



NORTHGATE URBAN CENTER
LEGISLATIVE REZONE PROPOSAL
APRIL 2008

Q1: What is the Northgate Urban Center Rezone proposal?

A: The City is proposing to change zoning on up to 98 acres of land in the Northgate Urban Center in the City of Seattle. The rezone would allow more compact and pedestrian friendly residential and commercial land uses. Related to this proposal, the City will also propose that developers provide public benefits in the Northgate Urban Center in exchange for this significant increase in development capacity. These public benefits prioritize affordable housing but under limited circumstances, might also include parks, open space, transportation, and/or streetscape improvements.

Q2: What are the goals for this action?

A: In December 2006, the City convened a design workshop with the Northgate community to discuss the next phase of revitalization in the Northgate neighborhood. At the workshop, participants supported a legislative rezone that would focus redevelopment efforts in the commercial core of the Northgate Urban Center – described generally as north of the Mall and along Northgate Way. Subsequently in April 2007, the Northgate Stakeholder Group sent a formal advice memo to the Mayor and City Council to move forward with a rezone proposal. The community's overarching goal is to continue implementing the Northgate Comprehensive Plan vision of "transform[ing] an auto-oriented landscape to a pedestrian-friendly destination with densities to support transit." During the last several years, the City's revitalization efforts have resulted in new jobs, new housing, more goods and services and millions of dollars in public investments - all within walking distance of the Northgate Transit Center. The legislative rezone proposal is another tool for achieving these results and realizing the Urban Center vision in the commercial core of the Northgate Urban Center.

Q3: If current zoning allows for more housing and job growth at Northgate, then why is the City proposing this rezone?

A: The overall goal of Seattle's Comprehensive Plan and the State Growth Management Act is to focus the growth in Seattle and the Puget Sound region in a

way that limits sprawl and fosters walkability, environmental stewardship and stronger communities. Seattle's Urban Centers are designated to be the densest neighborhoods in the city. While the current zoning in the Northgate Urban Center will accommodate the housing and job growth targets in the Comprehensive Plan, the actual growth in Northgate has lagged until recently. The rezone proposal is intended to accelerate and focus the development of new housing and mixed-use development in the commercial core of the Northgate Urban Center, generally along Northgate Way - the major transportation corridor. The proposal is also intended to concentrate new jobs and housing adjacent to the City's major public investment in the future 3.73 acre Northgate Urban Center Park (located at NE 112th Street & 5th Ave NE) to create a vibrant, walkable neighborhood near shopping, jobs, parks, library, community center and the Northgate Transit Center.

Q4: How is the City ensuring that Northgate will continue to be a livable neighborhood?

A: Consistent with the City's goals for providing public amenities in urban centers, many important public improvements have been completed and are being planned that will ensure the livability of the Northgate Urban Center as it grows. The new Civic Center with the Northgate Community Center, Library and 1.6 acre Park was completed in June 2006 along with pedestrian improvements along 5th Ave NE. The Maple Leaf Community Garden was also completed in 2006. The Thornton Creek Water Quality Channel will preserve 2.7 acres of open space, provide public access, and enhance water quality in Thornton Creek augmenting the open space preserved along the Creek and its tributaries. The City's Department of Parks and Recreation has secured a 3.73 acre property at NE 112th and 5th Ave NE for a future park at the center of the Northgate commercial core. The Parks Department has formed a "Public Advisory Team" to work with the park planners and the landscape design team to plan the future park.

Addressing transportation issues has also been at the center of planning efforts for Northgate. The Coordinated Transportation Investment Plan (CTIP, 2006) proposes and prioritizes solutions for current and projected traffic issues to move people safely and efficiently, reduce drive-alone travel, support housing and economic development, and protect Northgate's neighborhoods. At the same time, regional transit providers will continue to provide service to the Northgate Transit Center, one of the largest transit hubs in the region. In addition, Sound Transit is expected to extend light rail and build a station at the Northgate Transit Center in 2020 with voter approval.

Q5: What is an EIS?

A: An EIS (environmental impact statement) is a document that is required under the State Environmental Policy Act when the lead agency -- in this case, the City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development -- determines a proposed action is likely to have significant adverse environmental impacts. The EIS provides the public an opportunity to review and comment on the discussion of significant environmental impacts, reasonable alternatives, and mitigation measures that would avoid or minimize adverse impacts. During the public comment period on the draft EIS, the public, government agencies and tribes can comment on the alternatives, analysis and conclusions. These comments will help shape the City's final EIS and inform the City's decision on the proposal.

Q6: What alternatives have been studied in the EIS?

A: Three alternatives are evaluated in the Northgate Urban Center Rezone draft EIS. Under the "*No Action*" alternative, existing zoning would remain and no action would be taken. In general, the "*Broad Rezone*" alternative increases the height by one increment and modifies the zoning from multi-family to commercial over almost the entire study area. Some parcels are increased more than one increment -- up to a height of 125 feet. The draft EIS studies the possible impacts of two development scenarios within the Broad Rezone alternative -- 1) the "commercial focus" scenario assumes that most new development would be commercial, while 2) the "residential focus" scenario assumes that most new development would be residential. Under the "*Focused Rezone*" alternative, height would still be increased and the type of zoning modified but in a more targeted and smaller geographical area. None of the alternatives is "preferred" or "proposed" at this time but are intended to represent the high impact and low impact alternatives.

Q7: How will future development, allowed under the rezone proposal, impact traffic?

A: Northgate Way is the major east-west arterial through the Northgate Urban Center, connecting people to regional destinations like I-5, Northgate Mall, the Northgate Transit Center and nearby civic, retail, office and medical facilities. The City's priorities are to reduce drive-alone travel, facilitate the movement of transit, make Northgate safer for pedestrians and cyclists, and reduce vehicle collisions. The City's Northgate Coordinated Transportation Investment Plan (CTIP, 2006) identifies specific transportation priorities to further these goals. The CTIP examines existing conditions, forecasts changes in traffic levels over the next thirty years, and prioritizes projects over that time period. These projects will maintain and improve traffic infrastructure as growth occurs in Northgate. Some of the alternatives studied in the draft EIS have impacts at specific intersections

that require additional traffic mitigation beyond the CTIP projects. These mitigations are proposed in the draft EIS.

Q8: Will developers be required to pay for transportation improvements?

A: Yes. The traffic impacts of each new development will be analyzed through the City's SEPA review process and specific traffic improvement projects will be identified as mitigation measures. Developers will be required to pay their proportional share of these improvements or pay into a fund for completing area-wide improvements. The improvements or payments will depend to some extent upon the number of housing units and/or the amount of new commercial square footage in the project. Under SEPA, developers are required to pay for their share of improvements that mitigate the impact of their development, but not to address existing problems.

Q9: What is the schedule for completing CTIP improvements?

A: The CTIP is a long range transportation investment plan with full implementation anticipated by 2030. The majority of CTIP projects will be identified in the City's 6-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The CIP is a budget document that is updated each year to show the City's planned capital spending at the project level. Projects appear in the CIP as individual and location-specific or as part of an annual program such as New Traffic Signals, Sidewalks or Traffic Calming. For these programs, funds are allocated on an annual basis; and CTIP projects must compete for funding against other transportation priorities city-wide. The actual schedule for funding these improvements will depend on the location and timing of redevelopment on private property and the City's annual budget process for funding capital improvement projects.

Q10: What impact will new development have on affordable housing in Northgate?

A: The Incentive Zoning proposal, which is a related action to the proposed Northgate Urban Center Rezone, is intended to provide public benefits in exchange for significant new development capacity. Under the legislative program being considered, developers will continue to be able to develop their property under the current zoning. If they choose to take advantage of the rezone's increased development potential, then they will be responsible for providing a public benefit in the form of affordable housing and other potential benefits. Under the program, housing would be affordable to moderate wage workers for a minimum of 50 years. The program may also allow a portion of the fees collected through the proposed Incentive Zoning program to be spent on other community improvements, such as construction of the future Northgate Park.

Q11: Are any single family homes impacted by the rezone proposal?

A: The rezone proposal does not change any single family zones. However, there may be some single family homes in the study area where the current underlying zone is multi-family residential. These zones may be impacted by the proposal.

Q12: What requirements are in place to protect Thornton Creek during construction of future development projects in the Northgate Urban Center?

A: The City's SEPA review of specific projects will analyze the construction and operational impacts of the projects on the surrounding environment. Seattle's Storm water, Grading and Drainage Code requires that contractors employ best management practices during construction to protect water quality entering the drainage system, which includes streams that flow into Thornton Creek. Each contractor is required to provide a temporary erosion and sedimentation control plan to the City for approval prior to commencing construction. In addition, Seattle's critical area regulations require buffers around streams and wetlands where no disturbance is allowed, which provide additional protection to surface water. In addition to these existing required protections, specific project-based mitigations may also be required.

Q13: Will the City choose one of the alternatives in the draft EIS as the preferred alternative?

A: Not necessarily. The City will use the information in the draft EIS, along with public and agency comments, to develop the final EIS which may include a preferred alternative that incorporates features from the alternatives studied in the draft EIS. This will comprise a formal proposal from the Mayor to the City Council for formal action.

Q14: What is the timeline for the EIS?

A: The draft EIS will be published on May 1. The public will have 45 days to comment on the draft EIS. During this comment period, a public hearing will be held. The Public hearing is scheduled for May 28 in the Multipurpose Room at Northgate Community Center, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. The Community Center is located at 10510 Fifth Ave. NE. The City will take public comment into account in completing a the Final EIS which will be published sometime in the fourth quarter of 2008. The Final EIS and rezone legislation will be introduced to City Council for consideration shortly after that and the

City Council will conduct its own process for taking comments and reviewing the proposal.

Q15: How can I get involved?

A: The public is encouraged to comment on the draft EIS during a 30-day comment period from the date of publication. The Department of Planning and Development (DPD) has published a notice of the draft EIS in the City's official newspaper of record (the *Daily Journal of Commerce*) as well as in the *Northgate Herald Outlook*. Copies of the draft EIS are available at the Northgate branch library, the Central Library and at DPD's offices downtown (700 5th Avenue, 20th Floor). A limited number of complimentary copies of the draft EIS may be obtained from the DPD Public Resource Center while the supply lasts. Additional copies may be purchased for the cost of reproduction. Copies in alternative format, such as CD, can also be made available. In addition, there will be a link to the draft EIS on the DPD web page.

More information about the draft EIS is available on the DPD website:

http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Northgate_Revitalization/NorthgateAreaRezoneProposalEIS/default.asp