

**CITY OF SEATTLE  
ANALYSIS AND DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR  
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Applicant Name: Department of Planning and Development

Address of Proposal: Pike/Pine Urban Center Village

**SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION**

The proposal is a legislative action to amend Section 23.41.010, 23.41.014, 23.55.030, and 23.73.010 of the Seattle Municipal Code, adding a new subsection to Section 23.41.012, approving and adopting revised Neighborhood Design Guidelines for the Pike/Pine Urban Center Village, and amending provisions in the Pike/Pine Conservation Overlay District to better maintain the character of the Pike/Pine neighborhood. The proposed amendments include the following actions:

1. Make additions to the existing Pike/Pine Neighborhood Design Guidelines to better address developments that incorporate “character structures” (defined as buildings 75 or more years old).
2. Revise the current neighborhood Guidelines, primarily to update the illustrations and examples.
3. When a character structure is located on the site of a proposed new project, the developer would be required, as part of the design review process, to evaluate the key architectural elements of the character structure, and to provide at least one design proposal that would maintain those elements and the integrity of the character structure.
4. Change the decision-maker from the Director of the Department of Planning and Development to the local Design Review Board when a developer requests a departure from the prescribed method for incorporating a character structure into a new building.
5. Allow an exception from the prohibition against backlit cabinet signs in the Pike/Pine Conservation Overlay District for signs that are no larger than three square feet.

The following approval is required:

SEPA - Environmental Determination - Chapter 25.05, Seattle Municipal Code.

**SEPA DETERMINATION:**  Exempt  DNS  MDNS  EIS

## **BACKGROUND DATA**

### **Background Information**

In July, 2009, the City Council adopted legislation that, among other things, expanded the boundaries of the Pike/Pine Conservation Overlay District, limited the scale of new development, and encouraged new projects to retain existing older structures, identified as character structures, as part of the development site. These changes were the first phase of work undertaken by the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) to implement proposals in the Pike/Pine neighborhood plan related to protecting neighborhood character and promoting an appropriate type and scale of development.

The legislation in this proposal is part of a second phase of work on Pike/Pine, which includes an update of the current neighborhood design guidelines, as well as the addition of new guidelines, primarily related to height, bulk and scale, that address conditions related to development encouraged under the legislation adopted in 2009. There are also proposed amendments to the Land Use Code that address issues related to the application of the new standards, which were raised during the review of recent development proposals. The proposed changes are intended to clarify and reinforce the intent of the original amendments and make them more consistent with neighborhood objectives.

### **Proposed Action**

The Department of Planning and Development (DPD) is recommending that amendments to the Seattle Municipal Code be undertaken to:

1. Adopt revisions to neighborhood-specific design guidelines for the Pike/Pine neighborhood to update the existing guidelines and to provide additional guidance regarding design issues related to recently adopted provisions addressing the scale of new development and the conservation of existing building resources within the Pike/Pine Conservation District Overlay;
2. Amend sections of Chapter 23.41 related to design review within the Pike/Pine Conservation Overlay District to require additional analysis of the key architectural features of a character structure located on a development lot, to require an alternative for review that maintains a character structure that is located on a development lot, and to identify conditions that must be met to allow for departures from standards that apply to development seeking additional height and/or floor area for retaining a character structure on the development lot;
3. Amend Section 23.55.030, which regulates signs in NC3, C1, C2, and SM zones, to limit the prohibition on internally-illuminated cabinet signs in the Pike/Pine Conservation Overlay District to signs that are larger than 3 square feet; and
4. Amend Section 23.73.010 of the Pike/Pine Conservation Overlay District standards to clarify the role of the design review board in granting departures from provisions related to maintaining a character structure on the development lot and to include maintaining the original floor-to-ceiling height of the ground story as a condition for development seeking additional height and/or floor area for retaining a character structure on the development lot.

## **Public Comments**

The proposed amendments to the Pike/Pine Conservation Overlay District, the revisions to the neighborhood-specific design guidelines, and revisions to design review requirements reflect an extensive community effort to implement key elements of the Pike/Pine neighborhood plan related to the conservation of neighborhood character and existing building resources. A draft proposal of these most recent proposals has been available for public review and was discussed at a public meeting held on July 7, 2010. The revised neighborhood guidelines will continue to augment the existing citywide *Design Review Guidelines for Multifamily and Commercial Buildings*.

Proposed changes to the Land Use Code require City Council approval. Public comment will be taken on the proposed amendments during future Council public hearings. A public hearing is scheduled for September 8, 2010.

**What is Design Review?** The design review process, as provided for in the Land Use Code Chapter 23.41, is intended to be a forum for community members, developers, architects, and city staff, aided by volunteer design review boards, to identify design-related concerns early in the design development of a project to ensure that new development makes positive contributions to Seattle's neighborhoods. Design Review is a component of a Master Use Permit (MUP) application and is required for new commercial, multi-family and mixed-use developments that exceed specified thresholds in certain zones. The design review process provides flexibility in the application of development standards through the granting of "design departures." Departures are granted when an applicant demonstrates that the modification of a prescriptive Code standard would result in a better overall building design through an improved response to unique site conditions or the character of the surrounding area.

**Design Guidelines.** Citywide Design Guidelines apply to all proposed new development subject to design review. Citywide design review guidelines for multifamily and commercial buildings are a compilation of broad urban design principles intended to address such aspects of development as site planning, height, bulk and scale relationships, architectural elements, landscaping, and the pedestrian environment. Zoning rules and prescriptive standards are intended to establish the primary use, intensity and scale of development in a specific zone. Design guidelines and the design review process help to ensure through application of applicable design guidelines and flexibility in requirements that new development responds appropriately to the context of its surroundings.

As part of a citywide neighborhood planning process, many neighborhoods expressed an interest in augmenting the citywide Design Review Guidelines. Neighborhood design guidelines are intended to reveal the unique character of a given neighborhood, to call attention to the specific goals for neighborhood development and the key locations for important design considerations, and thereby protect, to the extent feasible, the qualities and values that a specific neighborhood shares in the face of change. Where the City Council has adopted neighborhood design guidelines (University Community, Roosevelt, Pike/Pine, Ballard Municipal Center area, West Seattle Junction, Admiral and Green Lake, Northgate, South Lake Union, Wallingford, Othello and Greenwood/Phinney and other neighborhoods) new development must respond to both the *neighborhood* and the applicable *City-wide Design Guidelines*.

Following adoption by the City Council, the Pike/Pine Urban Center Village Design Guidelines originally became effective on October 15, 2000. The original design guidelines were a key implementation strategy of the Pike/Pine Neighborhood Plan. The current wording would remain essentially unchanged under the proposed action, with the exception of minor updating and new illustrations that reflect changed conditions in the area. In addition, two new subsections are proposed to be added to the current Guidelines. The first new section addresses building height, bulk and scale, and more specifically references new conditions associated with the 2009 amendments to the Pike/Pine Conservation Overlay District that emphasize the conservation of existing building resources and neighborhood character. The second new subsection addresses signage. These changes support the City's ongoing efforts to implement proposals in the Pike/Pine Neighborhood Plan.

Residents, businesses, and property owners in the neighborhood outlined a vision to guide the future development of the neighborhood as a mixed use, pedestrian environment, accessible by efficient public transit, while maintaining the unique development character that is key to the neighborhood's success. The neighborhood anticipates that the design guidelines, supplemented by the proposed revisions, will continue to be a tool used to promote new development that is compatible with the existing built context and that enhances the neighborhood's pedestrian scale and unique character.

**Additional Land Use Code Amendments.** The proposal includes additional amendments related to the revised design guidelines. For the most part, these amendments address new measures that an applicant must comply with as part of the design review process if a project is on a lot within the Pike/Pine Conservation Overlay District that includes a character structure. Further, the amendments clarify the role of the design review board in granting departures from certain existing development standards related to provisions for allowing additional height and/or floor area in projects that maintain a character structure. In the legislation adopted in 2009, this decision was assigned to the Director of DPD.

The revised design guidelines for Pike/Pine include new guidelines for the pedestrian environment related to signs, and the sign provisions that apply in the Pike/Pine Conservation Overlay District are also proposed to be amended. The amendment would limit the prohibition on internally-illuminated cabinet signs to signs that are greater than 3 square feet. This change is intended to provide flexibility to permit the use of smaller signs, while continuing to prohibit larger signs that have the greatest impact on the pedestrian environment and are most incompatible with the original architectural character of the area.

#### ANALYSIS - SEPA

The initial disclosure of the potential impacts from this proposal was made in an environmental checklist prepared by DPD. The information in this checklist, review of the proposed text changes and the proposed design guidelines, and the experience of the lead agency with review of similar projects, form the basis for this analysis and decision.

#### **Short-term Impacts**

As a non-project action, the proposed amendments will not have any short-term impact on the environment. Future development affected by this legislation will be reviewed under existing laws and substantial development projects will be subject to SEPA to address short-term impacts on the environment.

## **Long-term Impacts**

Zoning in the Pike/Pine neighborhood, including the provisions of the Pike/Pine Conservation Overlay District, establishes the rules that govern the amount and type of development that can occur. Zoning defines the permitted uses and density of development, whether office, retail or residential, as well as the overall height, bulk and scale of development permitted. Parking amounts, location, and access are set under zoning as well. Design guidelines refine a project design that might otherwise meet zoning standards and address, for instance, how the design of the building may influence the perception of the scale of the building and its fit with existing structures, or might suggest ways that a building could improve its orientation to the street and the pedestrians who may be most affected by the scale of new development.

In the case of Pike/Pine, recently adopted zoning provisions also promote the retention of existing structures in new projects, limits on the width of structures on Pike and Pine Streets, new development on smaller lots that is more consistent in scale with established conditions, and a finer grain of uses at street level. The revised design guidelines provide additional guidance to address these conditions. This additional guidance will better ensure that new development recognizes the character of a neighborhood and, through a new building's design, including the potential incorporation of an existing structure in a new project, better integrates the new project with the existing development context, rather than imposing itself upon the surrounding area. Therefore, no significant adverse, long-term impacts are anticipated. Although no long-term impacts are anticipated, further discussion of various elements of the environment is warranted.

Under the City's Comprehensive Plan, the Pike/Pine neighborhood is a designated Urban Center Village within the Capitol Hill/First Hill Urban Center. The area is characterized by a unique mix of light manufacturing, wholesaling, high-tech and automobile-related businesses; a variety of institutions, including churches, fraternal organizations, and Seattle Central Community College Facilities; a wide range of arts activities that include theaters, galleries, and performance space; a regional-scale grocery store and retail service center (Harvard Market); night clubs, community services, a wide variety of retail uses, and a wide variety of housing. The zoning in the neighborhood is predominantly neighborhood commercial, and is subject to the provisions of the Pike/Pine Conservation Overlay District. This zoning promotes residential use, with commercial development that serves the community in a pedestrian-friendly environment. Current zoning maintains the historic mix of uses that have characterized the neighborhoods for many years. Street-level retail sales and service uses are encouraged on commercial streets to provide a vital pedestrian street front and services to surrounding residences.

The proposed revisions to the neighborhood guidelines and related code amendments strengthen the mechanisms for ensuring that new development is compatible with the existing development character, recognizing the unique character and pedestrian orientation of much of the neighborhood. The revised guidelines update and supplement the current neighborhood guidelines and continue to augment the Citywide Design Guidelines, with added attention to Height, Bulk and Scale, and to how signs affect the pedestrian environment. The intent of these guidelines and related Code amendments is to identify important features and help reinforce the neighborhood character; improve the quality of new development; promote the conservation of existing building resources, address the visual impacts of growth; indicate desirable approaches to design; increase neighborhood awareness of design issues and options; and increase community involvement.

The proposed actions are not anticipated to result in adverse impacts on any element of the environment. The guidelines reflect the objectives of the Pike/Pine Neighborhood Plan, and the City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan in encouraging and supporting mixed-use urban environments in which housing, commercial uses and essential neighborhood goods and services are located in close proximity to promote walking, bicycling and transit use. However, these objectives are balanced with the neighborhood's priority for conserving the area's existing, unique character and identity, which are seen as critical to its livability and success. These amendments emphasize compatible development that respects the neighborhood's established development context and unique character, along with encouraging the conservation of existing built resources. On the whole, this type of environment should encourage greater substitution of pedestrian trips for automobile trips, helping to limit transportation impacts of future development. Conserving existing structures should help reduce energy expenditures associated with the demolition and removal of existing building resources.

The proposed Code amendments and Neighborhood Design Guidelines, through provisions for an enhanced pedestrian environment, maintenance of neighborhood character and existing building resources, and focus on conservation and height, bulk, and scale compatibility will have the effect of reducing impacts on the neighborhood and promoting new development that is more compatible with existing development where the neighborhood context is a positive expression of the neighborhood's vision. Where the existing context is inconsistent with the future vision of the neighborhood and with the City's Comprehensive Plan Urban Centers and Villages strategy, the proposed guidelines will aid in the positive evolution of the neighborhood as new development is proposed.

DECISION - SEPA

The decision was made after review by the responsible official on behalf of the lead agency or a completed environmental checklist and other information on file with the responsible department. This constitutes the Threshold Determination and form. The intent of this declaration is to satisfy the requirements of the State Environmental Policy Act (RCW 43.21C), including the requirement to inform the public agency decisions pursuant to SEPA.

Determination of Non-Significance. This proposal has been determined to not have a significant adverse impact upon the environment. An EIS is not required under RCW 43.21C.030 2c.

Determination of Significance; this proposal has or may have a significant adverse impact upon the environment. An EIS is required under RCW 43.21C.030 2c.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Andrew S. McKim  
Department of Planning and Development

Date \_\_\_\_\_