

Principles to Guide Implementation of Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA)

Background

The City of Seattle is committed to a goal of building or preserving 20,000 affordable homes over the next 10 years. A crucial element of reaching this goal is implementation of Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA). The goal of MHA is to create at least affordable 6,000 homes, housing that will be affordable for 50 years to households with incomes up to 60% of area median income (AMI). Under MHA, contributions for affordable housing will be required as commercial and multi-family development occurs, with additional development capacity allowed to minimize the impact of MHA requirements on the cost of new housing. These mandatory contributions are consistent with a state-approved approach for similar programs. (See <http://tinyurl.com/MHA-1Page> for more background on MHA.)

We are looking for more community input on these draft principles.

This document contains draft principles that will guide MHA implementation. They reflect what the City has heard during months of conversations in neighborhoods and online. When finalized, these principles will be used to guide choices about future changes to zoning or urban village boundaries to implement MHA in neighborhoods. As the City works with communities in the coming months on MHA, we'll revisit these principles to inform and evaluate policy and program choices.

Draft principles are grouped into the three categories summarized below:

➤ *Look for this symbol to see how community input will be incorporated.*

A Principles that form the foundation of MHA

- These are essential to MHA.
- They include core values critical to HALA goals.

➤ Although comments on these foundational principles are welcome, it is unlikely that major changes will be made.

B Community-generated principles that will help guide MHA implementation

- These are draft statements about how to implement MHA, based on community-generated ideas and preferences.
- These ideas will meaningfully shape MHA implementation choices.

➤ Further comments and suggestions will be used to shape community-generated principles.

➤ Your comments may both improve current draft principles and propose new ones.

➤ The final set of these principles will be used by the City, communities, and focus groups to evaluate choices for MHA implementation.

C Principles addressed outside of MHA

- These are important principles about housing and livability that cannot be addressed through MHA.
- Other existing or proposed programs will address these principles.

➤ Further comments and suggestions will be used to shape these principles.

➤ Your comments may both improve current draft principles and propose new ones.

➤ The final set of these principles will be shared with City departments, and used to inform their work outside of MHA implementation.

The End Result

- After extensive community input through neighborhood meetings, community focus groups, city-wide conversations, and online engagement, the City will develop a final set of principles.
- **Principles will be used to help shape and evaluate MHA implementation choices in coming months.**
- While we recognize that not everyone will agree with the final adopted principles, the goal is to reflect widely-held community-based ideas.
- The principles will be presented in writing to Mayor Murray and City Councilmembers in order to inform them about community input regarding MHA implementation.

Join us online!

Bring your voice to the conversation using our online platform.


✓ Weigh in on MHA principles

✓ See what others are saying

✓ Share new ideas

See the HALA website for details: seattle.gov/HALA

Principles that form the foundation of MHA

 **Although comments on these foundational principles are welcome, it is unlikely that major changes will be made.**

MHA implementation will:

1. Contribute to the 10-year HALA goal of 20,000 net new units of rent- and income-restricted housing. Specifically, the MHA goal is at least 6,000 units of housing affordable to households with incomes up to 60% of the area median income (AMI), units that will remain affordable for 50 years. In 2016, 60% of the AMI is \$37,980 for an individual and \$54,180 for a family of four.
2. Require multifamily and commercial developments to contribute to affordable housing.
3. Contributions to affordable housing will be provided by including affordable housing on site, or by providing a payment to the Seattle Office of Housing for creation of new affordable housing.
4. Ensure MHA program creates affordable housing opportunities throughout the city.
5. In alignment with a state-approved approach, new affordability requirements are linked to allowing some additional development capacity in commercial and multifamily zones (in many cases one additional floor).
6. Allow more variety of housing types in existing single-family zones within urban villages.
7. Expand the boundaries of some urban villages to allow more housing near high-frequency transit hubs.
8. Keep Seattle an inclusive city by providing housing opportunities for everyone: people of all ages, races, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds and households of all sizes, types, and incomes.
9. Evaluate MHA implementation using a social and racial equity/justice lens.

B Community-generated principles that will help guide MHA implementation

**➤ Your input needed!
Your comments & suggestions will further shape these principles.**

1. Housing Options

- Encourage a wide variety of housing options, including family-sized units and not just one-bedroom and studio units.

2. Urban Design Quality

- Address urban design quality, including high-quality design of new buildings and landscaping.
 - a. Encourage publicly visible green space and landscaping at street level.
 - b. Encourage design qualities that reflect Seattle's context, including materials and architectural style.
 - c. Encourage design that allows access to light and views in shared and public spaces.

3. Transitions

- Plan for transitions between higher- and lower-scale zones as additional development capacity is accommodated.
 - a. Zone full blocks instead of partial blocks in order to soften transitions.
 - b. Consider using low-rise zones to help transition between single-family and commercial / mixed-use zones.
 - c. Use building setback requirements to create step-downs between commercial and mixed-use zones and other zones.

4. Historic Areas

- a. Do not increase development capacity in designated National Register historic districts, even if it means these areas do not contribute to affordability.
- b. Consider not providing development capacity increases in other documented areas of historic or cultural significance that are not National Register historic districts, even if it means these areas do not contribute to affordability.

(continued)

B Community-generated principles that will help guide MHA implementation

**➤ Your input needed!
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shape these principles.**

5. Amenities

- a. Consider locating more housing near amenities such as parks and schools.

6. Urban Village Expansion Areas

- a. Implement the urban village expansions using 10-minute walksheds similar to what was shown in the draft Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan update.
- b. Implement urban village expansions recommended in Seattle 2035 but with modifications informed by local community members.
- c. In general, any development capacity increases in urban village expansion areas should ensure new development is gradual in scale relative to the existing neighborhood context.

7. Unique Conditions

- a. Consider location-specific factors such as documented view corridors from a public space or right-of-way when zoning changes are made.

8. Neighborhood Urban Design

- a. Consider urban design priorities expressed in an adopted neighborhood plan or neighborhood-based planning effort when zoning changes are made.

9. What other principles about MHA would you add?

Principles addressed outside of MHA

 **We welcome your input.
Your comments & suggestions will further
shape these principles.**

MHA will help address affordable housing by creating at least 6,000 rent- and income-restricted housing units in the next 10 years. Many other housing and livability issues of importance to the community are being addressed through HALA, but not specifically by the MHA effort. The following principles are drawn from community input to date. Information is provided here on how these principles are being addressed through other HALA actions or other efforts. We welcome your input on these principles too. The final set of these principles will be shared with City departments in order to inform their work outside of MHA implementation.

a. Address displacement as the city grows.

Seattle's comprehensive plan ([Seattle 2035](#)) directs the City to expand housing choice throughout Seattle, especially in areas where displacement risk is high. Payments made through MHA will be invested in a way that builds on the Office of Housing's 35-year track record of supporting housing in neighborhoods experiencing displacement pressure and rising housing costs. The City is also pursuing programs that would allow rental-housing owners to access financing to rehabilitate their properties without increasing rents for current residents.

b. Preserve existing housing that serves low-income people.

The 2009 voter-approved [Housing Levy](#) produced or preserved 2,184 apartments affordable to low-income renters. The Housing Levy expires this year, and a proposal to renew and double the levy will be up for public vote in August 2016.

c. Address affordability of retail/commercial spaces.

In April 2016 Mayor Ed Murray announced the launch of a [Commercial Affordability Advisory Committee](#) to address rising cost of commercial space for small businesses.

d. Provide strategies for preserving places of cultural significance.

Through the City's [Equitable Development Initiative](#) and Community Development planning processes, the City helps facilitate projects such as the Multicultural Community Center in the Othello neighborhood.

e. Address need for parks, open space, transit, and infrastructure as the city grows.

The Seattle Parks District was approved by the voters in 2015 and provides ongoing funding for the acquisition of parks and open spaces throughout the City. The Parks Department's acquisition program targets areas in need of park space as identified in Seattle Parks and Recreation's 5 year [Development Plan](#), with updates coming in 2017. Prop. 1, approved by voters in November 2014, led to the largest increase in transit service in more than 40 years. Today, more than 70% of Seattle residents live within a short walk of frequent bus service. Additionally, the \$930 million Levy to Move Seattle, approved by voters in 2015, provides funding to improve safety for all travelers, maintain our streets and bridges, and invest in reliable, affordable travel options for a growing city over the next nine years. Please see the Seattle Department of Transportation's [10-year Strategic Vision](#) for Transportation for more details. With these new resources, the City has also implemented the Office of Planning and Community Development to ensure that the City supports thriving communities with a mix of amenities, open space, transportation, affordable housing, and educational and economic opportunity by coordinating the City's planning and investments to meet community needs.