City of Seattle



Edward B. Murray, Mayor

Seattle Department of Planning and Development Diane M. Sugimura, Director

Memo

- To: Planning, Land Use, and Sustainability Committee Mike O'Brien, Chair Tim Burgess, Vice-Chair Nick Licata, Member Sally J. Clark, Alternate
- From: Brennon Staley, Department of Planning and Development Lyle Bicknell, Department of Planning and Development

Date: March 24, 2014

Re: Supplemental Rezone Analysis for the Proposed North Rainier Rezone

In October 2013, the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) recommended rezones, amendments to development standards, and implementation of incentive zoning around the Mount Baker Town Center, which were introduced as Council Bill 117979. These proposals were based on the Mount Baker Town Center Urban Design Framework (2011) and were intended to carry out key actions identified by the community during the recent update of the North Rainier Neighborhood Plan.

After the Planning, Land Use, and Sustainability (PLUS) Committee discussed the proposals on November 27, 2013, Councilmembers directed the Department to prepare analysis of rezoning additional properties for committee consideration. The additional properties are east of Martin Luther King Junior Way South and include property owned by the Mount Baker Housing Association. Attached to this memo is additional rezone analysis for this additional area.

A description of the original rezone proposal, which did not include this area, can be found in Director's Analysis and Recommendation on North Rainier/Mount Baker Town Center Rezone Proposal dated June 14, 2013.

Thank you for your consideration of this analysis. We are available to answer any questions you may have.

Attachment.

Supplemental Rezone Analysis for the Proposed North Rainier Rezone

Description of the additional proposal

The proposal would rezone approximately 116,000 square feet of property directly east of Martin Luther King Jr Way South and north of South McClellan Street from Lowrise to Midrise and from Neighborhood Commercial 1 - 40 to Seattle Mixed 65. A summary of this additional rezone proposal, in addition to what was originally proposed, is shown in Map A.

The two rezone areas are identified as follows:

Area J: Rezone the existing Lowrise to Midrise with a base FAR of 2.0 [MR (2.0)]

Area K: Rezone the existing Neighborhood Commercial 1 with a 40 foot height limit (NC1-40) zones to Seattle Mixed with a 65 foot height limit (SM-65).

Intent of zoning changes

In general, the proposed additional rezones would be consistent with the intent of the original rezone proposal to increase the allowed density and intensity of development near the light rail station. The purpose of this strategy is to provide for a pedestrian-oriented town center by concentrating commercial and residential growth in the Mount Baker Town Center.

Development Capacity

Based on an assumption that the whole area (excluding a city-owned parcel containing a steep slope and small gardens) is developable, the rezone could increase the amount of growth that could occur in the North Rainier Hub Urban Village over the next 20 years by about 340 housing units and 60 jobs. This represents a 5% increase in housing growth for the Urban Village and a 0.4% increase in job growth beyond existing capacity.

Incentive Zoning

Under this proposal, the extra height and floor area allowed through this rezone would be obtained by providing public benefits through the incentive provisions described in Land Use Code Chapter 23.58A. For the Midrise zone, a base FAR of 2 would be established consistent with those provisions. SM-65 zoning has a base FAR of 3.5, which is less than the currently allowed FAR for NC1-40 in a station area. Since the height limit of the proposed zones is 85 feet or less, extra height can be achieved by providing affordable housing on-site or through payment in-lieu.

Consistency with Rezone Criteria

The following sections compare elements of the existing proposal with the rezone criteria in Code Chapter 23.34.





Neighborhood-wide Rezone Criteria

General rezone criteria

The table below analyzes the rezone proposal for the two additional areas against the general rezone criteria (and includes a Code citation for reference).

Criterion	Met?	Analysis – Rainier-wide
In urban centers and urban villages the zoned capacity for the center or village taken as a whole shall be no less than one hundred twenty-five percent (125%) of the growth targets adopted in the Comprehensive Plan for that center or village. (SMC 23.34.008.A.1)	Yes	The proposal represents an increase in the development capacity available in the neighborhood, thus, this criterion is met.
For the area within the urban village boundary of hub urban villages and for residential urban villages taken as a whole the zoned capacity shall not be less than the densities established in the Urban Village Element of the Comprehensive Plan. (SMC 23.34.008.A.2)	Yes	The proposal would increase the development capacity available in the neighborhood, thus, this criterion is met.
The most appropriate zone designation shall be that for which the provisions for designation of the zone type and the locational criteria for the specific zone match the characteristics of the area to be rezoned better than any other zone designation. (SMC 23.34.008.B)	Yes	A specific analysis of each individual rezone in relationship to criteria for the specific zones is provided in the Zone Specific Criteria section.
Previous and potential zoning changes both in and around the area proposed for rezone shall be examined. (SMC 23.34.008.C)	Yes	This analysis takes into account the changes to zoning made in the area as part of Station Area Planning, adopted by the City Council in the late 1990s. Outside of the rezones proposed in Council Bill 117979, no future changes are known.

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Criterion	Met?	Analysis – Rainier-wide
Council adopted neighborhood plans that apply to the area proposed for rezone shall be taken into consideration.(SMC 23.34.008.D.2)	Yes	The North Rainier Neighborhood Plan was adopted in 1999 and its goals and policies were amended in 2010. A listing of specific North Rainier neighborhood plan goals and policies applicable to this rezone is including in the Director's Analysis and Recommendation on North Rainier/Mount Baker Town Center Rezone Proposal dated June 14, 2013. The rezone proposal is consistent with the North Rainier Neighborhood Plan Goals and Policies, as amended.
Where a neighborhood plan establishes policies expressly adopted for the purpose of guiding future rezones, but does not provide for rezones of particular sites or areas, rezones shall be in conformance with the rezone policies of such neighborhood plan. (SMC 23.34.008.D.3)	Yes	The proposed rezones are in conformance with the North Rainier Neighborhood Plan Update including adopted policies intended to guide future rezones.
The impact of more intensive zones on less intensive zones or industrial and commercial zones on other zones shall be minimized by the use of transitions or buffers, if possible. A gradual transition between zoning categories, including height limits, is preferred. Physical buffers may provide an effective separation between different uses and intensities of development. (SMC 23.34.008.E.1)	Yes	This proposal would help to create a gradual height transition from the proposed SM 125 across MLK Jr Way South to the Lowrise and NC1/40' commercial zoned land to the east. The proposal would not significantly change the types of uses allowed. The proposal would allow more intense uses on the east side of MLK Jr Way South which might otherwise act as a physical barrier. While 29 th Avenue South is a smaller street, it would still provide a reasonable buffer for a transition from Midrise to Lowrise zoning.
Physical buffers may provide an effective separation between different uses and intensities of development. (SMC 23.34.008.E.2)	Maybe	The proposal would allow more intense uses on the east side of MLK Jr Way South which might otherwise act as a physical buffer. While 29 th Avenue South is a smaller street, it would still provide a reasonable buffer for a transition from Midrise to Lowrise zoning.

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Criterion	Met?	Analysis – Rainier-wide
Boundaries between commercial and residential areas shall generally be established so that commercial uses face each other across the street on which they are located, and face away from adjacent residential areas. An exception may be made when physical buffers can provide a more effective separation between uses (SMC 23.34.008.E.3).	Yes	The proposed rezones will maintain the current boundaries between residential and commercial uses.
In general, height limits greater than forty (40) feet should be limited to urban villages. (SMC 23.34.008.E.4).	Yes	All areas within the rezone proposal are within the North Rainier Hub Urban Village.

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Criterion	Met?	Analysis – Rainier-wide
Negative & positive impacts on the area, including factors such as housing (particularly low-income housing), public services, environmental factors (noise, air & water, flora & fauna, odor, glare & shadows, energy), pedestrian safety, manufacturing activity, employment activity, architectural or historic character, shoreline review, public access and recreation, should be examined. (SMC 23.34.008.E.4.1).	Yes	The rezone proposal will result in an increased capacity for more intensive mixed- use structures. This could result in minor negative impacts such as an increase in shadowing by new structures, replacement of some existing smaller scale structures, and some minor increase in local traffic. The area is largely built-out so impacts on natural systems are limited. Additionally, this area includes a small amount of steep slope Environmentally Critical Area in the northwest corner which could be impacted by the rezone. Given the requirements of the Environmentally Critical Areas code and that there is substantial area for redevelopment outside of the ECA, it is not anticipated that significant impacts would occur. Minor negative impacts described above would be offset by positive impacts. For instance, new development could enhance vegetative cover by complying with Seattle's green factor. Since the City's incentive zoning program for affordable housing units are likely to be created. Potential redevelopment of the existing affordable housing units are likely to result in additional affordable housing in the long-term. Development resulting from the proposed zoning would increase pedestrian-focused retail activity; enhance the neighborhood's existing employment opportunities; increase housing opportunities and diversify the area's housing stock; improve pedestrian safety by improved sidewalks with new development; and allow new residences and businesses in close proximity to the Mount Baker light rail station so as to offer increased opportunities to use mass transit.

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Criterion	Met?	Analysis – Rainier-wide
Development which can reasonably be anticipated based on the proposed development potential shall not exceed the service capacities which can reasonably be anticipated in the area, including street access, street capacity, transit service, parking capacity, utility and sewer capacity. (SMC 23.34.008.E.4.1).	Yes	The proposed zoning change could increase the amount of growth that could occur in the North Rainier Hub Urban Village over the next 20 years by about 340 housing units and 60 jobs. Existing services are adequate to accommodate an increase of this scale. The North Rainier Hub Urban Village is already served by several arterial roadways, and a full range of existing utility infrastructure. In addition, the rezone proposal will encourage the creation of more pedestrian-oriented shopping that will provide a broader range of goods and services for the surrounding neighborhood and greater North Rainier valley. This will help reduce additional car trips to outlying shopping areas. A transportation analysis by Fehr & Peers of the additional rezone area found the following: "Based on our forecast of local traffic operations under 2030 baseline conditions, we are confident that the increase in vehicle trips due to the potential rezone would have no operational impact on the roadways used to access the properties".
Evidence of changed circumstances shall be taken into consideration in reviewing proposed rezones, but is not required to demonstrate the appropriateness of a proposed rezone. Consideration of changed circumstances shall be limited to elements or conditions included in the criteria for the relevant zone and/or overlay designations in this chapter. (SMC 23.34.008.G).	Yes	The rezone proposal is prompted in part by the opening of the Mount Baker light rail transit station that now provides direct access from the Mount Baker Town Center to Downtown, Southeast Seattle and SeaTac Airport. The light rail station represents a significant change in the North Rainier neighborhood.
If the area is located in or adjacent to a critical area, the effect of the rezone on the critical area shall be considered. (SMC 23.34.008.I).	Yes	No impacts to critical areas are expected to result from the rezone proposal. The site does contain a small amount of steep slope Environmentally Critical Area in the northwest corner which could be impacted by the rezone. Given the requirements of the Environmentally Critical Areas code and that there is substantial area for redevelopment outside of the ECA, it is not anticipated that significant impacts would occur.

Area-specific Rezone Criteria



Rezone Proposal: Rezone the existing LR3 to Midrise for properties located between MLK Jr. Way South and 29th Ave S to the north of South McClellan Street

Existing Conditions: This area contains an existing affordable housing development owned by the Mount Baker Housing Association, as well as a small strip of land owned by the City of Seattle containing a steep slope and terraced gardens. The affordable housing development consists of multiple 3- and 4-story apartments surrounded by surface parking.

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Criterion	Met?	Analysis – Area J
Function. An area that provides concentrations of housing in desirable, pedestrian-oriented urban neighborhoods having convenient access to regional transit stations, where the mix of activity provides convenient access to a full range of residential services and amenities, and opportunities for people to live within walking distance of employment.	Yes	The MR zoning designation is consistent with the goal established in the North Rainier Neighborhood Plan Update and Mount Baker Urban Design Framework for concentrated housing. The close proximity of this location to transit and its location on the edge of the commercial district make it particularly suitable for residential.

Criterion	Met?	Analysis – Area J
Locational Criteria. 1. Threshold Conditions. Subject to subsection 23.34.024.B.2 of this section, properties that may be considered for a Midrise designation are limited to the following: a. Properties already zoned Midrise; b. Properties in areas already developed predominantly to the intensity permitted by the Midrise zone; or c. Properties within an urban center or urban village, where a neighborhood plan adopted or amended by the City Council after January 1, 1995 indicates that the area is appropriate for a Midrise zone designation.	Maybe	The properties in the area and directly to the east are developed predominately with 3- and 4-story apartments as well as a few one and two story retail and residential buildings. While a midrise designation could allow 6- or even 7-story buildings, this scale of development would be generally compatible with the existing scale. The North Rainier Neighborhood Plan Update updated in 2010 lays out a vision for the area that includes bringing additional housing and job growth to the area and capitalizing on the presence of the new light rail station. Goal 8 of the plan update lays out a specific vision for the Town Center: "concentrates housing, commercial uses, services and living-wage employment opportunities; that is well served by transit and non-motorized travel options; and that is well designed and attractive to pedestrians; with a vibrant, business district that serves North Rainier residents and is a destination shopping area with stores that serve the greater Rainier Valley." While the plan does not specifically suggest a rezone for this area, the proposal is consistent with the basic character and design envisioned by the Plan. The proposal is generally compatible with the basic intent of this criterion especially considering the recommendations from the plan update process and location near a light rail station.
 2. Environmentally Critical Areas. Except as stated in this subsection 23.34.024.B.2, properties designated as environmentally critical may not be rezoned to a Midrise designation, and may remain Midrise only in areas predominantly developed to the intensity of the Midrise zone. The preceding sentence does not apply if the environmentally critical area either 1) was created by human activity, or 2) is a designated peat settlement, liquefaction, seismic or volcanic hazard, or flood prone area, or abandoned landfill. 	Yes	This site contains a small amount of steep slope Environmentally Critical Area in the northwest corner which could be impacted by the rezone. Given the requirements of the Environmentally Critical Areas code and that there is substantial area for redevelopment outside of the ECA, it is not anticipated that significant impacts would occur. This steep slope was created in part by the development of MLK Jr Way.

Criterion	Met?	Analysis – Area J
 Other Criteria. The Midrise zone designation is most appropriate in areas generally characterized by the following: Properties that are adjacent to business and commercial areas with comparable height and bulk; Properties in areas that are served by major arterials and where transit service is good to excellent and street capacity could absorb the traffic generated by midrise development; Properties in areas that are in close proximity to major employment centers; Properties in areas that are in close proximity to open space and recreational facilities; Properties in areas along arterials where topographic changes either provide an edge or permit a transition in scale with surroundings; Properties in flat areas where the prevailing structure height is greater than 37 feet or where due to a mix of heights, there is no established height pattern; Properties in areas with moderate slopes and views oblique or parallel to the slope where the height and bulk of existing structures have already limited or blocked views from within the multifamily area and upland areas; Properties in areas with steep slopes and views perpendicular to the slope where upland developments are of sufficient distance or height to retain their views over the area designated for the Midrise zone; Properties in areas where topographic conditions allow the bulk of the structure to be obscured. 	Yes	These properties are in close proximity to commercial areas, major arterials, open space, major employment center, and light rail. The property has automobile access through 29 th Avenue South, a non-arterial street. 29 th Avenue South is a limited access street and is already set to accommodate multifamily development; therefore it should be sufficient to absorb the traffic generated by midrise development. The properties are located in an area with a complex topography. The three-story nature of existing development and the significant strand of trees to the north already tend to obscure any views through the site.

Conclusion: The rezone proposal meets all of the applicable function and locational criteria of the MR zone. DPD determines that Area J is therefore appropriate for the proposed MR zone.

K

Rezone Proposal: Rezone the existing Neighborhood Commercial (NC1-40) zone to Seattle Mixed (SM-65) for properties located on S McClellan between MLK Jr Way South and 29th Avenue South

Existing Conditions: This area contains a mix of one- and two-story residential and retail properties with mostly unimproved parking.

The proposed rezone must meet the general function and locational criteria of the SM zone as well as the height limit criteria for commercial and industrial zones.

Criterion	Met?	Analysis – Area K
Function. An area within an urban center, urban village, or station area overlay district that provides for a wide range of uses to encourage development of the area into a mixed-use neighborhood with a pedestrian orientation; (SMC 23.34.128.A)	Yes	Seattle Mixed zoning is consistent with the goal established in the North Rainier Neighborhood Plan Update and Mount Baker Urban Design Framework for concentrated housing, commercial uses and services in a mixed use context. This area is appropriate for multiple uses due to its location on the arterial streets MLK Jr Way and S McClellan Street and location near light right and the North Rainier Town Center.
Transportation and infrastructure capacity. An area that is well-served by transit and vehicular systems and where utility infrastructure is adequate, or where such systems and infrastructure can be readily expanded to accommodate growth; (SMC 23.34.128.B)	Yes	The area is well-served by transit including the Mount Baker Light Rail station, bus routes on Rainier Ave S and S McClellan Street, and the major arterials MLK Jr Way and Rainier Ave S. The area also contains a full range of utility infrastructure that is adequate for this intensity of development.

Criterion	Met?	Analysis – Area K
Relationship to surrounding activity. An area that either provides a transition from, or is compatible with, an adjacent neighborhood that is densely developed or zoned for high density mixed use; or an area where a transition to higher density mixed use is desired, either within a larger area characterized primarily by commercial or industrial activity, or within an area where significant investment in public transit infrastructure can accommodate greater density and adequate transition with surrounding areas can be provided; (SMC 23.34.128.C)	Yes	This area would provide a height transition from the higher intensity SM125 to the west and the NC1-40 to the east. Additionally, it is at the bottom of a slope that rises to the north, which will help provide a transition to lower- intensity uses. In general, the rezone would not be likely to change the types of uses that could locate in the structure; however, it could allow limited light industrial uses. Given the small size of this area and the larger parcels proposed to be rezoned to SM throughout the rest of the area, it is unlikely that a light manufacturing use would locate here. Even if it did, it is expected that noise and odor standards would be sufficient to prevent conflict with adjacent neighbors.
Mix of use. In general, the zone is suitable for a wide range of uses. However, an area within the SM zone may be identified for the purposes of encouraging a primarily residential character. Within these areas, nonresidential uses shall generally be of modest scale or neighborhood-serving in character; (SMC 23.34.128.D)	N/A	This area is not proposed to be designated Seattle Mixed Residential. It is appropriate for a wide range of uses.

Criterion	Met?	Analysis – Area K
Height. Height limits of 40 feet, 55 feet, 65 feet, 75 feet, 85 feet, 125 feet, 160 feet, 240 feet, and 400 feet may be applied to land zoned SM. Different heights may be applied to different uses in SM zones to more strongly promote certain development types or particular uses within the zone. A 40 or 55 foot height shall be applied where it is appropriate to limit the intensity and scale of new development. A 65 foot, 75 foot or 85 foot height shall apply where it is appropriate to provide for a uniform and pedestrian scale. Generally within urban centers and light rail station areas, a 125 foot, 160 foot, 240 foot, or 400 foot height may be designated for areas where high density, mixed use development is desirable or where_development at this height and intensity will serve as transition from areas where greater heights are permitted. (SMC 23.34.128.E)	Yes	The proposed height of 65' is consistent with the SM zone and the goal of higher density and intensity in the Town Center. Additionally, this site is at the bottom of a slope that rises to the north, which will help provide a transition to lower-intensity uses.

Conclusion: The rezone proposal meets all applicable function and locational criteria of the SM zone. DPD determines that Area B is therefore appropriate for the proposed SM zone.

Criteria for Height Limits of Proposed Zone The table below analyzes the broad rezone proposal for both rezone areas against the criteria for setting height limits.

Criterion	Met?	Analysis – Area K
Height limits shall be consistent with the type and scale of development intended for each zone classification. The demand for permitted goods and services and the potential for displacement of preferred uses shall be considered. (SMC 23.34.009.A)	Yes	The proposed height in this area is 65 feet. The North Rainier Neighborhood Plan Update encourages businesses that serve the needs of the community. The proposal is estimated to create new opportunities for mixed use development. The proposed expansion of the commercial core would likely increase the diversity of available options for locating small and medium scale businesses in the neighborhood. This site is located on the edge of the North Rainier Town Center and on a major connector street with the Mount Baker neighborhood and it is thus likely that there would be sufficient demand for permitted goods and services to justify this location. Existing uses (retail and residential) are consistent with what would be allowed and expected under the new zone so while short- term displacement could occur during construction, long-term displacement of preferred uses should not occur.
Height limits shall reinforce the natural topography of the area and its surroundings, and the likelihood of view blockage shall be considered. (SMC 23.34.009.B)	Yes	Existing and proposed height limits respond primarily to the context of the urban grid and the major arterial axis of Rainier Avenue S, Martin Luther King, Jr. Way S and S McClellan St. No view blockage will occur from any public view sites protected under SEPA (SMC 25.05.675).

Criterion	Met?	Analysis – Area K
The height limits established by current zoning in the area shall be given consideration. In general, permitted height limits shall be compatible with the predominant height and scale of existing development, particularly where existing development is a good measure of the area's overall development potential. Height limits for an area shall be compatible with actual and zoned heights in surrounding areas. (SMC 23.34.009.C)	Yes	The proposal is generally consistent with existing height limits in the area. 65 foot height limits already exist throughout most of the area to the west and heights of 125 are currently proposed. Existing and proposed height limits are substantially different from the predominant height and scale of existing development, which includes one-, two- and three-story buildings. However, recent development to the south and the introduction of high capacity transit suggest that existing development within the Mount Baker Station Area Overlay is not a good measure of the overall development potential and that future development will be more consist with actual and proposed zoning.
A gradual transition in height and scale and level of activity between zones shall be provided unless major physical buffers are present. (SMC 23.34.009.D.2.)	Yes	This site is at the bottom of a slope that rises to the north, which will help provide a transition to lower-intensity uses. Additionally, the proposal would still maintain adjacent areas of NC1-40 and LR zones as a buffer to single-family zones.
Particular attention shall be given to height recommendations in business district plans or neighborhood plans adopted by the City Council subsequent to the adoption of the 1985 Land Use Map. (SMC 23.34.009.E.)	Yes	The North Rainier Neighborhood Plan Update (2010) and the Mount Baker Urban Design Framework (2011) addressed height and zoning intensities and identified potential rezones for the near- and longer-term. The current rezone proposals are consistent with Rainier Neighborhood Plan Update policies as discussed above.

DPD determines that Area K is therefore appropriate for the proposed SM zone.