

Frequently Asked Questions **About the Draft Land Use Code Recommendations** **May, 2008**

Where is South Downtown?

For the purposes of this project, "South Downtown" includes areas within Seattle's Downtown Urban Center, and areas of land at the northern edge of the Greater Duwamish Manufacturing/Industrial Center. Neighborhood areas include:

- Pioneer Square
- Chinatown/International District
- Little Saigon and other areas east of Interstate 5, north of South Royal Brougham Way and west of the Rainier Avenue South corridor
- Areas around the stadiums

Why planning in South Downtown now?

South Downtown's is located within the Downtown Urban Center at the hub of numerous modes of transportation. Yet, investment and growth in the area has lagged behind other Center City neighborhoods. Neighborhood plans and other voices in the community have called for adjustments to land use regulations to help revitalize South Downtown and address key challenges, including: cherished historic neighborhoods that struggle economically; concerns about public safety; buildings that need to be updated; and parcels that are vacant or underused, inviting uncivil behavior. Changes are needed in South Downtown. However, the area's transformation should balance local and regional uses and respect the rich culture and history of the area.

What are the goals and objectives of the Livable South Downtown Planning Study?

GOALS

- Stimulate housing and jobs through zoning and land use decisions
- Respect neighborhood character and neighborhood plans
- Promote an integrated mix of uses
- Support quality connections between neighborhoods and downtown as a whole
- Encourage economic vitality and environmental sustainability
- Accommodate regional services and ensure they align with the goals of the local community

OBJECTIVES

- Evaluate zoning opportunities and constraints in South Downtown, particularly in regard to achieving more housing and jobs
- Identify desired development direction
- Recommend and implement City land use actions to support an emerging residential/ employment community
- Consider opportunities for sustainable practices in future development
- Recommend public and private investments that would contribute to a well-balanced community in South Downtown

What are the elements of the Project?

The Livable South Downtown Planning Study includes several important elements. Detailed information about the project, including study results for numerous topics affecting South Downtown, can be found at www.seattle.gov/DPD/Planning/South_Downtown. Key project elements include:

- 1) Community Involvement. The project included extensive outreach to community organizations and individuals, four community-wide meetings, and fourteen meetings of the 25-members Livable South Downtown advisory group. All meetings were open to the public.
- 2) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) analysis. An extensive scoping process was conducted in early/mid 2006. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement was released in late 2007. The Final EIS will be released on May 29, 2008.
- 3) Land Use Study. A preliminary Phase I Staff Report was published in March 2006. The Draft Recommendations Report was published in May 2008. A final community open house with information about the draft recommendations is scheduled for June 3, 2008 in City Hall. Public commentary is requested on the draft recommendations until June 30, 2008.
- 4) Legislative amendments. Recommended Land Use Code amendments, including rezones, are anticipated to be presented to the Seattle City Council later in 2008.

What are the DRAFT recommendations?

DPD is proposing to update Land Use Code regulations in South Downtown to meet neighborhood plan objectives and to advance the City's goals of locating residential and workforce density near transportation infrastructure and other amenities.

Key elements of draft Land Use Code recommendations include:

- Rezone decisions (changing zoning on land from one designation to another)
- Amendments/adjustments to existing zone standards
- Introduction of land use programs to support community goals in South Downtown including:
 - A new incentive zoning program to ensure the provision of affordable housing and other public amenities
 - South Downtown Historic TDR
 - Potential amendment to affordable housing TDR
 - Sustainability-related standards

In addition, the Livable South Downtown planning project has undertaken study of economic conditions and urban design evaluation of areas within South Downtown. These studies may inform future policy decisions by the City.

Is more residential density planned?

A key goal of the Pioneer Square and Chinatown/I.D. neighborhood plans is increase the number of residents in South Downtown. The Draft EIS analyzed potential increases in residents consistent with regional growth projections for the South Downtown area. In general the draft recommendations support opportunities and incentives for increased residential density within and around core historic/ neighborhood commercial areas including:

- Increased zoned density and height for infill development for residents located above ground floor retail in Pioneer Square and at the edges of the Chinatown/International District historic core. Residential densities are also anticipated above active street-front uses in Little Saigon.
- Increased residential density in tall buildings located in Japantown in the northern Chinatown/I.D. neighborhood and on the Stadium North Lot

How do the draft recommendations address workforce/ commercial density?

Draft recommendations suggest increases to potential workforce density at the edges of South Downtown, near regional transit hubs, and where physical conditions or adjacent uses would make residential development challenging. Increases for height and density for commercial and light industrial uses include:

- The First Avenue South corridor immediately east of the Port of Seattle Terminal 46;
- The area south of Chinatown/I.D. and abutting the Interstate 90 ramps;
- The area over the railroad tracks south of King Street Station and east of Qwest Field.

Will historic and cultural resources be protected?

South Downtown is known for its rich history and cultural character. The historic preservation districts, boards and guidelines are long-established City policies and programs that will continue in the Pioneer Square and Chinatown/International District neighborhoods. Recommended Land Use Code changes will avoid negative effects on sensitive historic resources, and will support future development that is compatible with the character of surrounding neighborhoods. Recommendations will also encourage reuse and rehabilitation of existing structures, some of which are unoccupied and need repair. Draft recommendations include:

- A new South Downtown Historic TDR program to provide resources for the rehabilitation of buildings that are historic-contributing per the National Register Historic Districts.
- Zoning approaches that retain zoned heights of historic-contributing buildings in both Chinatown/I.D. and Pioneer Square. Retention of zoned density reduces potential economic pressure to demolish historic resources, and ensures appropriate scale of nearby development.
- Retention of existing review board processes and Code provisions

What does the proposal do to ensure affordable housing resources will exist in South Downtown?

According to a detailed survey conducted by the Seattle Office of Housing with input from members of the South Downtown community, 77% of existing residential units in South Downtown are affordable to low income households (Defined as household income at or below 80% area median household income). Many of those units will remain affordable for a period of time per regulatory contract. However, some units could be converted to market rate units, and further demand for affordable units is anticipated throughout the Downtown area.

Recommended Land Use Code amendments address the need for future affordable housing in through:

- Provision of housing close to transit, employment, goods and services;
- Introduction of an incentive zoning program to encourage the development of affordable housing and other public amenities in exchange for additional height and floor area;
- Leveraging the incentive zoning program with other programs, including the property tax exemptions through Seattle Homes Within Reach;
- A strategy of retaining existing heights and density that applies to most existing affordable housing units, helping to avoid economic pressure to convert affordable units to market rate housing;
- Proposed amendments to encourage use of Affordable Housing TDR In South Downtown; and
- Further planning for housing affordability in South Downtown to be conducted by the Office of Housing in 2008.

Do the draft recommendations address the open space needs in South Downtown?

Planning for public realm improvements continues throughout all of the Downtown Urban Center as part of the Mayor's Center City Strategy. Proposed Land Use Code amendments will result in the provision of new public spaces in South Downtown through the following means:

- The incentive zoning program is anticipated to direct resources toward the provision of open spaces associated with new development.
- Designation of green streets proposed in key areas of South Downtown. Green streets are park-like public rights of way that serve pedestrians and vehicles, and can be developed with a combination of City and private funds. The Livable South Downtown project recommends City funding for the design of several green streets, with community participation, for 2009.
- An increment of additional height is proposed for Little Saigon only with the provision of ground-level through-block open space. A separate study of open space and urban design in this area can be found on the project web site.
- The Seattle Green Factor will ensure investment in landscaping and vegetation to help improve the public realm experience in South Downtown and provide environmental benefits.

Does the proposal address small business areas in South Downtown addressed?

Neighborhood commercial areas in Pioneer Square, Chinatown/I.D. and Little Saigon are central features of life in South Downtown. These areas will be protected and supported through:

- Introduction of provisions that require active pedestrian-oriented street-level uses in Little Saigon, and retention of similar provisions in Pioneer Square and Chinatown/I.D.;
- Land Use Code provisions that limit the overall size of businesses in sensitive small business areas while allowing larger businesses outside existing small-business centers;
- Requirements for building scale and designs consistent with neighborhood-scale mixed use areas, such as upper-level setbacks, required street-level retail or residential entrances, limits on blank walls, and other provisions;
- Provisions that offer incentives to locate residential units in upper floors of buildings in- and around small business areas to provide a round-the-clock population and customers for local services.

What are the environmental benefits of the proposal?

Many of the proposed draft recommendations are consistent with the City's goal to reduce its carbon footprint:

- Encouraging growth near services and transit, thereby reducing automobile dependency and reducing development pressures on fragile natural environments outside of the Downtown Urban Center;
- Incorporation of green building practices;
- Emphasizing water quality benefits of landscaping through the introduction of the Seattle Green Factor in South Downtown;
- LEED performance required of all larger development projects;
- Energy planning required of the largest development projects in South Downtown.

Do the recommendations address proposed development projects in the area?

Several large projects are in different phases of consideration in the South Downtown area. In general, the draft land use recommendations accommodate these projects and suggest standards that will support their integration with the surrounding community. It is important to note the complicated process involved in moving a project from an initial vision through construction. The proposed recommendations acknowledge that many projects change significantly throughout the design and permitting process, and some are never completed. Zoning for areas in which major construction is proposed must ensure appropriate parameters for design, uses, building heights and scale of development for a range of future development concepts.

Do the draft recommendations address the needs of Seattle's Industrial base?

Draft recommendations retain the boundaries of the Greater Duwamish Manufacturing Industrial Center (MIC). Areas within the Greater Duwamish MIC will retain an industrial zone designation, and no residential uses will be allowed in these areas.

It is significant to note that freight mobility patterns have changed significantly over the past decade, particularly with the introduction of improvements to State Route 519, which directs trucks over dedicated ramps between Interstate 5 and Fourth- and First Avenues South. Draft recommendations are intended to avoid potential conflicts with freight mobility needs. For example, no zoning changes are proposed south of South Royal Brougham Way—a transportation corridor that provides a critical link in Seattle freight network both north-south and east-west. In the First Avenue South vicinity, no increases to density are proposed adjacent to South Royal Brougham Way in order to minimize potential conflicts between passenger vehicles and trucks. A detailed discussion of transportation issues can be found in the Livable South Downtown EIS.

How does the Livable South Downtown Planning Study address the stadiums?

Qwest and Safeco Fields are large entertainment venues that influence the region's economy and infrastructure, and impact local neighborhood areas. Representatives of both facilities served on the Livable South Downtown advisory group. No changes are proposed to zoning on the sites of the stadiums, and the existing Stadium Transition Area Overlay zone is proposed to remain. Draft recommendations for areas in the vicinity of the stadiums are intended to encourage street-level uses and physical amenities that will serve event-goers and integrate the stadiums with the surrounding community.

Increases in zoned density and height are proposed in areas west and northeast of the stadiums. Land use regulations will help invigorate the stadium area with safer and attractive streetscapes, open spaces, restaurants and retail that will serve stadium event-goers. It is anticipated that future development in these areas will invigorate the neighborhoods around the stadiums with a round-the-clock presence of residents and workers.

In response to stadium requests, the Livable South Downtown Planning Study included evaluation of two issues of interest by the stadiums. The Environmental Impact Statement evaluated stadium event-related traffic scenarios in addition to the EIS evaluation of transportation and traffic impacts generally. Additionally, images of potential impacts to views from areas within the stadiums will be published online as requested by the stadiums. These images were not included in the Environmental Impact Statement as views from properties such as the stadiums are not identified as being protected by the City's SEPA policies.

Proposed heights within the historic districts are minimal. Heights in the area around the historic districts will bring more people into the area on a daily basis to balance the intermittent influx of people attending stadium events. This is a priority of Pioneer Square and Chinatown/International District.

No proposed heights anywhere in South Downtown will meet or exceed the heights of the stadiums. Heights immediately west of the stadiums will remain at 120'.

Views from Safeco Field will not change significantly because heights around that stadium will not change. Heights to the northwest--on the southern portion of the WOSCA site--will increase by 20' and a view corridor to the northwest will remain.

Views from Qwest Field will change. However, zoning contemplates the retention of view corridors including spaces between buildings to the west. Views of the cityscape could change, but people will continue to enjoy views of the King Street Tower clock tower and other iconic features.