



# City of Seattle

## Department of Planning and Development

Diane M. Sugimura, Director

February 14, 2013

To: Councilmember Richard Conlin, Chair  
Planning, Land Use and Sustainability (PLUS) Committee

From: Gordon Clowers, Senior Planner  
Mike Podowski, Manager

Re: Greenwood/Phinney Ridge Urban Village Rezone

In response to requests from property owners and support from community members within the affected area, DPD offers the following supplemental analysis. In light of new information, DPD supports amendments to the original proposal as follows:

- Do not include a Pedestrian (P) zone designation for the southern blockface along NW 85<sup>th</sup> Street between 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenues NW that is zoned Neighborhood Commercial 2-40; and
- Allow a minor increase in floor area of 0.75 floor area ratio (FAR) in this same area, without changing the existing 40-foot height limit.

### Unique Conditions

Portions of the half-block south of NW 85<sup>th</sup> Street between 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenues NW are affected by a number of unique factors that serve as a basis to amend the original proposal as summarized above:

1. These properties are in proximity of peat soils and high groundwater -- in some places within approximately 15 feet of soil depth, which would affect depth, cost and constructability of sub-surface parking, for example:
  - Past geotechnical studies indicate an approximate groundwater elevation that is ten feet below surface level on all properties potentially affected by this amendment (*Greenwood Subsurface Characterization Study, April 2004, Shannon & Wilson, Inc.*);
  - The combination of soil types and groundwater conditions present challenges and make garage construction economically infeasible for this scale of development in this location, which would force parking into the buildable area and therefore subject to the density limit.
2. A substandard-width alley at the rear of these properties has unusually variable topography that rises several feet above the street level of NW 85<sup>th</sup> Street, which presents a unique physical constraint for alley access to parking.



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3. When combined with the above factors, the limited depth of the property (105 feet) is a further constraint because it limits the ability to effectively develop parking spaces, vehicular access lanes, street-front non-residential uses, and residential entrances (as would be required in a P zone);
4. Proximity of single-family homes directly south of the alley encourages retention of the existing 40-foot height limit, a further limiting factor for site development.

### **P-Zone**

Retaining the existing zoning without a P-designation is more appropriate here to allow for street-level uses on a constrained site. Under a P zone designation, a floor plan with the required 80% presence of non-residential uses along the street-level façade would be difficult to achieve if a building would also need to fit in a residential entrance, interior parking and a garage access point. These kinds of ground-floor space allocation design challenges would tend to present a substantial practical barrier to infill development for properties on the south side of 85<sup>th</sup> Street between 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Aves NW.

DPD's original recommendation on the P-zone designation did not fully consider the unique site characteristics and the practical building design constraints created by the combination of nearby challenging soils, topographical conditions, and site dimensions, for that portion south of NW 85<sup>th</sup> Street and west of 1<sup>st</sup> Ave NW. Thus, a reasonable outcome would be to maintain the existing NC2-40 zone without the P designation. This conclusion is meant to update and replace the P-zone conclusions made at pages 22 and 24 in the April 2012 Director's Report.

### **Floor Area**

A maximum FAR of 4.0 is now proposed for mixed-use development, 0.75 FAR greater than the otherwise applicable density limit of 3.25 for mixed use development in the NC2-40 zone. The proposed additional FAR would facilitate development by providing more space (and associated building area) within the development "envelope" above grade to help address the difficult site constraints – proximity to the peat soils and high water table, combined with the limited depth of these properties and variable topography.

### **Conclusion**

The proposed minor changes to the original rezone proposal are tied to unique characteristics of the properties on the south side of NW 85<sup>th</sup> Street between 1<sup>st</sup> and 3rd Avenues NW. The changes to the rezone proposal are supported by the Greenwood Community Council, would encourage outcomes compatible with local land use patterns, and are consistent with the objectives of promoting mixed-use development and a vibrant activity center in Greenwood consistent with the neighborhood plan for the Greenwood/Phinney Ridge Urban Village.

Thank you for considering this supplemental information. We are available to answer any questions you may have.