Description of the Proposal and Alternatives

CHAPTER 2 DESCRIPTION OF THE ALTERNATIVES

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 Contents

Introduction 1
Planning Context 6
Proposed Action and Alternatives ... 17
Environmental Review ... 33
Benefits and Disadvantages of Delaying the Proposed Action ... 35

The City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan, *Toward a Sustainable Seattle*, establishes a framework for accommodating future growth in a manner that is sustainable and consistent with community values. The urban village strategy is a key component of the plan. The urban village strategy, as described in the Urban Village element, is a comprehensive approach to planning for future growth in a sustainable manner. The Urban Village element identifies four categories of urban villages, including urban centers, manufacturing/industrial centers, hub urban villages and residential urban villages. Urban centers are identified as the densest neighborhoods in the City, with a diverse mix of uses, housing, and employment. The South Lake Union neighborhood is identified as an urban center.

As an urban center, the Comprehensive Plan establishes that the South Lake Union neighborhood should contain a concentration of housing and employment and provide a regionally significant focus for housing and employment growth. Densities and mix of uses should support walking, transit use and cohesive community development.

Consistent with these goals, the Urban Center Neighborhood Plan for South Lake Union (Neighborhood Plan) establishes goals, policies and strategies supportive of the urban center designation. Strategy 2c specifically addresses the use of increased height and density to achieve Neighborhood Plan goals (see sidebar). Although the Neighborhood Plan notes that there was disagreement about this strategy, it is identified as a high priority, with implementation to start in the near term (defined as within a five-year period).

The City is considering the use of incentive zoning as a strategy to encourage increased density while ensuring growth contributes to livability and sustainability. The goal of incentive zoning is to link code flexibility, increased density and development potential with public benefits valued by the community. The City initiated an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process to study the potential impacts of increased height and density in the neighborhood. Over the course of 2008 and 2009, working in partnership with interested citizens and organizations, the City identified three alternative zoning scenarios, each providing a different configuration of height and density in the South Lake Union neighborhood.

> Urban villages … enable the City to: deliver services more equitably, pursue a development pattern that is environmentally and economically sound, and provide better means of managing growth and change through collaboration with the community…
>
> Toward a Sustainable Seattle, 2004.

> **Strategy 2c:** Use additional height and density as an incentive for projects that implement multiple neighborhood plan policies where the additional height will not negatively affect the surrounding area, flight paths or key public view corridors
> *South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan, 2007*

The City is testing these scenarios, along with a scenario that does not provide for height increases (No Action), through this EIS. Based on the analysis and public comment received during the Draft EIS comment period and future public comment on a specific proposal, the City will determine future actions, if any, associated with code updates to permit increased height and density in the South Lake Union neighborhood.

2.1.1 Overview of the Proposal

This EIS considers four alternatives to height and density in the South Lake Union neighborhood. Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 represent a range of potential height increases that could be achieved through incentive zoning and are collectively referred to as action alternatives. Alternative 4 would retain the existing zoning designations with no incentives for height increases and is referred to as the no-action alternative.

Among the action alternatives, Alternative 1 would provide the greatest potential for increases in height and density, Alternative 3 the least, and Alternative 2 falls between Alternatives 1 and 3. Alternative 1 would allow for building heights of 240 to 300 feet in much of the neighborhood, with maximum heights of 400 feet between John Street and Denny Way. Alternative 2 would allow for maximum heights of 300 feet in the area between Aurora and Westlake avenues north, with much of the rest of the neighborhood at maximum heights of 160 to 240 feet. Under Alternative 3, the majority of the neighborhood would have maximum building heights of 160 feet to 240 feet. Under Alternatives 2 and 3, existing zoning, with no provision for increased height through zoning incentives, would be retained in the majority of the Cascade neighborhood, with changes limited to areas near the western and southern boundaries in Alternative 2 and along the western boundary in Alternative 3. Similarly, under Alternative 3, the majority of the Fairview neighborhood would also retain existing zoning, with no provision for increased height through incentive zoning.

Alternatives 1 and 2 would provide for height and density increases for both commercial and residential development, while Alternative 3 is focused primarily on residential development.

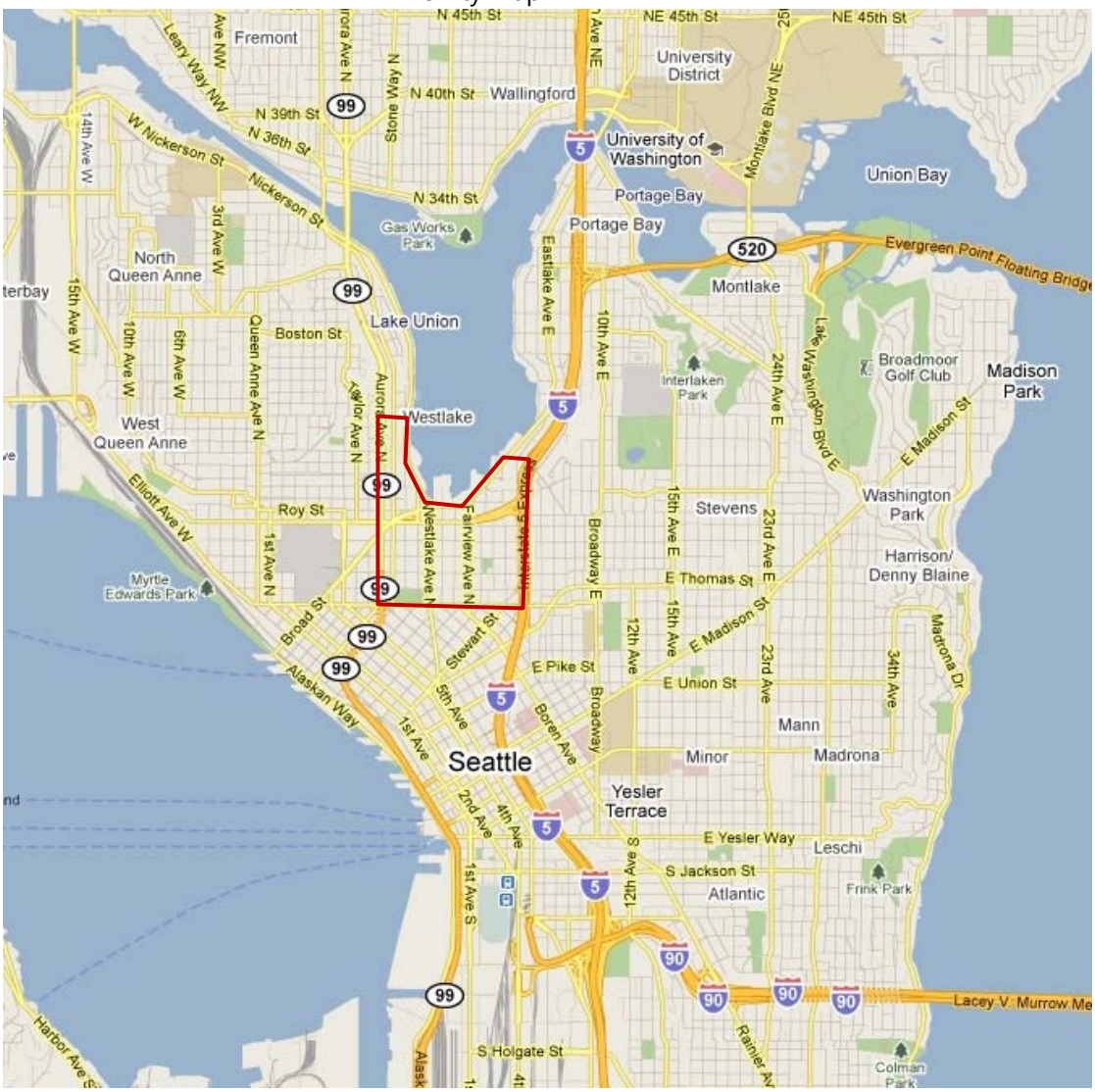
All of the alternatives are described in more detail in Section 2.3 and shown in Figures 2-5 through 2-8.

Study Area

The South Lake Union neighborhood is located in the center of the City of Seattle, located immediately north of the Downtown, and adjoining the Uptown and Capitol Hill areas to the west and east. Consisting of about

340 acres, the area is generally bounded on the east by Interstate 5, on the west by Aurora Avenue, on the south by Denny Way and on the north by the Lake Union shoreline. See **Figure 2-1**.

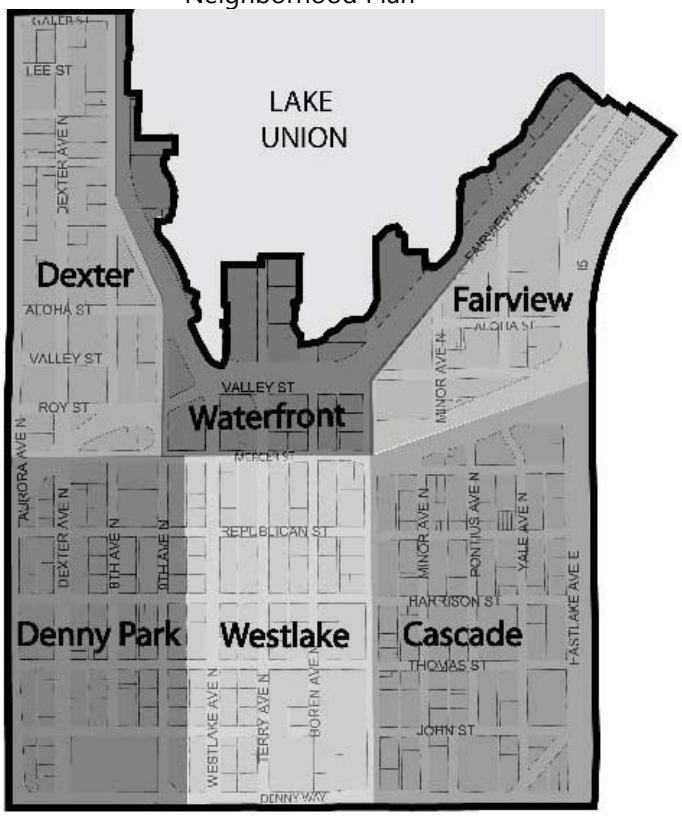
Figure 2-1
Vicinity Map



Source: Google Maps, 2010

For planning purposes, the City has identified six neighborhoods in the neighborhood, known as the Dexter, Denny Park, Waterfront, Westlake, Fairview and Cascade neighborhoods See **Figure 2-2**.

Figure 2-2
Neighborhood Plan



Source: South Lake Union Urban Center Neighborhood Plan, 2007.

Within the study area boundaries and where appropriate, this EIS considers in greater detail existing conditions and potential environmental impacts of the alternatives in three focus areas. Due to the area-wide cumulative nature of the analyses, the focus areas are not specifically called out in the transportation, energy (greenhouse gas), and air quality analyses.

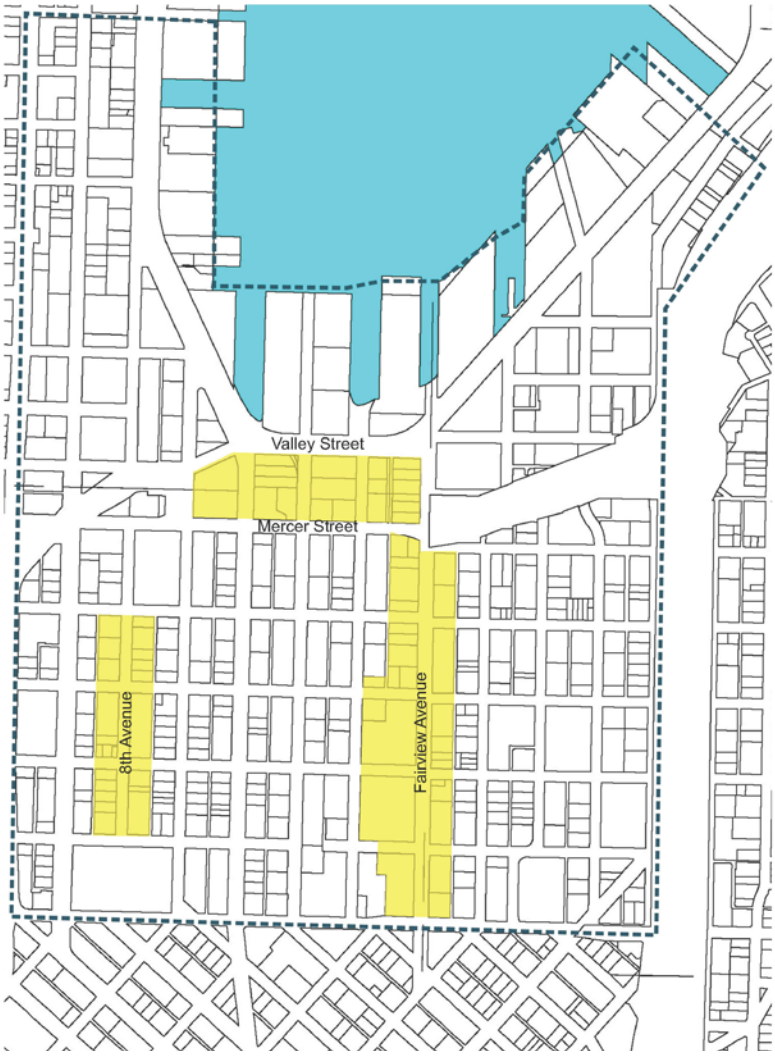
Focus areas are shown in **Figure 2-3** and described below:

- 8th Avenue Corridor – Consisting of about 5.9 acres in the Denny Park area, this area is comprised of one-half block east and west of 8th Avenue between Republican and John Streets.
- Fairview Avenue Corridor – About 16.2 acres, generally consisting of one-half block east and west of Fairview Avenue between Mercer Street and Denny Way. This area straddles the boundary between the Westlake and Cascade neighborhoods.
- Valley/Mercer Blocks – Consisting of about 8 acres in the

8th Avenue at Harrison Street

Waterfront area, this area is bounded by Valley Street on the north, Mercer Street on the south, 9th Avenue on the west and Fairview Avenue on the west.

Figure 2-3
Focus Areas



Source: EA|Blumen, 2010.

Transportation Network

Due to its central location and proximity to the major regional north/south corridors of Aurora Avenue North and Interstate 5, South Lake Union is heavily affected by regional and local traffic. Major transportation projects in the neighborhood that would result in changes to right-of-way alignment and associated access and configuration of parcels adjacent to the affected rights of way include the Mercer Corridor-East Project and the Bored Tunnel Street Grid Reconnection. Because these projects are either funded or highly likely to be funded, they have

been assumed as part of the underlying street network for the neighborhood.

2.1.2 Objectives of the Proposal

The City has identified the following specific objectives of the proposal:

- Advance Comprehensive Plan goals to use limited land resources more efficiently, to pursue a development pattern that is economically sound, and to maximize the efficiency of public investment in infrastructure and services.
- Ensure adequate zoned development capacity for long-term growth consistent with the designation of South Lake Union as one of the City's six urban centers.
- Provide for a more diverse and attractive neighborhood character by providing a mix of housing types, uses, building types and heights.
- Promote a land use pattern that provides for a balanced mix of residential and employment opportunities.
- Enhance the pedestrian quality at street level by providing amenities, taking into consideration light and air as well as public view corridors and providing for retail activity at key locations.
- Use increases in height and density to achieve other neighborhood plan goals such as increasing the amount of affordable housing, open space, and other public benefits through an incentive zoning program.
- Determine how to best accommodate growth while maintaining a functional transportation system, including street network, transit, and non-motorized modes of travel. Similarly, determine how to accommodate growth while maintaining functional capacity of utility systems, including electrical energy, water, sewer and storm drain systems.

2.2 Planning Context

2.2.2 Seattle Comprehensive Plan

The Seattle Comprehensive Plan, *Toward a Sustainable Seattle*, is a GMA-compliant 20-year plan that provides guidance for how Seattle will accommodate growth in a way that is consistent with the vision of the citizens of the City. As a policy document, the Plan lays out general guidance for future City actions. In many cases, general guidance in the Plan is more specifically addressed in functional plans that focus on a particular aspect of City services, such as parks, transportation or

Chapter 2 Contents
Introduction
Planning Context
Proposed Action and Alternatives
Environmental Review
Benefits and Disadvantages of Delaying the

drainage. The City implements the Plan through development and other regulations, primarily found in the City's zoning map and Land Use Code.

The City adopted the current Plan in 1994. It has been updated in major and minor ways in subsequent years. The amendment processes for the Comprehensive Plan are defined under state law:

- Once a year, the City may amend the plan to address specific proposed changes initiated by the City and private parties.
- Every seven years, the City must review and consider amendments to ensure continued compliance with the Growth Management Act, reflect updated population projections and ensure capacity to accommodate projected population for the next 20-year time horizon.

Growth Targets

The Comprehensive Plan contains growth targets that establish how much residential and employment growth is anticipated through 2024 and where it will be located. Recently, King County and its cities have allocated new growth targets that extend the planning horizon to 2031. It is expected that this updated target will be the basis for the City's next 10-year comprehensive plan update, due in 2014. However, the City has not yet adopted those targets into the Comprehensive Plan or allocated portions of those targets to individual urban centers or urban villages.

In order to provide the City with an early opportunity to consider the fit of the alternatives relative to the future comprehensive plan update effort, this EIS assumes a 2031 South Lake Union growth estimate that is proportionate to the adopted South Lake Union 2024 target, see **Table 2-1** below. The estimate is for analysis purposes only and does not represent policy intent by the City.

It should be noted that the adopted 2024 growth target for the neighborhood allocated a relatively high share of citywide growth to South Lake Union. Because the current growth target is ambitious, it is unlikely that future planning would increase the proportion of citywide growth that is allocated to South Lake Union. It is more likely that future planning will match the current proportion or reduce it by distributing citywide growth to other areas of the City. Therefore, the 2031 growth is a conservative assumption; a future growth target is unlikely to be higher than the estimate.

Table 2-1
City of Seattle Growth Targets[1]

	City		South Lake Union	
	2024	2031	2024	2031[2]
Residences	47,000	70,000	8,000	11,900
Jobs	84,000	115,000	16,000	21,900

Source: City of Seattle, EA|Blumen, 2010

[1] Growth targets for the City in 2024 and 2031 and for South Lake Union in 2024 represent adopted City policy. The growth target shown for South Lake Union in 2031 is an estimate developed for analysis in this EIS and has not been reviewed, recommended or adopted by the City. See Note 2, below.

[2] The City has not yet identified specific 2031 targets for neighborhoods within the City. For this analysis, the 2031 estimated for South Lake Union was determined by determining the ratio of the 2024 South Lake Union to City targets and applying this ratio to the 2031 citywide target (About 17% of the citywide total for residences and 19% of the citywide total for jobs)..

Development Capacity

Development capacity is a measure of the total amount of new development that could be added in an area. The City of Seattle calculates this measure by comparing existing land uses to what could be built under current or proposed zoning. The difference between the potential and existing development is the capacity for new development. Development capacity estimates are not a prediction that a certain amount of development will occur or when it may occur, but instead a measure of the maximum development that could occur in a given area. Development capacity is expressed in terms of housing units and the number of potential jobs that could be added.

The estimate of development capacity varies according to the amount and type of development that is permitted. Accordingly, the development capacity for South Lake Union has been calculated for each alternative, including No Action (Alternative 4). **Table 2-2**, below summarizes the development capacity for South Lake Union under each alternative. Please see **Appendix B** for complete description of the development capacity methodology used in this analysis.

Table 2-2
Development Capacity

	Employment Capacity[1] (jobs)	Residential[2] (dwelling units)
Alternative 1	31,500	21,000
Alternative 2	30,500	19,000
Alternative 3	23,000	15,000
Alternative 4 (No Action)	20,000	11,500

Source: City of Seattle, 2010

[1] Assumes one job/350 square feet of commercial development and 45% of new development will be for commercial use.

[2] Assumes recent residential development trends (see Appendix B) and 55% of new development will be for residential use

2.2.3 Lake Union Seaport Airport Flight Path

The Lake Union Seaport Airport is a public airport connecting downtown Seattle with regional destinations. Kenmore Air, the primary airport operating from Lake Union, provides daily service to the San Juan Islands and Canada. During its peak season, extending from late spring until fall, Kenmore Air provides up to 80 daily arrivals and departures from morning until dusk. The area between the south shore of Lake Union and extending over Seattle Center to Puget Sound is a primary flight path.


Seaplane on Lake Union

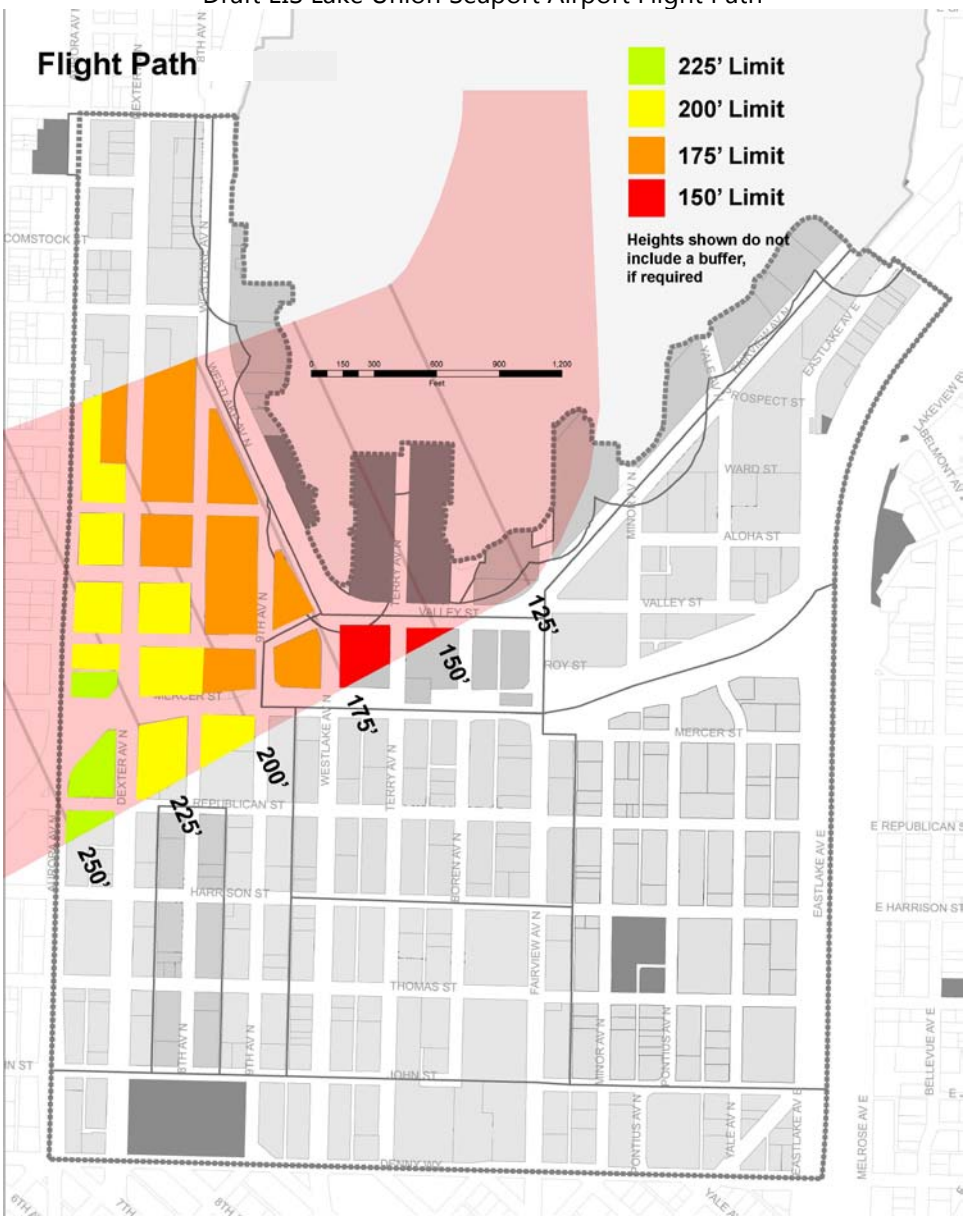
Figure 2-4 shows the Lake Union Seaport Airport flight path, as described in the Draft EIS and prepared by the Washington Department of Transportation, Aviation Division. This figure shows the flight path elevation as it rises over the South Lake Union neighborhood.

Subsequent to issuance of the Draft EIS, additional review of the flight path was conducted (see **Appendix F**). This analysis included a review of how seaplane lanes are utilized (including runway utilization, flight tracks, and piloting techniques), an evaluation of the aircraft fleet used by floatplane operators, and documentation of the performance characteristics of the various floatplane aircraft. Several Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) planning documents that have applicability in the establishment of approach/departure protection boundaries for curving approach and departure procedures such as those used on Lake Union were also reviewed.

Based on this analysis, and in coordination with WSDOT Aviation, a revised flight path was identified (**Figure 2.4(A)**). This revised flight path differs from that shown in the Draft EIS in that portions are narrower than

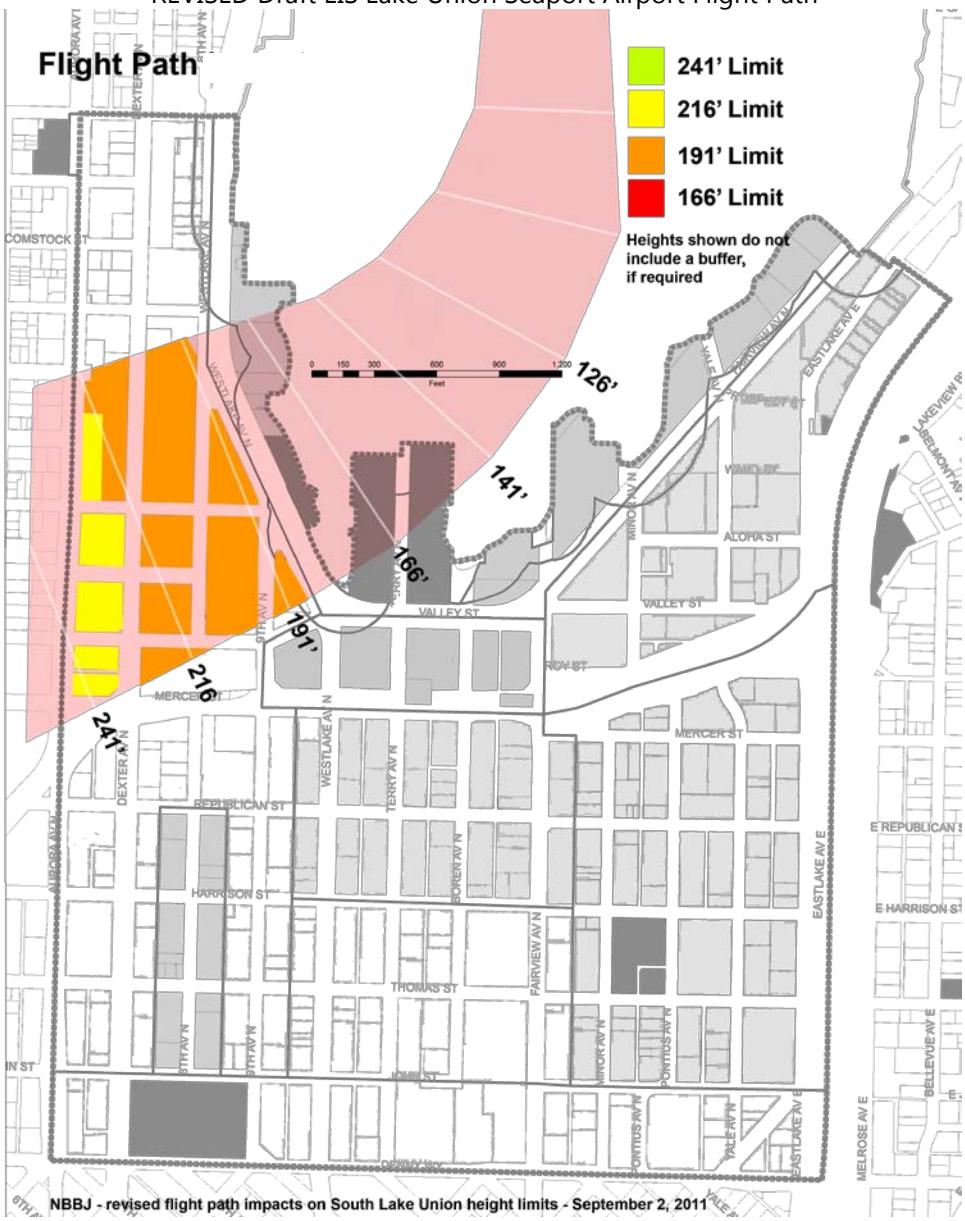
the previous flight path, the curvature is more gradual, and the east-west legs of the flight path have shifted slightly to the north (**Figure 2-4 (B)**). Specifically, the southern boundary has shifted 400-500 feet north so that the southern boundary lies north of Valley Street and is generally aligned with Broad Street. The southern boundary now crosses Aurora Avenue North at about Mercer Street. Similarly, the northern boundary of the flight path shifted 200-300 feet north, crossing the Lake Union shoreline at roughly Highland Drive and crossing Aurora Avenue just north of Ward Street.

Figure 2-4
Draft EIS Lake Union Seaport Airport Flight Path



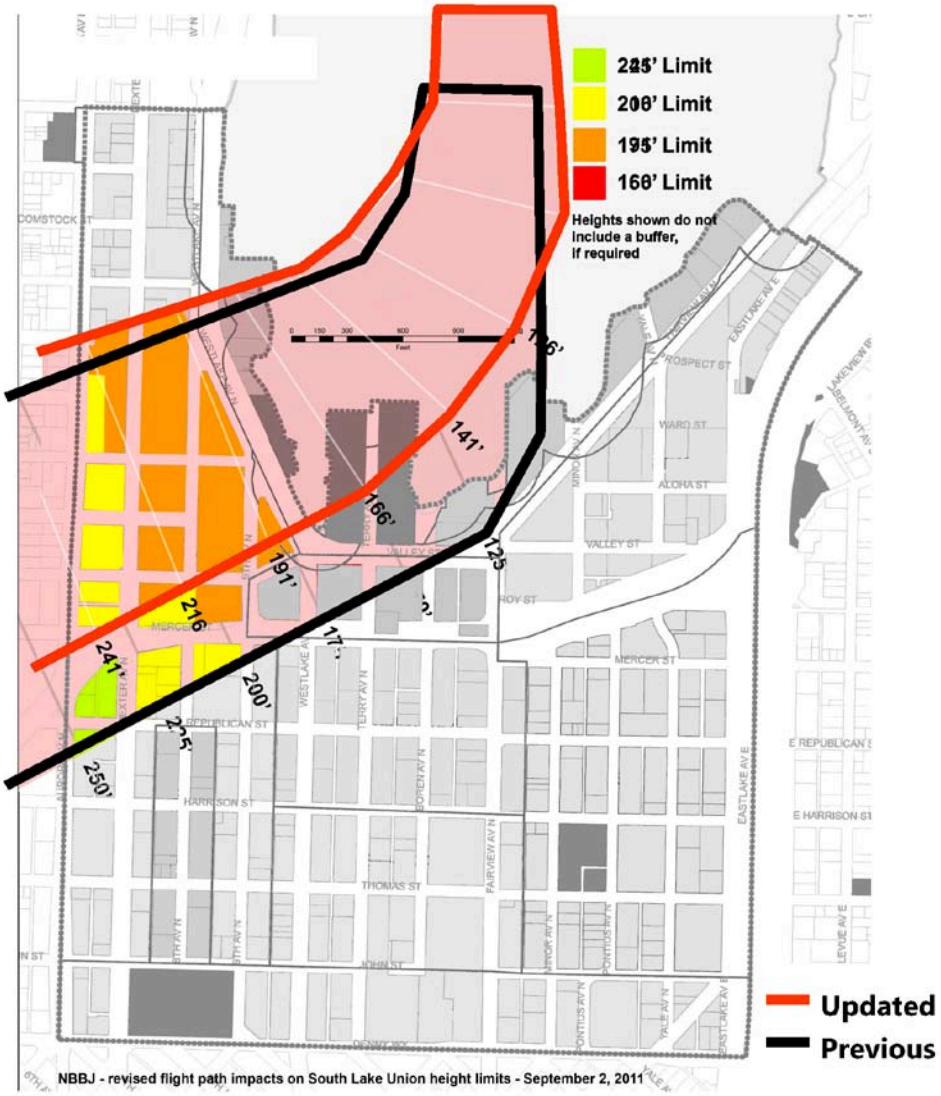
Source: WSDOT (Aviation Division), NBBJ, 2010.

Figure 2-4(A)
REVISED Draft EIS Lake Union Seaport Airport Flight Path



Source: Barnard Dunkelberg & Company, WSDOT (Aviation Division), NBBJ, 2010.

Figure 2-4(B)
REVISED Draft EIS Lake Union Seaport Airport Flight Path



Source: Barnard Dunkelberg & Company, WSDOT (Aviation Division), NBBJ, 2010.

2.2.4 South Lake Union Urban Center Neighborhood Plan

In 2004, the City designated South Lake Union as an Urban Center. The City's Comprehensive Plan describes urban centers as the City's densest neighborhoods, providing a diverse mix of uses, housing and employment opportunities. Collectively, the City's six urban centers are intended to accommodate most of the City's targeted future growth. Accordingly, Plan policies focus on these areas to ensure their continued vitality and capacity for growth.

City of Seattle Urban Centers
Northgate
University Community
Uptown
South Lake Union
First Hill/Capitol Hill
Downtown

The South Lake Union Urban Center Neighborhood Plan is a free-standing plan that establishes goals, policies and strategies supportive of the urban center designation. Portions of the Neighborhood Plan have been adopted as part of the Comprehensive Plan.

The Neighborhood Plan describes the future vision for the neighborhood:

The future of South Lake Union will be characterized by:

- *A pervasive human scale ambiance consistent with a vital aesthetically pleasing, safe and energetic neighborhood which embraces a dynamic intermixing of opportunities for working living and playing;*
- *Retention of a significant element of the area's commercial activities, including opportunities for business growth;*
- *A full spectrum of housing opportunities;*
- *Ecologically sound development and lifestyles and promotion of ecologically sound business practices consistent within the regulatory environment;*
- *Ease of transportation for all modes within and through the area;*
- *A variety of open spaces serving the needs of the area and the city, with emphasis on Lake Union, and its continued preservation for a wide range of uses;*
- *A sensitivity to the area's history and historical elements; and*
- *Coordination with plans of adjacent areas.*

Source: City of Seattle. South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan, 2007.

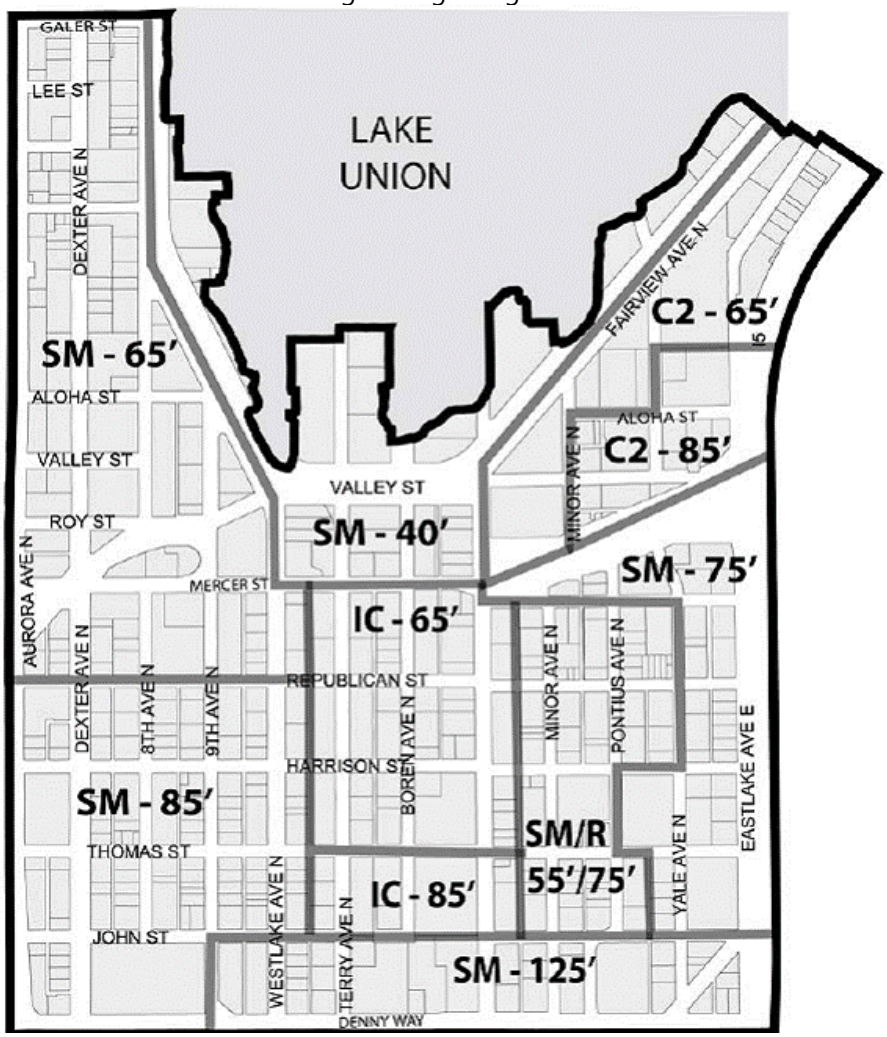
The Neighborhood Plan contains five chapters: Neighborhood Character, Transportation, Parks and Open Space, Housing and Sustainable Development. In each of these chapters, one or more goals for the neighborhood's future are identified. In order to meet those goals, the plan identifies policies, which provide broad direction for City and neighborhood action, and strategies, which are more specific actions to be implemented over the next twenty years.

2.2.5 Existing Zoning

Figure 2-5 shows the existing zoning designations in the neighborhood. Most of the neighborhood is currently zoned Seattle Mixed (SM) with varying height limits. The SM zone provides for a range of residential and commercial uses to support a pedestrian-oriented mixed-use neighborhood. An Industrial Commercial (IC) designation is located in the central part of the neighborhood. This designation allows for a mix of industrial and commercial uses and prohibits most types of residential development. To the northeast and near Lake Union, property is zoned Commercial 2 (C2), providing for auto-oriented, primarily non-retail

commercial uses. Height limits range from 40 feet adjacent to Lake Union to 125 feet along Denny Way.

Figure 2-5
Existing Zoning Designations



Source: South Lake Union Urban Center Neighborhood Plan, 2007

8th Avenue Corridor

This area is currently zoned Seattle Mixed (SM), with a height limit of 85 feet.

Fairview Avenue Corridor

The Fairview Avenue area is zoned Industrial Commercial (IC) between Mercer and John streets. North of Thomas Street, the IC zone has a height limit of 65 feet; while between Thomas and John streets, the height limit is 85 feet. Between John Street and Denny Way, existing zoning is Seattle Mixed (SM), with a height limit of 125 feet.

Valley/Mercer Blocks

This area is currently zoned Seattle Mixed (SM), with a height limit of 40 feet.

Development allowed under existing zoning represents the No Action Alternative in this EIS. Please see Section 2.3.6 for a description of the No Action Alternative.

2.2.4 Urban Design Framework

The Urban Design Framework (UDF) identifies strategies to guide zoning changes, amendments to the South Lake Union Design Guidelines and Right-of-Way Improvement Manual and other implementation actions. The UDF was developed over a multi-year process, beginning in 2008, and included participation from a range of constituents, including planners, urban designers, architects, landscape architects, and neighborhood residents and business owners. The UDF contains recommendations addressing the following elements:

Guiding Principles
Gateways, hearts and edges
Street character
Residential and retail focus areas
Residential open space strategies
Public space network
Views
Upper-level setbacks
Urban form
Lakefront
Neighborhood connections
Green stormwater infrastructure
Incentive zoning priorities

The UDF will guide the work of the Seattle Department of Planning and Development and other departments within the City. Please see Section 2.3.2 for a discussion of the incentive zoning recommendations contained in the UDF and Section 3.4 of this Final EIS for additional discussion of potential mitigation identified in the UDF.

2.2.5 Public Outreach

An extensive public outreach effort was integral to preparation of the South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan. Community members and organizations were involved in shaping the Neighborhood Plan through provision of background information, meeting participation and/or feedback on draft plan recommendations. A summary of major public meetings is provided below, beginning with the most recent.

- Draft EIS Public Meeting. A public open house and meeting was conducted on March 28, 2011. Public comment received at this meeting, together with response to these comments, is included in Chapter 5 of this Final EIS.

- Urban Design Framework Public Meeting. Held January 26, 2010, to review and comment on draft South Lake Union Design Framework Principles and Actions
- Public Workshop. Held February 12, 2008 to review and comment on the results of a recent design charrette conducted as part of the South Lake Union Urban Form Study. At the charrette, several scenarios for future development of the South Lake Union neighborhood were produced. The open house was an opportunity to view the charrette results, offer comments, and learn how these alternative scenarios will be used in the Urban Form Study.
- Urban Form Study Scoping Meeting. Held November 19, 2008 to invite comments on the preliminary EIS scope.
- Kick-Off Meeting. Held January 9, 2008 to kick off the South Lake Union Urban Form Study, leading to recommendations for changes to height and density regulations that will help shape the character of South Lake Union for the next 20-30 years.
- Public Hearing. Held December 10, 2007, public hearing on proposed land use code amendments to the South Lake Union Industrial Commercial Zone.
- Open House. Held on October 29, 2007 as a celebration of the completion of the South Lake Union neighborhood plan.
- Open House. Held June 26, 2007 to discuss the priorities of the South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan recommendations.
- Open House. Held June 12, 2006 to present the updated South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan.
- Public Workshop. Held on April 4, 2006 to discuss key issues in the neighborhood plan update.
- Open House. Held on November 29, 2005 to gather feedback on draft goals and policies for a draft South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan.
- Open House. Held on June 7, 2005. University of Washington Master of Urban Planning students showcased 20 weeks of work on topics such as urban design, housing, sustainability, community identity, streetscapes, historic preservation, and more.

Public involvement continues to be an important element of the planning process. Future consideration of this proposal will include review by the Seattle Planning Commission and City Council. Prior to any action, public comment will be invited. Please see the project website at http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/South_Lake_Union/Overview/ for continuing updates to the planning process.

2.3 Proposed Action and Alternatives

2.3.1 Overview

In order to meet the goals of the Comprehensive Plan, the City is considering adoption of incentive zoning provisions to allow increased height and density in certain areas of the South Lake Union neighborhood. The City has identified four alternatives, each of which describes a different pattern of height and density in the neighborhood. In general, Alternative 1 would provide for the greatest increases in building height and corresponding residential density. Similarly, Alternative 2 provides for height and density increases, but relatively less than Alternative 1. Alternative 3 provides for the least amount of height and density increase relative to the action alternatives. Alternative 4 would retain the existing zoning standards and height limits. **Table 2-3** summarizes the key features of the alternatives.

Table 2-3
Alternatives Overview

Features	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Podium Height	45′ – 85′	30 – 45′	20 – 45′	Not applicable
Incentive Zoning Height Limits	85′ – 400′	85′ – 300′	85′ – 240′	Not applicable
Floor Plate Size	Commercial - 24,000 sf above podium height for commercial Residential - 10,500 sf average/11,500 sf maximum above podium height			Not applicable
Floor Area Ratio Limits	Commercial: Base of 4.5 or 5; up to 7 with bonuses Residential: no FAR limits			4.5 to 5
Residential Densities	Varies according to building height and podium size. The range of densities at different heights is shown below. Note that not all alternatives include all of the heights listed. 400′ height limit: 720 – 890 units/acre 300′ height limit: 562 – 655 units/acre 240′ height limit: 465 – 535 units/acre 160′ height limit: 327 – 385 units/acre Lower building heights and corresponding densities are assumed for lots fronting Lake Union. See Draft EIS Appendix B for complete methodology.			Not applicable
Minimum Lot Size for Towers	22,000 sf (2 towers/block), 60,000 sf (1 tower/block)			Not applicable

Source: City of Seattle, 2010

A podium is the base of a building that supports a tower.

A floor plate is the horizontal plane of the floor of a building, measured to the inside surface of exterior walls.

Floor area ratio is the ratio of the total square feet of a building to the total square feet of the property on which it is located.

2.3.2 Incentives

An incentive program offers development bonuses, usually in the form of additional height or floor area, for development projects that offer public benefits and amenities. As shown in **Table 2-2**, the three action alternatives include the potential for an FAR bonus and increased height through the provision of public benefits as defined by incentive zoning.

A bonus is an incentive offered to developers, usually in the form of increased height or floor area, for providing a public benefit, such as affordable housing, energy efficiency, open space and others.

Seattle Municipal Code Section 23.58A establishes conditions and process for development incentives. As described in this Section, buildings less than 85 feet in height may gain increased floor area only through the provision of affordable housing as established by the provisions of Section 23.58A.014. For buildings greater than 85 feet in height, other City approved bonus options may be used for up to 40% of their increased floor area, as long as at least 60% of the increased floor area is supported by the provision of affordable housing through the process established in Section 23.58A.014.

Although not currently applicable in South Lake Union, future development under any of the action alternatives would be able to seek floor area bonuses consistent with the requirements of Seattle Municipal Code 23.58A. For buildings taller than 85 feet in height, potential public benefits that could be included as a future development incentive, in addition to the affordable housing requirement, will be specifically identified following public comment and City review of EIS findings.

The *South Lake Union Urban Design Framework* addresses strategies to support increased density and intensity of development while maintaining the neighborhood character described in the Neighborhood Plan. The document identifies the following list of public amenity priorities that could be incorporated into an incentive program for South Lake Union:

Transfer of development rights is a zoning tool that allows property owners in areas with constraints to development, such as significant environmental features or historical significance, to sell their development rights to property owners in areas more suitable for development.

- **Renovation of 100 Dexter.** Convert the Parks office facility into a new center for community, arts, and culture.
- **Public Space and Streetscapes.** Develop pocket plaza, play area, or streetscape improvements consistent with Urban Design Framework. Improvements should focus in pedestrian corridors, such as Thomas, Terry and 8th Avenue. Streetscape improvements could include green stormwater facilities exceeding Stormwater Code requirements.
- **Landmark Preservation.** Use transfer of development rights to landmark buildings based on an updated inventory of South Lake Union.

- **Housing Preservation.** Use transfer of development rights to protect existing affordable housing, including red brick buildings (Carolina Ct, Grandview, Carlton Apts., 502 Minor N, Carolyn Manor Apts., Brewster, Jensen).
- **Reduced Overwater Coverage.** Use transfer of development rights to encourage removal of overwater buildings along the west shore of Lake Union to provide shoreline habitat and public access trail improvements consistent with Shoreline Master Program.

Source: South Lake Union Urban Design Framework, 2010

LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is a building certification program focused on environmental and human health, energy efficiency, indoor environmental quality, materials selection, sustainable site development and water savings. Buildings can qualify for four levels of ratings: certified, silver, gold or platinum.

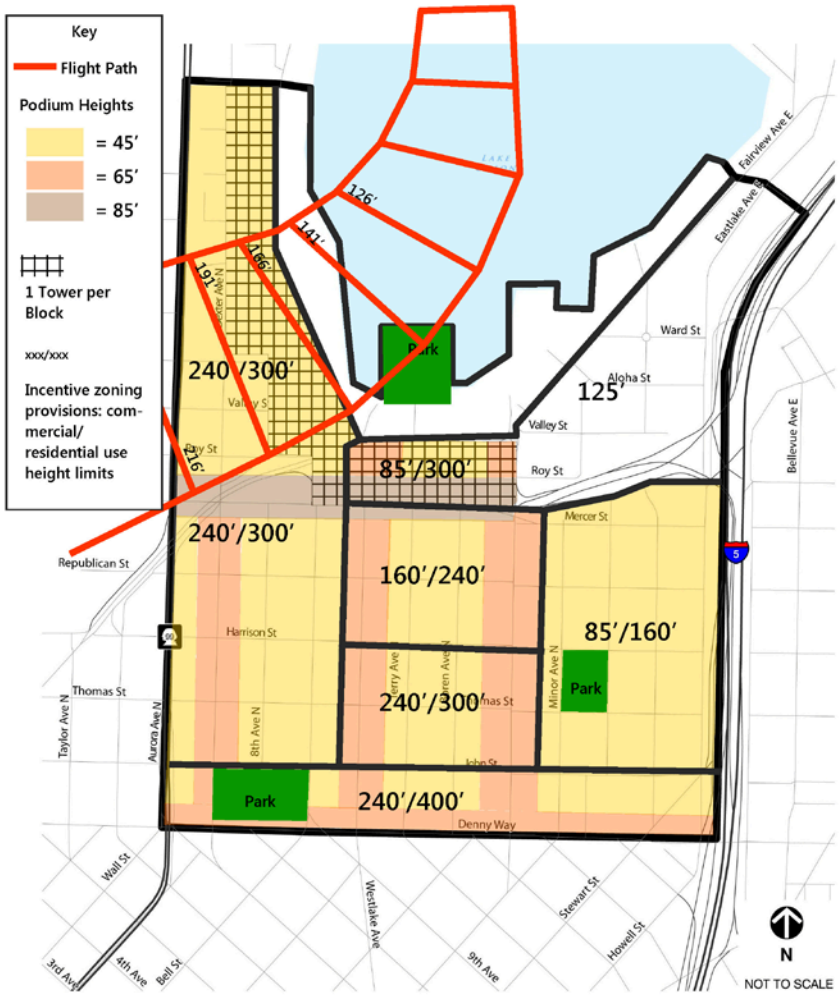
In addition to the measures identified in the UDF, the City has identified the following public priorities that could be incorporated into a incentive program for South Lake Union:

- **Regional TDR.** Through City of Seattle Resolution #31147, the City states support for a regional TDR program that promotes preservation of rural farms through a transfer of development rights to the urban area. Recent state legislation (ESSB 5253) provides the potential for receiving areas to benefit from increased intensity of development through a new infrastructure funding framework.
- **LEED for Neighborhood Development (ND).** LEED ND integrates the principles of smart growth, urbanism and green building into an established system for neighborhood design. Criteria address linkages, compact land use patterns, green infrastructure and buildings and innovation and design. LEED ND supports many of the City's sustainability goals and core values as established in the City's Comprehensive Plan.
- In addition, existing incentive programs in other zones in the City provide bonuses for meeting a specific LEED™ standard, provision or payment in lieu of childcare, provision of public amenities, such as open space, or some combination of these benefits.

2.3.3 Alternative 1

Alternative 1 would permit the greatest increases in height and density, relative to the other alternatives. Key features of this alternative are described below and shown in **Figure 2-6**.

Figure 2-6
Alternative 1



Source: City of Seattle, 2010

Zoning Designations. The underlying Seattle Mixed zoning designation would be retained in all parts of the neighborhood. The existing Industrial Commercial (IC) designation would be rezoned to Seattle Mixed.

Shoreline Designations. No changes to the existing shoreline designations are proposed under any of the alternatives.

Permitted Uses. The Seattle Mixed zone provides for a wide range of uses to encourage development of the area into a mixed-use neighborhood with a pedestrian orientation or an area that is in transition from traditional manufacturing or commercial uses to one where residential use is also appropriate.

Height and FAR Bonuses. Alternative 1 provides the greatest potential for increased FAR and building height through the use of incentive zoning, relative to the action alternatives. Maximum building heights that could be achieved under incentive zoning provisions would vary throughout the neighborhood, as shown in **Figure 2-6** and described below.

Building Heights. Greatest heights are permitted along the southern edge of the neighborhood, between Denny Way and John Street. In this area, residential towers could be 400 feet and commercial towers 240 feet in height.

Lowest heights continue in the east central part of the neighborhood, roughly corresponding to the Cascade neighborhood. In this area, maximum heights of 160 feet for residential towers and 85 feet for commercial uses are established.

In the balance of the neighborhood, maximum heights range between 240 to 300 feet for residential towers. Commercial uses in mixed use buildings are limited to 20 feet along the 8th Avenue corridor, between John and Republican Streets and to 85 feet in the blocks bounded by Mercer, Valley and Roy streets and 9th Avenue. In the remaining areas, commercial height limits vary from 160 feet to 240 feet.

Lake Union Seaport Flight Path. Regardless of permitted building heights allowed by city zoning provisions, building heights in the approach/departure corridor for the Lake Union Seaport Airport would continue to be limited according to Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requirements, as shown in **Figure 2-4**.

Podium Heights. Podium heights of up to 85 feet are allowed along the Mercer Street corridor. Along the Dexter, Westlake, Fairview and Denny Way corridors, maximum podium height is 65 feet. Podium heights are limited to 45 feet in the balance of the area.

Floor Area Ratio. Commercial floor area ratio is limited to a base of five, with the potential of increasing to a maximum of seven through use of incentives or TDR.

Floor Plate Size. Commercial floor plates are limited to a maximum of 24,000 sf. Residential floor plates are limited to an average of 10,500 sf for the entire tower, with a maximum of 11,500 sf above the podium.

Density. Density assumptions vary according to building height and podium size. In general, the range of densities assumed in this EIS are as follows:

- 400' height limit: 720 – 890 units/acre
- 300' height limit: 562 – 655 units/acre
- 240' height limit: 465 – 535 units/acre
- 160' height limit: 327 – 385 units/acre

Lower building heights and corresponding densities are assumed for lots near Lake Union. See **Appendix B** for a complete discussion of the methodology used to estimate residential densities.

Tower Location. Near Lake Union, but outside of the 200' designated shoreline area, a maximum of one tower per block, (equivalent to a minimum 60,000 sf lot size) is permitted. This area is shown in a crosshatched pattern in **Figure 2-6**. For the balance of the area, a maximum of two towers per block (equivalent to a minimum 22,000 sf lot size) is permitted.

8th Avenue Corridor. This area is zoned SM 20/300, allowing a maximum height of 20 for commercial uses and 300 feet for residential uses. The maximum podium height in this area is 45 feet. Two towers per block area permitted.

Fairview Avenue Corridor. This area is zoned SM, with varying building heights. In the blocks between Valley and Mercer streets, the height limit is 300'. In the area between Mercer and Harrison streets, height limits are 160 feet for commercial uses and 240 feet for residential uses, increasing to 240 feet for commercial uses and 300 feet for residential uses between Harrison and John streets and to 240 feet for commercial uses and 400 feet for residential uses between John Street and Denny Way. The maximum podium height is 65 feet. Two towers per block are permitted.

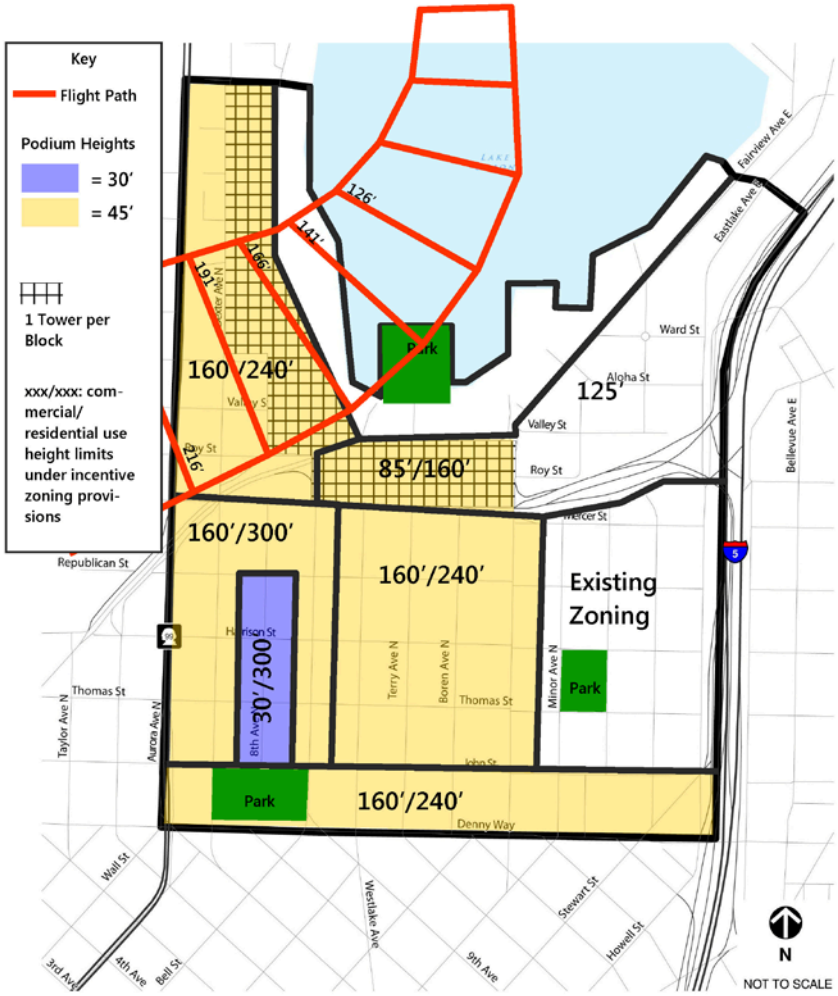
Valley/Mercer Blocks. This area is zoned SM 85/300, allowing a maximum building height of 85 feet for commercial uses and 300 feet for residential uses. Permitted podium heights vary between 45 and 85 feet within this area. A maximum of one tower per block is permitted in this area.

2.3.4 Alternative 2

Alternative 2 describes a development scenario that would allow increases in height and density that are generally between that of Alternatives 1 and

3. Key features of this alternative are described below and shown in **Figure 2-7**.

Figure 2-7
Alternative 2



Source: City of Seattle, 2010

Zoning Designations. The underlying Seattle Mixed zoning designation would be retained in all parts of the neighborhood. The existing Industrial Commercial (IC) designation would be rezoned to Seattle Mixed.

Shoreline Designations. No changes to the existing shoreline designations are proposed under any of the alternatives.

Permitted Uses. The Seattle Mixed zone provides for a wide range of uses to encourage development of the area into a mixed-use neighborhood with a pedestrian orientation or an area that is in transition

from traditional manufacturing or commercial uses to one where residential use is also appropriate.

Height and FAR Bonuses. Alternative 2 provides for a mid-range of increased FAR and height bonuses through the use of incentive zoning, relative to the action alternatives. No incentives for increased height and FAR would be established in the eastern portion of the neighborhood (portions of the Cascade and Fairview neighborhoods). Maximum building heights that could be achieved under incentive zoning provisions would vary throughout the neighborhood, as shown in **Figure 2-6** and described below.

Building Heights. Greatest heights are permitted in the southwestern portion of the neighborhood, corresponding to the Denny Park subarea. In this area, residential towers could be 300 feet and commercial towers 160 feet in height. Within this area, height limits are reduced along the 8th Avenue corridor, with commercial development limited to 20 feet and residential to 240 feet in height.

Height limits are lowest in the northern part of the neighborhood. In the blocks bounded by Mercer, Valley and Roy Streets and 9th Avenue North, commercial uses are limited to 85 feet and residential uses to 160 feet in height. Immediately to the east, in the Fairview neighborhood, building heights are limited to 125 feet. In the balance of the neighborhood, maximum height for residential towers is 240 feet and for commercial buildings 160 feet.

Lake Union Seaport Flight Path. Regardless of permitted building heights allowed by city zoning provisions, building heights in the approach/departure corridor for the Lake Union Seaport Airport would continue to be limited according to Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requirements, as shown in **Figure 2-4**.

Podium Heights. Podium heights are limited to 30 feet along the 8th Avenue corridor and 45 feet in all other parts of the neighborhood.

Floor Area Ratio. Same as Alternative 1. Commercial floor area ratio is limited to a base of five, with the potential of going up to a maximum of seven with incentives or TDR.

Density. Density assumptions vary according to building height and podium size. In general, the range of densities assumed in this EIS are as follows:

- 300' height limit: 562 – 655 units/acre
- 240' height limit: 465 – 535 units/acre
- 160' height limit: 327 – 385 units/acre

Lower building heights and corresponding densities are assumed for lots fronting Lake Union. See **Appendix B** for a complete discussion of the methodology used to estimate residential densities.

Floor Plate Size. Same as Alternative 1. Commercial floor plates are limited to a maximum of 24,000 sf. Residential floor plates are limited to an average of 10,500 sf for the entire tower, with a maximum of 11,500 sf above the podium.

Tower Location. Same as Alternative 1. Near Lake Union, but outside of the 200' designated shoreline area, a maximum of one tower per block, (equivalent to a minimum 60,000 sf lot size) is permitted. This area is shown in a crosshatched pattern in **Figure 2-7**. For the balance of the area, a maximum of two towers per block (equivalent to a minimum 22,000 sf lot size) is permitted.

8th Avenue Corridor. This area is zoned SM 20/240, allowing a maximum height of 20 feet for commercial uses and 240 feet for residential uses. The maximum podium height in this area is 20 feet. Two towers per block area permitted.

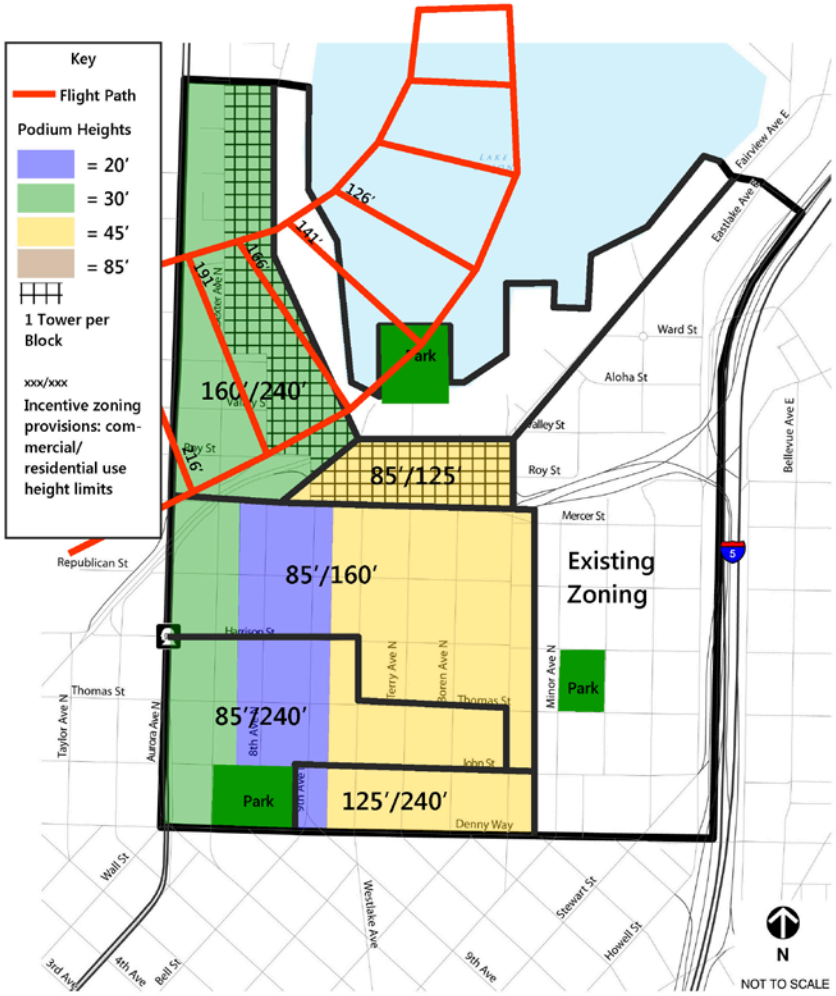
Fairview Avenue Corridor. This area is zoned SM, allowing a maximum building height of 160 feet for commercial uses and 240 feet for residential development. The maximum podium height is 45 feet. Two towers per block are permitted.

Valley/Mercer Blocks. This area is zoned SM 85/300, allowing a maximum building height of 85 feet for commercial uses and 300 feet for residential uses. Permitted podium heights vary between 45 and 85 feet within this area. A maximum of one tower per block is permitted in this area.

2.3.5 Alternative 3

Alternative 3 describes a development scenario that would permit the least amount of increase in height and density, relative to the other action alternatives. Potential height increases are focused on residential development. Key features of this alternative are described below and shown in **Figure 2-8**.

Figure 2-8
Alternative 3



Source: City of Seattle, 2010

Zoning Designations. The underlying Seattle Mixed zoning designation would be retained in all parts of the neighborhood. The existing Industrial Commercial (IC) designation would be rezoned to Seattle Mixed.

Shoreline Designations. No changes to the existing shoreline designations are proposed under any of the alternatives.

Permitted Uses. The Seattle Mixed zone provides for a wide range of uses to encourage development of the area into a mixed-use neighborhood with a pedestrian orientation or an area that is in transition from traditional manufacturing or commercial uses to one where residential use is also appropriate.

Height and FAR Bonuses. Alternative 3 provides the least potential for increased FAR and height bonuses through the use of incentive zoning, relative to the action alternatives. No incentives for increased height and FAR would be established in the eastern portion of the neighborhood (portions of the Cascade and Fairview neighborhoods). Maximum building heights that could be achieved under incentive zoning provisions would vary throughout the neighborhood, as shown in **Figure 2-6** and described below.

Building Heights. Alternative 3 allows building heights up to 240 feet for residential development and 125 feet for commercial uses between Denny Way, John Street, 9th Avenue North and the east side of Fairview Avenue.

Commercial use height limits vary between 65 feet to 85 feet in the rest of the area. In the central part of the neighborhood, residential height limits decrease from 240 feet along John Street to 125 feet in the blocks between Mercer and Valley Streets. West of 9th Avenue and north of Mercer Street (Dexter neighborhood), residential building heights are limited to 240 feet.

Lake Union Seaport Flight Path. Regardless of permitted building heights allowed by city zoning provisions, building heights in the approach/departure corridor for the Lake Union Seaport Airport would continue to be limited according to Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requirements, as shown in **Figure 2-4**.

Podium Heights. Podium heights are limited to 20 feet along the 8th and 9th Avenue corridors. West and north of this corridor, podium heights are limited to 30 feet. In the remaining area, podium heights are limited to 45 feet.

Floor Area Ratio. Same as Alternatives 1 and 2. Commercial floor area ratio is limited to a base of five with the potential of going up to a maximum of seven with incentives or TDR.

Floor Plate Size. Same as Alternatives 1 and 2. Commercial floor plates are limited to a maximum of 24,000 sf. Residential floor plates are limited to an average of 10,500 sf for the entire tower, with a maximum of 11,500 sf above the podium.

Density. Density assumptions vary according to building height and podium size. In general, the range of densities assumed in this EIS are as follows:

- 240' height limit: 465 – 535 units/acre
- 160' height limit: 327 – 385 units/acre

Lower building heights and corresponding densities are assumed for lots near Lake Union. See **Appendix B** for a complete discussion of the methodology used to estimate residential densities.

Tower Location. Same as Alternatives 1 and 2. Near Lake Union, but outside of the 200' designated shoreline area, a maximum of one tower per block, (equivalent to a minimum 60,000 sf lot size) is permitted. This area is shown in a crosshatched pattern in **Figure 2-8**. For the balance of the area, a maximum of two towers per block (equivalent to a minimum 22,000 sf lot size) is permitted.

8th Avenue Corridor. This area is zoned SM, with increasing height allowed moving south from Republican Street. Between Republic and Harrison streets, building heights are limited to 85 feet for commercial uses and 160 feet for residential uses. South of Harrison, the maximum commercial use limit remains at 85 feet, but the height limit for residential uses increases to 240 feet. The maximum podium height in this area is 20 feet. Two towers per block area permitted.

Fairview Avenue Corridor. This area is zoned SM, with increasing heights allowed moving south from Mercer Street. In the area between Mercer and Thomas streets, buildings height limits are 85 feet for commercial uses and 160 feet for residential uses, remaining at 85 feet for commercial uses and increasing 240 feet for residential uses between Thomas and John streets, and to 125 feet for commercial uses and 240 feet for residential uses between John Street and Denny Way. The maximum podium height is 45 feet. Two towers per block are permitted.

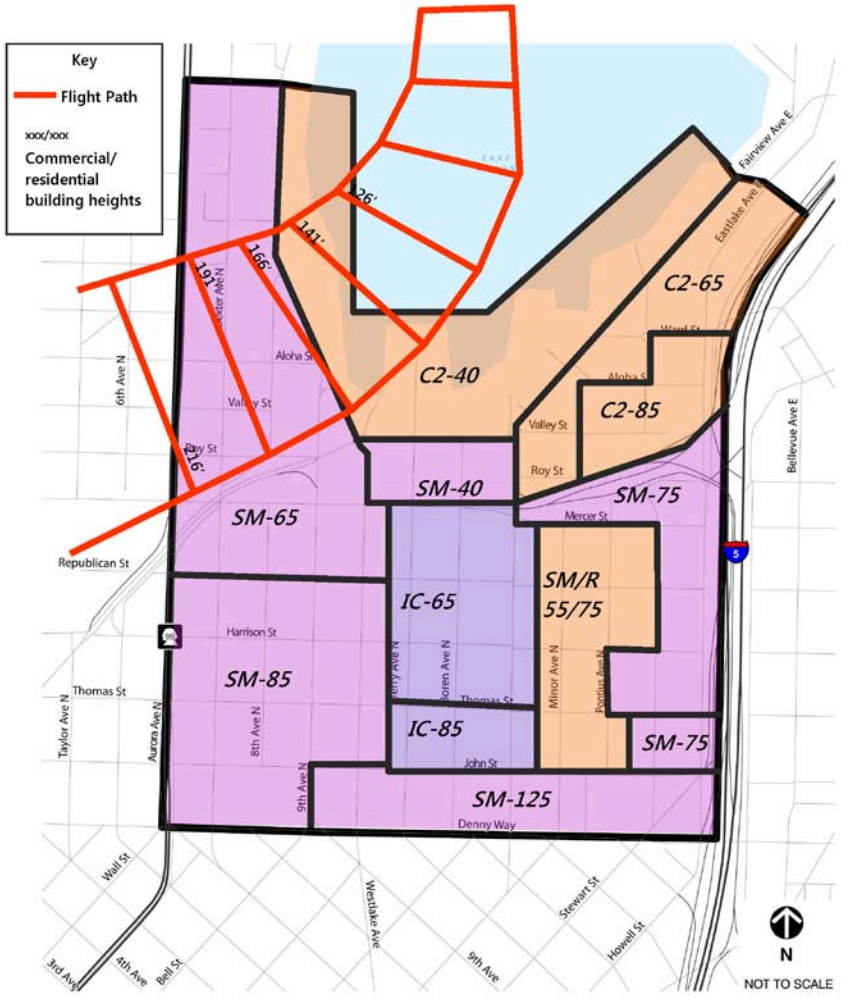
Valley/Mercer Blocks. This area is zoned SM, allowing a maximum building height of 85 feet for commercial uses and 125 feet for residential uses. Maximum podium height is 45 feet. A maximum of one tower per block is permitted in this area.

2.3.6 Alternative 4

Alternative 4 retains the existing zoning designations in the neighborhood, with no potential for height increases through incentive

zoning provisions. Key features of this alternative are described below and shown in **Figure 2-9**.

Figure 2-9
Alternative 4



Source: City of Seattle, 2010

Zoning Designations. The majority of the neighborhood would remain Seattle Mixed at varying heights, ranging from SM-125" along Denny Way, down to SM-40 in the central Waterfront area, as shown in **Figure 2-8.** The Fairview area would retain the existing Commercial (C2) zoning. The central portion of the neighborhood would remain in an Industrial Commercial (IC) zone.

Shoreline Designations. No changes to the existing shoreline designations are proposed under any of the alternatives.

Permitted Uses. The Seattle Mixed zone provides for a wide range of uses to encourage development of the area into a mixed-use

neighborhood with a pedestrian orientation or an area that is in transition from traditional manufacturing or commercial uses to one where residential use is also appropriate.

The C-2 zone provides for an auto-oriented, primarily non-retail commercial area that provides a wide range of commercial activities serving a community, citywide, or regional function, including uses such as manufacturing and warehousing that are less appropriate in more-retail-oriented commercial areas.

The IC zone is intended to promote development of businesses which incorporate a mix of industrial and commercial activities, including light manufacturing and research and development, while accommodating a wide range of other employment activities. Most residential development is not permitted in this zone.

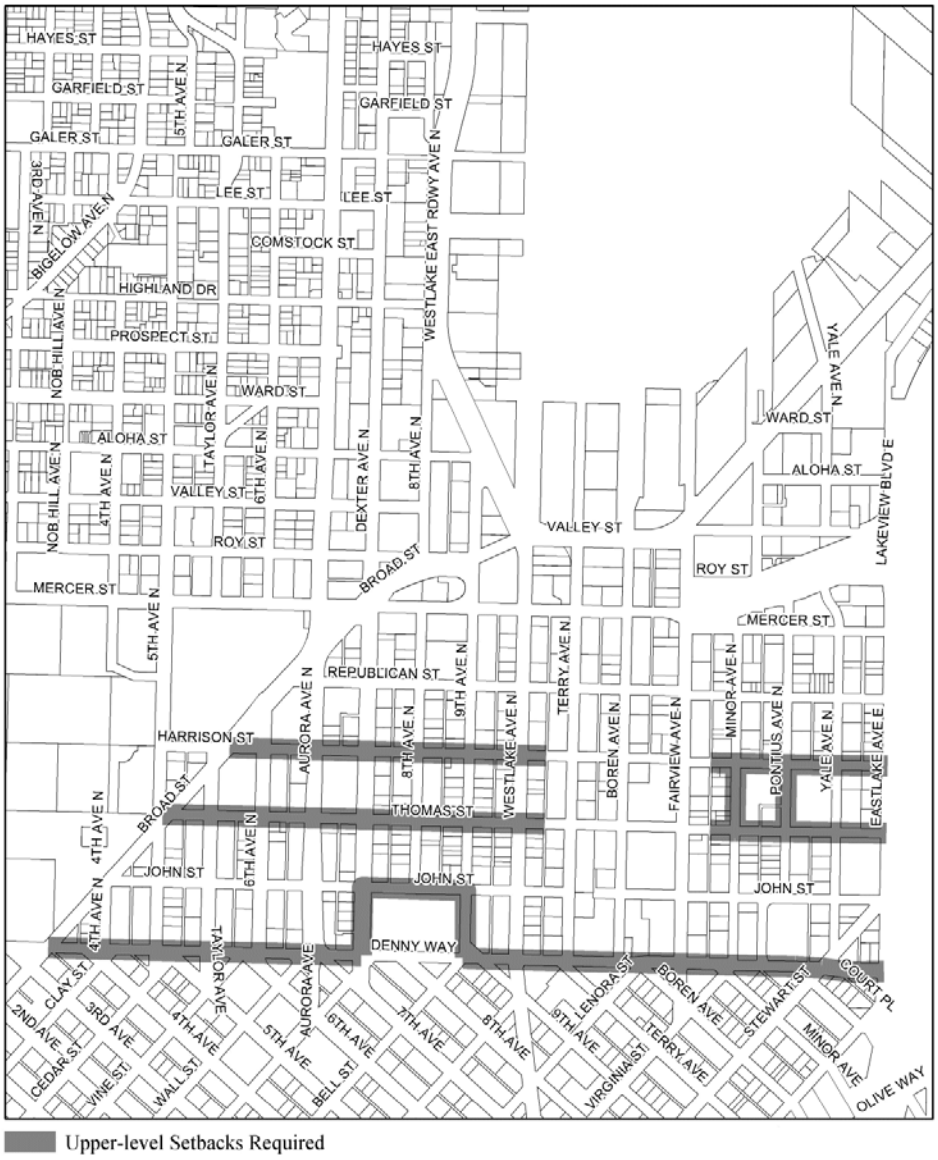
Height and FAR Bonuses. Alternative 4 does not propose any height or FAR bonuses through incentive zoning provisions.

Building Heights. In general, height limits are lowest near Lake Union and in the Cascade subarea, with height limits ranging between 40 and 75 feet in these areas. Greatest heights (up to 125 feet) are permitted along the southern edge of the neighborhood, along Denny Way and John Street. In this area, a maximum of 125 feet is permitted.

Lake Union Seaport Flight Path. Regardless of permitted building heights allowed by city zoning provisions, building heights in the approach/departure corridor for the Lake Union Seaport Airport would continue to be limited according to Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requirements, as shown in **Figure 2-4**.

Podium Heights. Existing zoning standards do not specifically define podium heights, but do require upper level setbacks in certain areas. To some extent, these upper level setbacks define a podium for the development. In general, the area along Denny Way in the SM-125' zone requires an upper level setback for any portion of a structure greater than 75 feet in height. Similarly, along portions of Thomas and Harrison Streets, upper level setbacks are required for structures greater than 25 feet (in residential areas) and 45 feet in height. See **Figure 2-10** for the location of upper level setback requirements.

Figure 2-10
Upper Level Setback Requirements



Source: City of Seattle Land Use Code, 2010

Floor Area Ratio. In the SM 85 zone, the maximum commercial FAR is 4.5. In the SM-125' zone, the maximum commercial FAR is 5. There are no FAR limits for residential uses and the remaining zoning designations do not establish a maximum FAR standard.

Floor Plate Size. Existing zoning standards do not establish a minimum floor plate size.

Density. Densities are not limited under current zoning, except by existing height and bulk requirements.

Tower Location. Existing zoning standards do not establish a minimum lot size for towers.

8th Avenue Corridor. This area is currently zoned Seattle Mixed (SM), with a height limit of 85 feet.

Fairview Avenue Corridor. The Fairview Avenue area is zoned Industrial Commercial (IC) between Mercer and John streets. North of Thomas Street, the IC zone has a height limit of 65 feet; while between Thomas and John streets, the height limit is 85 feet. Between John Street and Denny Way, existing zoning is Seattle Mixed (SM), with a height limit of 125 feet.

Valley/Mercer Blocks. This area is currently zoned Seattle Mixed (SM), with a height limit of 40 feet.

2.3.7 Alternatives Eliminated from Consideration

The 2008 South Lake Union Urban Form Study resulted in initial alternatives that were described in the 2008 EIS Scoping Notice. These initial alternatives were similar to those currently proposed, but had substantive differences in terms of tower spacing and podium heights. As previously described, the current alternatives were developed as part of the 2009 Design Framework planning process and are intended to address concerns raised by the neighborhood about the initial alternatives. Specific changes made to the initial alternatives that led to the current alternatives include:

<u>All Alternatives</u>

- Residential floor plate size reduced from 12,500 sf below 160' to an average of 10,500 sf for the entire tower.
- Commercial floor plate size reduced from 35,000 sf to 24,000 sf.
- Commercial floor area ratio changed from unlimited to seven.
- Increase minimum lot size from 18,000 sf to 24,000 sf (2 towers per block); established minimum lot size of 60,000 sf for lots Lakefront lots.
- In most places where height of 400 feet had been proposed, reduced to no greater than 300 feet.

<u>Alternative 1</u>

- Podiums reduced to 45' in most areas, but higher on wider and more intensely used streets.

Alternative 2

- Maximum height between Valley and Mercer streets reduced from 240 to 160'.
- Commercial height in the area generally between Westlake and Fairview streets reduced from 240 to 160'.
- Residential focus changes from 8th and 9th avenues to only 8th Avenue.

Alternative 3

- Maximum height for commercial buildings between Valley and Mercer streets reduced to from 125' to 85'.

2.4 Environmental Review

Chapter 2 Contents
Introduction
Planning Context
Proposed Action and Alternatives
Environmental Review
Benefits and Disadvantages of Delaying the

2.4.1 Purpose

The purpose of this EIS is to assist the public and agency decision-makers in considering the potential environmental effects of proposed changes to Zoning Code standards for height and density in the South Lake Union Neighborhood.

2.4.2 Programmatic Review

SEPA requires government officials to consider the environmental consequences of proposed actions, and to consider better or less damaging ways to accomplish the objectives of those proposed actions. They must consider whether the proposed action will have a probable significant adverse environmental impact on the elements of the natural and built environment.

This EIS provides qualitative and quantitative analysis of environmental impacts as appropriate to the general nature of the Proposed Action planning efforts. The adoption of development regulations is classified by SEPA as a non-project (i.e., programmatic) action. A non-project action is defined as an action that is broader than a single site-specific project, and involves decisions on policies, plans, or programs. An EIS for a non-project proposal does not require site-specific analyses; instead, the EIS will discuss impacts and alternatives appropriate to the scope of the non-project proposal and to the level of planning for the proposal. (WAC 197-11-442)

Within the context of programmatic review, and as described in Section 2.1, this EIS will also consider three focus areas in greater detail. This increased level of detail will provide a basis for future environmental review, allowing for a more streamlined review of specific sites within these focus areas. (see **Figure 2-3**).

2.4.3 Phased Review

SEPA encourages the use of phased environmental review to focus on issues that are ready for decision, and to exclude from consideration issues already decided or not yet ready for decision-making [WAC 197-11-060 (5)]. Phased review is appropriate where the sequence of a proposal is from a programmatic document, such as an EIS addressing a comprehensive plan, to other documents that are narrower in scope, such as for a site-specific, project-level analysis. The City of Seattle is using phased review, as authorized by SEPA, in this environmental review. The analysis in this EIS will be used to review the environmental impacts of the proposed height and density changes in the South Lake Union neighborhood.

This analysis will also provide a more specific review of potential development impacts within three focus areas. This analysis will allow for a future phase of SEPA review that may be able to incorporate the analysis in this EIS and streamline future project-level SEPA review.

2.4.4 EIS Scope of Analysis

The City issued a Determination of Significance and Scoping Notice on November 18, 2008. During the scoping comment period, which extended from November 18 to December 18, 2008, interested citizens, agencies, organization and affected tribes were invited to provide comments on the scope of the EIS. Comments received during the comment period raised issues related to specific environmental impacts proposed for study in the EIS, the alternatives proposed for study and the planning process that led to the proposed alternatives.

Subsequently, the City worked with neighborhood stakeholders to develop an Urban Design Framework. This Design Framework was developed in direct response to the concerns raised by stakeholders in their scoping comments and is intended to complement and inform the EIS alternatives, provide direction on potential impact mitigation, as well as serve as a tool to guide implementation of the Neighborhood Plan.

Based on this process, the City revised the EIS alternatives and finalized the scope of the EIS. Environmental topics addressed in this EIS include:

Land Use Plans & Policies
Housing
Aesthetics & Urban Design
Transportation
Open Space & Recreation
Public Services & Utilities
Soils/Geology
Water
Air Quality
Greenhouse Gas
Environmental Health
Noise
Plants & Animals
Historic & Cultural Resources

2.4.5 Prior Environmental Review

The South Lake Union neighborhood has experienced a significant amount of public and private development in the past several years. The documentation of the SEPA review process for many of these projects is a source of valuable data and have been consulted in preparing this EIS. Whenever used in this EIS, prior documents have been cited as a source of information. Consulted documents include:

Amazon World Headquarters SEPA Review (multiple processes and documents)

Group Health Headquarters/Westlake Terry Building Expanded SEPA Checklist

Fred Hutchison Cancer Research Center EIS,

UW School of Medicine Phase II and III EIS

Museum of History & Industry (MOHAI) Expanded SEPA Checklist

2200 Westlake Avenue/2200 EIS Addendum

2201 Westlake Avenue/ENSO EIS Addendum

Lake Union Park Master Plan EIS

2.5 Benefits and Disadvantages of Delaying the Proposed Action

Delaying adoption of zoning incentives to allow for increased height and density in the South Lake Union neighborhood could reduce the likelihood of public benefits that may be experienced as a result of zoning incentives. Because the existing IC and C2 zones would be retained, residential development would remain focused in the existing SM zone. Delaying the action would also maintain existing height limits. Depending on the perspective of the individual, this may be seen as a benefit or a disadvantage.