eight-week turnaround. We will return to our six-week turnaround cycle as soon as possible.

For more information:

Ginny Zimmerman
Plan Review Supervisor
SDOT Street Use
(206) 684-5241
ginny.zimmerman@seattle.gov

DPD's Applicant Services Center is located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Ave., (206) 684-8850.

SDOT Coaching Hours Recently Revised

As a reminder, new SDOT coaching hours went into effect July 7, 2008.

SDOT coaching counter hours:

M-F: 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

The SDOT coaching counter is located adjacent to the Land Use coaching counter, and across from the Microfilm area. SDOT will provide design and pre-application guidance as well as general coaching information.

To obtain SDOT permits, applicants must visit the Street Use counter. The Street Use counter is located on the 37th floor of the Seattle Municipal Tower (700 5th Avenue) until August 14.

The SDOT street use counter will not be available August 15 or 18 due to the move to the 23rd floor (see below).

For more information:

Ginny Zimmerman, Plan Review Supervisor
SDOT Street Use
(206) 684-5241
ginny.zimmerman@seattle.gov

SDOT Street Use is Moving to the 23rd Floor

Street Use will be moving from the 37th floor to the 23rd floor of the Seattle Municipal Tower (700 5th Avenue) in mid-August. The Street Use counter on the 37th floor will be closed Friday, August 15 and Monday, August 18. SDOT will reopen in the new office on the 23rd floor on Tuesday, August 19.

For more information:

Liz Sheldon, Right of Way Management
Acting Manager, SDOT Street Use
(206) 684-7945
elizabeth.sheldon@seattle.gov

DPD Permit Turnaround Times

DPD is committed to providing good customer service to its applicants. The permit turnaround data is updated monthly online and can be viewed at www.seattle.gov/dpd/resourcecenter (go to "Turnaround/Approval Times 2008").

Type of Permit	Goal	June 2008 Performance
Simple Building IP*	80% in 48 Hours	92.4%
Medium Construction IP	80% in 2 Weeks	81.9%
Complex Construction IP	70% in 6 Weeks	80.9%
Construction Issuance	90% in 120 Days	82.0%
Master Use Permit Decisions	80% in 120 Days	84.5%

*IP: Initial Plan Review by DPD staff



Summer Start

As a way of preparing homeowner applicants for future remodel projects, DPD will provide coaching advice and information in a series of stories in dpdINFO, from May – September 2008. The information in these stories will come directly from permit specialists, just like you would normally receive it, if you came into the ASC.

Interviewees:
Diane Freeman
and Jim Ach,
Permit Specialists



Do I Need a Permit to Build a Fence?

We often get asked the question, I want to build a fence; do I need a permit? There are two steps you need to take before starting your fence project. First, you need to make sure your desired fence location is on your property. This may seem an obvious step, but it is easy to confuse the location of property lines. Second, you need to factor in the height of the fence.

Fences do not count toward lot coverage and are allowed anywhere on the property. To find your property lines, do not rely on the location of the current fence. We recommend you get your property surveyed or visit the Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) Engineering Records Vault on the 47th floor of the Seattle Municipal Tower (700 5th Avenue). SPU will provide a base map that will help you locate your property line so the fence is not accidentally built in the public right-of-way. For more information, visit www.seattle.gov/util/Engineering/Records_Vault/Hours_&_Location/COS_001833.asp.



Fences do not count toward lot coverage and are also allowed anywhere on your property.

Fences can be built up to six feet high. Trellises and similar features may be up to eight feet high, but must be predominantly open. See the example in Client Assistance Memo 312, *Decks, Fences and Arbors for Single Family Homes in Seattle*. No portion of the fence can be over eight feet high (per SMC 23.44.014.D.10).

A fence that does not exceed eight feet in height and does not have masonry or concrete elements above six feet in height, is exempt from a building permit—provided it meets development standards (per SRC R105.24).

If the fence is on top of a retaining wall it can be no higher than 9.5 feet from the grade at the bottom of the retaining wall. But if you move the fence back 3.5 feet from the edge of the retaining wall, you will have to follow the standard height restrictions listed above.

Either side of the fence may face your property.

If your property is in an environmentally critical area or on a sloped lot, or if you're planning on building a masonry, brick or rock-wall fence, we recommend coming into the ASC and talking with a land use planner. Every project is site specific; in some cases constructing these types of fences leads to soil disturbance, which could trigger additional reviews.

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When building a fence, you should be aware of the design guidelines or covenants of your neighborhood. To learn more about neighborhood-specific design guidelines, visit www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Applicant_s_Toolbox/Design_Guidelines/default.asp.

Bulkheads and retaining walls have more stringent design standards, so if you are considering that type of project, come into the ASC and talk with a permit specialist. You can also contact the permit specialist phone line at (206) 684-8850 from 1:00 to 4:15 p.m., Monday to Friday.

Has this article been helpful? What do you want to hear about in our last "Summer Start" article? Let DPD know, by emailing Tyson Lin, Public Relations Specialist, at tyson.lin@seattle.gov.

This "Summer Start" story should not be used as a substitute for codes and regulations. The applicant is responsible for compliance with all code and rule requirements, whether or not described in this article. Permit requirements can vary greatly from site to site. The information provided is intended to be a general overview of the permitting process. Prior to proceeding with project design it is recommended that the applicant meet with a Permit Specialist in the ASC to discuss site specific condition information.

Unreinforced Masonry Building Committee

The City of Seattle is considering possible new requirements for strengthening the City's unreinforced masonry buildings to better withstand earthquakes. DPD is forming a committee of those who might be affected by the regulations to advise the City on policy questions related to the new requirements. We will ask the policy committee to help us answer such questions as: In what types of buildings should strengthening be required? How much time should be allowed for completing seismic retrofits? What incentives and assistance would be most beneficial?" We hope the committee will complete its recommendations in February 2009.

For more information about the committee or the project, please contact:

Maureen Traxler
(206) 233-3892, maureen.traxler@seattle.gov

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- Developers have new City reporting requirements—see 22.903.035.B. and 22.903.035. C. They are now required to give notice regarding payment of relocation assistance as well as distribute a relocation information packet. Additionally they are required to provide a report about the relocation to DPD no later than 180 days after the date of the original notice.

A change in state law, also effective on August 1, extends the conversion notice period from 90 days to 120 days. It was not necessary for the City to adopt this change, since it will be a state requirement.

Relocation assistance is only available to tenant households that do not elect to purchase their units. Relocation funds are paid directly to eligible tenant households by the developer. Developers pay 100 percent of the cost.

To read the ordinance, or for more information about tenant relocation when apartments are converted into condominiums, visit our website at www.seattle.gov/dpd/Publications/Landlord_Tenant/default.asp. Client Assistance Memo 602, *Condominium Conversion: A Guide for Tenants, Prospective Buyers, and Owners*, is being revised to reflect the changes in the new ordinance and will be available soon.

Questions regarding the new ordinance can be directed to:

Jim Metz
Housing Ordinance Supervisor
(206) 684-7979
jim.metz@seattle.gov

Don't forget to visit DPD on the web!

At www.seattle.gov/dpd, you can:

- Apply for an electrical permit
- Request an inspection
- Check the status of your permit
- Report a code violation
- Comment on land use actions
- Download codes, forms and publications
- Catch up on news & events
- Review properties using GIS mapping feature
- Follow progress on city planning projects
- And much, much more!

2006 Seattle Energy Code EnvStd Tool Training Offered

DPD is offering a new training session entitled *Nonresidential Envelope Compliance: Using the Updated Seattle EnvStd 2006 Software*. At this training, you will:

- Learn about changes in the software
- Review Seattle amendments incorporated into the 2006 version
- Find out about the program capabilities and limitations
- Discover the best way to input data, including the default assembly libraries
- Negotiate the evaluation of alternates through the tutorial and in-class exercises

The Seattle EnvStd 2006 software program may be used to demonstrate envelope compliance for nonresidential (other than Group R occupancy) buildings. You may want to consider this option for code compliance if the glazing area in your project exceeds 45 percent of the gross wall area (30 percent for electric resistance space heat) or if you want to trade between the heating (U-factor and R-value) and cooling (SHGC) requirements for the building envelope. Be aware that you'll need to improve the energy efficiency in some other area to make up for those areas that do not meet the prescriptive requirements.

Please RSVP by noon on September 2, 2008.

To RSVP, or for questions about the training, please contact:

Vicki Baucom
DPD Code Development Analyst
vicki.baucom@seattle.gov
(206) 233-2757

EnvStd Tool Training Session

When: September 5, 2008
 8:00 a.m. - noon

Where: Seattle Municipal Tower
 700 Fifth Avenue, 40th Floor
 Conference Room 4050

Training will be provided by John Arent, P.E., Architectural Energy Corporation

RSVPs are required. Training is free.

City Council to Act on Code Changes

Council is expected to act on proposed amendments to the Seattle Building and Residential codes in August. Interested parties may check the Council agenda by visiting the City Council web page: www.seattle.gov/council/com_assign.htm.

At press time, the City Council Planning, Land Use and Neighborhoods Committee was scheduled to be briefed, and possibly to vote, on the amendments on July 31. DPD expects the approved amendments to be effective by the end of September; the effective date is contingent on when the full Council votes on the amendments and when the Mayor signs the bills.

Many of the proposals mirror changes made by the State Building Code Council, and several provide clarification of existing language. Changes to live load requirements for decks and exterior balconies, and changes to clothes dryer exhaust duct protection

provide consistency with the current requirements in the building and mechanical codes. Other proposed amendments clarify the requirements for moisture protection of exterior walls and siding, and modify the structural independence requirements for townhouses.

DPD included some interpretations to further assist the public with design decisions. New *Seattle Building Code* amendments add a definition of "suite" for hospitals and add related interpretations; clarify requirements for elevator machine rooms; clarify sizing and power requirements for elevator cars; and modify Seattle requirements for single-exit buildings.

The full text of the draft amendments are posted on DPD's web site at www.seattle.gov/dpd/Codes/Technical_Codes/Code_Amendments/default.asp.



Whose Responsibility is That Overgrown Bush?

—Property owners are responsible for vegetation that grows into the right-of-way from their property.

The warm days following this year’s long, wet spring have been a tonic for trees and shrubs, and your thoughts may be turning to pruning. Well-maintained trees and plants increase property values and enhance our neighborhoods and our natural environment.

Seattle’s gardens and trees are beautiful, but sometimes their exuberance means overgrowth into the adjacent sidewalk, street or alley. When property is developed, owners dedicate part of the land as “public right-of-way” for streets, sidewalks, utilities and similar public uses. Many property owners are unaware that they are responsible for maintaining the planting strip or road shoulder that borders their property, in addition to the plants on their own property.

When you think about pruning, in addition to aesthetics and the health of the plants, think about whether low-growing vegetation may trip someone or force pedestrians off a sidewalk and into the street. Low-hanging tree limbs may bump someone’s head or scratch the roof of someone’s vehicle. Seattle law requires that vegetation, including bushes, trees, garden plants and weeds, be maintained to provide at least eight feet of clearance above a sidewalk and 14 feet above a roadway or alley. Safety at street intersections for both pedestrians and vehicle drivers also is a concern when foliage and vegetation block the view of an intersection or an important street sign. In most cases, vegetation that interferes with the view of an intersection from a distance of 30 feet needs to be trimmed. Failure to trim overgrown vegetation may result in a citation with a fine of \$150 for a first offense and \$500 for subsequent offenses.

Please note that pruning and removal of trees from planting strips requires permits obtained through the Seattle Department of Transportation’s Urban Forestry program. Permit applications may be found at www.seattle.gov/transportation/treepruning.htm or by calling (206) 684-TREE (8733). If your property is in an environmentally critical area, such as a wetland or a steep slope, special rules apply to tree pruning and vegetation maintenance, and a permit is required. See the information on DPD’s website at www.seattle.gov/dpd/Codes/Tree_Landscaping_Regulations/Overview/default.asp and in DPD Client Assistance Memo 242, *Tree Protection Regulations in Seattle*, for guidance.

We’re pleased to offer periodic tips on complying with Seattle’s many codes, courtesy of DPD’s Code Compliance staff, whose daily work fosters safety and quality of life.

Code Compliance staff enforce regulations that govern construction, land use, environmental protection, housing and building maintenance, just cause eviction, tenant relocation due to development activity, vacant buildings standards, vegetation overgrowth, and noise from construction and equipment.

For more information or to report a potential code violation, call (206) 615-0808 or visit the Code Compliance website at www.seattle.gov/dpd/Compliance.



This

Becomes

This



stormwater, *cont. from page 1*

Stormwater regulations are needed to protect people, property and the environment from damage that could be caused by rain water running off of our urban land surfaces. This stormwater runoff can cause flooding, landslides, erosion and other potential hazards. It can also carry pollutants into our creeks, lakes, bays and other receiving waters.

Seattle's stormwater code includes these requirements:

1. To practice stormwater pollution prevention during construction
2. To reduce the introduction of pollutants into stormwater runoff as close to the source as possible
3. To install flow control and/or stormwater treatment facilities, depending on the size and nature of a project

Seattle's stormwater regulations will consist of the Stormwater Code (SMC 22.800-22.808) and four Joint DPD/SPU Directors' Rules. The Directors' Rules provide specifications, guidelines, and additional information for meeting the requirements of the Stormwater Code. The four Directors' Rules are:

- Volume 1: The Source Control Technical Requirements Manual
- Volume 2: The Construction Stormwater Control Manual Technical Requirements Manual
- Volume 3: The Stormwater Flow Control and Water Quality Treatment Best Management Practices Technical Requirements Manual
- Volume 4: The Stormwater and Side Sewer Code Enforcement Manual

Seattle last updated its Stormwater Code in 2000 to comply with its 1995 NPDES Municipal Stormwater Permit. A new NPDES Municipal Stormwater permit was issued January 17, 2007, which requires our Stormwater Code to be changed to be equivalent to the Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington (Ecology 2005).

The Stormwater Code Revision Project is an SPU-led project, conducted in close collaboration with DPD, the Department of Transportation, and many other City departments and external stakeholders.

The objectives of the project are to produce a set of requirements and technical standards that:

- I. Protect – to the greatest extent practicable – life, property, and the environment from loss, injury and damage by pollution, erosion, flooding, land-

slides and other adverse impacts of urban stormwater runoff.

2. Meet the requirements of state and federal law, including the City's municipal stormwater NPDES permit.
3. Obtain a determination from the Washington State Department of Ecology that Seattle's Stormwater Code is equivalent to Ecology's Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington (February 2005).
4. Provide a clearly-written, cohesively-formatted set of requirements and standards that are consistent with other City regulations, policies and procedures.
5. Reflect the latest advances in management techniques designed to reduce the adverse impacts of stormwater runoff in an urban environment.

Major Changes

The Stormwater Code and its associated Joint SPU/DPD Directors' Rules have been completely rewritten in order to provide a more consistent and cohesive set of regulations, requirements, and standards. Of all the changes incorporated into the revised Stormwater Code and Directors' Rules, the three most significant involve:

1. Revising how the Stormwater Code is enforced
2. Incorporating requirements to install green infrastructure
3. Changing thresholds and performance standards for development projects.

The revised Stormwater Code will modify the existing code in order to meet the following goals:

1. Empower the Directors of SPU and DPD to issue penalties administratively as an additional option, while retaining current provisions regarding referral to Municipal Court in the Code.
2. Ensure the penalty is better matched to the nature of the violation and the actions by the responsible party. The assessed penalty, which can range from \$250 to \$5,000 per day of violation, will be determined by using a matrix-based set of criteria and guidelines.

Green infrastructure are best-management practices that use infiltration, evapotranspiration, or stormwater reuse to manage stormwater runoff. The revised

stormwater, *cont. from page 7*

Stormwater Code will contain design criteria for a suite of these stormwater flow control and treatment facilities, including bioretention, landscaping, permeable paving, rainwater harvesting, and vegetated roofs. Additionally, the revised Stormwater Code will require development projects in Seattle above a specific threshold to implement green infrastructure to the maximum extent feasible.

Significant changes in treatment and flow control are being proposed for all development projects, based on Ecology’s minimum requirements and Seattle’s unique development patterns. In general, thresholds and performance standards for flow control and treatment will be a function of:

1. The five project types defined in the revised Stormwater Code: Single-family residential project, Parcel-based project, Roadway project, Joint project, and Trail/Sidewalk project.
2. The requirement for a project to install a flow control facility, a water quality treatment facility, or both, depending on the drainage basin in which the project is located, as shown in the table below.

Receiving water/ system	Flow Control?	Treatment?
“Flow-critical receiving water”	√	√
Public combined sewer	√	
Designated receiving water		√

A project located in a creek basin (a “flow critical receiving water”) will be required to meet a flow control requirement based on a flow-duration standard, which is more protective than the flow requirements in the current Stormwater Code.

3. The amount of impervious surface on a site. As is true with the current Stormwater Code, the thresholds that trigger a requirement to install a flow control or treatment facility depend on the amount of new plus replaced impervious surface (for flow control) or the amount of new plus replaced pollution-generating impervious surface (for treatment). Among the changes to the existing thresholds are the following:

Treatment: The new threshold for treatment will be lowered from the current one acre to 5,000 square feet of new plus replaced pollution-generating impervious surface. This change is based on both Ecology’s minimum requirements and, for roadways, the need to reduce the amount of pollutants entering our receiving waters.

Flow Control: The new threshold triggering flow control for projects discharging to the public combined sewer will be raised from the current 2,000 square feet to 10,000 square feet of new plus replaced impervious surface. This change is intended to reduce the number of small flow control facilities.

The Draft Stormwater Code and associated Directors’ rules can be found online at: www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Stormwater_Grading_and_Drainage_Code_Revisions/Overview/default.asp.

The Stormwater Code revisions are anticipated to go into effect in early 2009.

For more information, about the Stormwater Code revisions, contact:

Robert Chandler
Project Manager
Seattle Public Utilities
(206) 386-4576
robert.chandler@seattle.gov

Stormwater Code Meeting

Side Sewer Contractors and General Contractors are encouraged to attend a meeting with SPU and DPD to discuss the major revisions to the Stormwater Code.

When: Thursday, August 14, 2008
 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.

Where: Seattle Municipal Tower, 40th Floor
 Room 4050/4060
 700 5th Avenue

Seattle Planning Commission Launches New Demography Program

The Seattle Planning Commission has launched a demographer position that promises to add significant value to Seattle's policymakers and residents. This position was created and approved by the Seattle City Council.

The demographer will begin work immediately on a series of "benchmarks" reports—data-rich overviews of Seattle on specific policy areas, such as affordability, livability and sustainability. The reports will monitor outcomes in the public sector, creating greater accountability by tracking Seattle's progress in achieving a variety of its public policy goals.

In addition, the demographer position will provide ongoing data collection and analysis for the Planning Commission, City Departments and the City Council on issues of vital importance to Seattle, including initiatives such as neighborhood plan updates and the Housing Levy renewal. This work will provide policymakers with the information they need to make informed choices on important policy decisions.

The demographer is a member of the Planning Commission staff and reports to its Director, Barbara Wilson.

"With the variety of historic challenges and opportunities facing Seattle, it is vital that our citizens and policymakers have complete and accurate information about the city they live in. This new position will help do just that," said Ms. Wilson. "Council exercised considerable foresight in creating this position, and we look forward to working with both the Council and the Executive to ensure this position creates the maximum amount of value for the City."

The commission is pleased to announce the position has been filled by Diana Canzoneri. During her ten years with the City of Bellevue, Ms. Canzoneri performed research and analysis to inform a variety of long-range planning efforts, including the City's Critical

Areas Update and Bel-Red Corridor Study. She also had lead responsibility for analyzing local demographic and economic trends, and produced reports on these trends to help inform programs and policies.

Ms. Canzoneri gained policy experience earlier in her career providing analysis and/or developing legislative proposals in three state capitols as well as recommending recycling policy and program options to municipal clients. Ms. Canzoneri received her Bachelor's Degree from Pomona College and completed a Master's Degree at the UW Evans School of Public Affairs.

Diana Canzoneri
Demographer & Senior Planning Analyst
(206) 615-1269
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Diana Canzone is the new demographer for the Seattle Planning Commission.

Reflections on My Time in Seattle

—by Casey Mills, former Planning Commission Analyst

I arrived in Seattle a couple years ago expecting to take it easy for a while. Having just completed a transportation plan in San Francisco's Tenderloin District, an often very fractured and vocal community, the "Seattle nice" way of doing things I'd heard so much about sounded like a welcome respite from the rough-and-tumble world of Bay Area politics. I expected the biggest problem I'd face would be where to get my coffee in the morning and deciding how far the Burke-Gilman Trail should be extended.

Instead, within my first six months I heard the term "crisis" applied to the city's transportation system, lack of affordable housing, industrial lands, neighborhood planning efforts, and design of multifamily housing.

So much for taking it easy.

Those six months taught me the first big lesson I learned about this city during my time here—that Seattle faces some extreme challenges that won't go away any time soon.

Take affordable housing. I left San Francisco convinced the sky-high prices plaguing low and moderate income folks in my former city would evaporate the minute I crossed the California border. It didn't take long to realize to what extent the issue plagued Seattle as well, and that without massive efforts things will only get worse.

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Or industrial lands. San Franciscans often lament the loss of their industrial lands and the blue collar jobs that accompanied them, most of which dried up years ago. But in Seattle, I assumed those lands and jobs represented an integral and highly valued aspect of the city's culture and economy. The orange cranes dominating the skyline as I first drove into the city seemed all the proof I needed. Yet after a few meetings with industrial business owners, I discovered that many of them must wage daily battle in a constant struggle against speculation and potential displacement.

And, of course, there's transportation. With the exception of BART, public transit in the Bay Area is notoriously awful, plagued by budget shortfalls causing a vicious cycle of price escalation and decreasing service. But as I watched the Viaduct issue tenaciously avoid resolution, and as I tried to ride my bike down consistently terrifying streets, and as I saw the most recent Sound Transit initiative—for better or worse—die an ugly death, I realized that maybe the Bay Area didn't have it all that bad.

Once my head stopped spinning from the sudden exposure to the myriad issues facing Seattle, however, I began to get acquainted with the flip side of these challenges. It was then I learned my second big lesson here—that Seattle possesses a remarkable group of citizens passionately engaged on civic issues and working hard every day of their lives to solve them. And, bizarrely enough, they do it free of charge.

While these folks exist throughout the city in a variety of roles—from the countless City-approved boards and commissions to advocacy groups like Futurewise to neighborhood groups like Sustainable Ballard—I had the pleasure of working with the Planning Commission. And it was this group that in many ways best represents for me all of Seattle's strongest attributes—its strong ethic of civic pride, engagement and responsibility.

I'd barely met everyone on the commission before they started rolling up their sleeves and diving head first into every major problem facing Seattle. They started with affordable housing, quickly producing a white paper on incentive zoning. Before the ink dried, they agreed to produce another major report on all of the potential strategies, including incentive zoning, to produce more affordable housing in Seattle. Titled the *Affordable Housing Action Agenda*, this report has already been used by a variety of policymakers, citizens and stakeholders as an incredible resource for ideas about how to tackle the

seemingly impossible issue of affordable housing.

While immersing itself deep in affordable housing, the commission also decided to conduct a major outreach effort amongst

industrial lands stakeholders, and follow it up with a comprehensive report on the City's industrial lands. Anyone even tangentially involved with this issue knows it to be an incredibly contentious one, yet commissioners remained vigilant and provided the independent, objective insight that they're known for, and produced *The Future of Seattle's Industrial Lands*. The report, as well as the commission, remains poised to continue to offer vital advice on this important issue.

As if all that wasn't enough, now, as I'm leaving, they plan on grabbing onto the third rail of Seattle politics—transportation—with both hands. They'll be taking up the issue of light rail station areas and how they can best serve the goals of the City. To me, it presents one of the most exciting opportunities for Seattle's future, and I can't wait to see what they come up with.

When I arrived here, if I had ended up somewhere else besides the commission, it's easy to imagine seeing the problems facing this city, promptly rolling up into a ball under my bed, and emerging months later with a commitment to change professions. But my luck brought me to a place that exemplified the two sides of Seattle—its tremendous challenges, and the willingness of its citizenry to meet those challenges.

Now I'm headed back to California, this time to Sacramento. Because I apparently possess no capacity for learning from my mistakes, I expected to take it easy there. But I recently started following California's state politics in the news, and it turns out that once again, I'll be facing a massive new set of problems. I only hope I'm again lucky enough to land in a place surrounded by so many great people willing to try and solve them.

Mills served as Planning Commission Analyst from 2006 to 2008. He has taken a position with ICF Jones and Stokes in Sacramento.



Casey Mills, former planning analyst.

Planning Commission Announces New Analyst

Katie Sheehy joined the Seattle Planning Commission staff on July 22, 2008 as the Planning Commission Analyst. Sheehy will be taking over for Casey Mills, who has recently relocated to Sacramento where he will join the staff of ICF Jones and Stokes (see article on page 9).

Sheehy has worked on urban planning and design issues in Seattle over most of the past decade. Her experience includes working on projects including conceptual design of light rail stations, inventory of neighborhood business districts, and research of historic properties. Most recently she worked for Hewitt Architects. Sheehy has previous experience working for the DPD Land Use Policy Team.

“Katie’s background working on land use, transportation, and affordable housing issues in both the public and private sectors will be a tremendous asset to the important work of the commission,” stated Barbara Wilson, Seattle Planning Commission Director.

Ms. Sheehy received Master’s Degrees in both public administration and urban planning from the University of Washington.

“I’m extremely excited about the position. Recently the Seattle Planning Commission tackled housing affordability and the future of Seattle’s industrial land,” stated Sheehy. “I look forward to working with the Planning Commission as they continue to provide their independent and objective expertise on other challenging and important issues facing Seattle.”

Katie Sheehy
Planning Commission Analyst
(206) 684-8694
katie.sheehy@seattle.gov



Katie Sheehy is the new Seattle Planning Commission planning analyst.

Peat Settlement-Prone Area Ordinance Adopted by Council

Council Bill 116248, creating a new Peat Settlement-prone Area designation in the Environmentally Critical Area (ECA) Code, has been passed by City Council and will become effective in late August.

The intent of the Peat Settlement-prone Area designation is to address impacts from new development in areas of peat-rich soils. Impacts include settlement on adjacent sites by lowering the groundwater table.

Within all peat settlement-prone areas, new development below the groundwater level will be prohibited except for specific features such as utility connections and required structural components including shallow foundations or pilings. This requirement may limit the construction of new basements in areas with high water tables.

Parking requirements may be reduced to help offset lost underground parking potential in some zones. Additionally, allowances for additional height or floor area may be granted in commercial zones where a

high groundwater table prevents underground parking. Temporary construction de-watering and land-disturbing activities may also be conditioned in these areas to prevent modification of the groundwater regime.

In some areas, the introduction of new impervious surfaces must be offset by an infiltration facility or soil amendment project to replace lost infiltration function. Replaced or reconfigured impervious surface area will not have to be offset.

More information is available at [/www.seattle.gov/DPD/Planning/Peat_Deposits/Overview/default.asp](http://www.seattle.gov/DPD/Planning/Peat_Deposits/Overview/default.asp). You can also contact:

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