

# Recommendations for New Multifamily Zones



## Concept Report



*Working with the Community  
to Update Seattle's Urban  
Neighborhoods.*

# Recommendations for New Multifamily Zones

In April 2006, the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) published a preliminary concept for changing and updating Seattle's multifamily zoning requirements. Preliminary recommendations for amending multifamily zoning were the subject of a public meeting on May 3, 2006. Since then, DPD staff have discussed the preliminary recommendations at numerous meetings. Staff have attended meetings with community groups, design and development professionals, and heard from many citizens, who both supported as well as constructively criticized the proposals put forward.

This report contains final conceptual recommendations. The final concept recommendations, as well as the feedback from meetings with the community, and with design and development professionals will be used to guide the development of a new multifamily Land Use Code. Following the discussion of the proposed concepts is a schedule highlighting the next steps in the process of adopting new multifamily zoning requirements.

## Background

Seattle's Comprehensive Plan sets out a strategy for the city to accommodate approximately 47,000 new households by 2024. Multifamily zones are important for accommodating future growth by allowing structures that provide housing for two or more households on one parcel of land. Seattle's Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 1994, recognizes the role of multifamily residential areas to "encourage the development and retention of a diversity of multifamily housing types to meet the diverse needs of Seattle's present and future populations."

Multifamily zones make up approximately seven percent of the total land area of the city. When combined with neighborhood commercial zones, which account for another six percent of the city's land area, these zones are expected to accommodate many more households than the sixty percent of the city zoned for single family development. Multifamily zones also provide many different housing options, such as townhouses, apartments and condominiums



**Seattle is a desirable place to live, and has a growing population.**

that are often more affordable than single family houses and better address the needs of Seattle's changing household sizes and incomes.

Seattle's zoning is complex, and is often relied upon to accomplish many, often conflicting objectives. In order to implement Seattle's Comprehensive Plan and meet the goals established for managing future growth, it has become necessary to re-evaluate the City's zoning regulations. Modifying and improving multifamily zoning is the third major undertaking in updating the City's zoning requirements, following changes begun with the Mayor's Neighborhood Business District Strategy and Downtown zoning changes.

## Project Goals

The goals of the Multifamily Code project are to:

- Help create high quality multifamily neighborhoods;
- Foster creative design through development flexibility;
- Encourage new investment in a variety of housing types, including affordable housing;
- Support Comprehensive and Neighborhood Plan objectives; and
- Make the code easier to use and understand, and complement the Mayor's Neighborhood Business District Strategy and amendments to neighborhood commercial zoning.

Multifamily zoning, originally adopted in 1982, has been incrementally amended over the years such that some objectives may be obscured by added layers of requirements and process. Over time, many of these added layers of regulation have become redundant and unnecessary. They often add to the cost of development and can work against Comprehensive and Neighborhood Plan goals for affordable housing and quality design.

Issues that have been raised regarding Seattle's multifamily zoning range from the code's complicated format and organization, to the complexity of requirements and the character of the neighborhoods that result. City staff, Planning Commissioners, and Design Review Board members, with experience using multifamily code requirements, have isolated many issues that impact the effectiveness of multifamily zone requirements. These issues and three main questions will be addressed:

*How effective are the multifamily zones in accommodating a growing and changing population?*

*Do they encourage well-designed buildings that fit in with established neighborhoods?*

*Does the zoning help accomplish these goals without adding unnecessarily to the cost of building new housing?*



**Multifamily zones accommodate a variety of housing types to serve today's smaller households, including singles, young couples and seniors.**

DPD and the Seattle Planning Commission hosted a series of focus groups, as well as a general public meeting in mid 2005. This input was used to help diagnose problems with multifamily zoning and identify creative solutions to frame future inquiry and analysis.



**Multifamily zones are intended to accommodate a variety of housing types from duplexes, triplexes, and townhouses to highrise condominium towers.**

The following issues or concepts were identified:

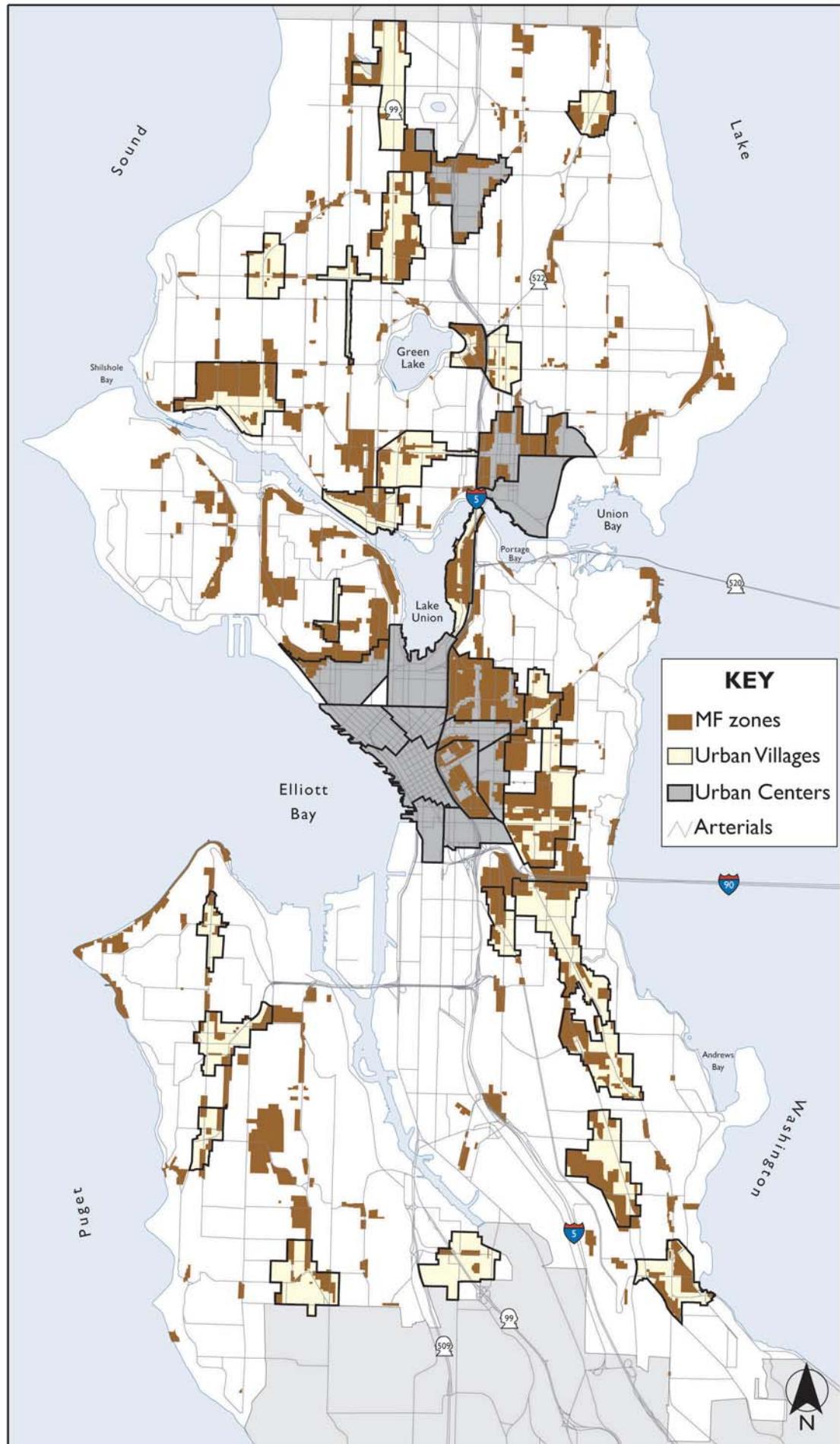
1. Look for new incentives for developers to provide affordable housing.
2. Provide flexibility, within limits; focus on quality design for new structures rather than strict adherence to regulations that do not take into account site or neighborhood conditions.
3. Develop principles for simplification, i.e. achieving appropriate transitions to less intensive zoned areas (such as multifamily and single family neighborhoods).
4. Consider how the Design Review process could be enhanced and applied to more projects.
5. Do not eliminate standards without carefully weighing the consequences.
6. Provide clear “purpose and intent” statements to allow for ease in interpreting and understanding provisions.
7. Incorporate better and more extensive graphics and tables to create a more readable and understandable code.
8. Organize the code to make it easier to find topics of interest and to provide references to other pertinent regulations and policies.

Following issue identification, staff researched practices in other cities. The staff report summarized opportunities for reform, and concluded with preliminary recommendations for developing a new multifamily code. Detailed research and analysis is documented in four papers addressing the following topics:

1. Zoning techniques and systems in use in other cities;
2. Evaluations of recent development trends;
3. Townhouses; and
4. Affordable housing.

These papers are available on DPD’s website:  
[http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/planning/multifamily\\_code\\_update/](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/planning/multifamily_code_update/)

# Multifamily Zoning



## Current Multifamily Zones

The following chart summarizes the building types and allowed heights in the current Multifamily Zones. For more detailed summaries see the “Zoning Charts” under the “Publications” menu at DPD’s website:  
<http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/>

| Zone                                | Intended Primary Building Type   | Height Limit | with a Pitched Roof |
|-------------------------------------|--|--------------|---------------------|
| <b>Lowrise Duplex/Triplex (LDT)</b> | Duplex or triplex houses and townhouses                                    | 25'          | 30' to 35"          |
| <b>Lowrise 1 (L1)</b>               | Townhouses   | 25'          | 30' to 35"          |
| <b>Lowrise 2 (L2)</b>               | 2 to 3 story apartment buildings or townhouses                             | 25'          | 30' to 35"          |
| <b>Lowrise 3 (L3)</b>               | 3 story apartment buildings or townhouses                                  | 30'          | 35'                 |
| <b>Lowrise 4 (L4)</b>               | 4 story apartment buildings or townhouses                                  | 37'          | 42'                 |
| <b>Midrise (MR)</b>                 | 6 story apartment buildings, limited commercial uses permitted             | 60' or 85'   | 60' or NA           |
| <b>Highrise (HR)</b>                | Residential towers up to 240' in height, limited commercial uses permitted | 160'/240' ** | NA                  |

\*In LDT, L1 and L2 zones roofs with a 4:12 pitch (slope rises 4' for every 12' in length) may extend to 30' and to 35' with a 6:12 pitch.

\*\*Height limit in HR zones when affordable housing or open space is provided or landmarks are preserved.

# Concept Recommendations

The remainder of this report summarizes the concept recommendations that establish the framework for a new multifamily code. The recommendations are generally organized around the following:

1. Generally, maintain the scale and density of current multifamily zones.
2. Accommodate a variety of housing types.
3. Allow alternatives to overly prescriptive development standards - “flexibility with limits”
4. Recognize neighborhood character.
5. Encourage affordable housing, particularly in urban centers and villages and light rail station areas, through such means as a density bonus (additional floor area) linked to reduced parking and other elements of code flexibility.
6. Support transit and other transportation alternatives by revising parking requirements to reflect local demand.
7. Simplify and organize multifamily regulations so they are easy to understand and apply.



**Example of multifamily project that uses architectural details to fit into an existing neighborhood.**

The overall intent of multifamily zones remains unchanged: to provide for higher density residential neighborhoods that allow a diversity of uses that support residents and are compatible with the residential character of the neighborhood. Therefore, the mix of permitted uses would largely remain intact and a range of multifamily zones will be retained, but with fewer zone categories.

## Mix of Multifamily Zones

A range of multifamily zones will continue to allow a mix of housing types. Multifamily zones will continue to act as a transition from single family and lower intensity multifamily zones to more intense multifamily and mixed-use commercial zones.

The five existing Lowrise zones -- Lowrise Duplex/Triplex, and Lowrise 1, 2, 3, and 4 -- are more than is needed to accommodate desired housing types ranging from duplexes, triplexes, and townhouses, to moderate density stacked flats (apartments and condominiums). Three zones are recommended to replace the current five zones, and to provide for a diversity of housing types: a new duplex/triplex zone, one that would combine Lowrise 1 (L1) and Lowrise 2 (L2) zones, and one that combines Lowrise 3 (L3) and Lowrise 4 (L4) zones.

The Lowrise Duplex, Triplex (LDT) zone was intended to allow for additional residential density in areas of smaller scale duplex and triplex structures that generally abut single family zones. The provisions of LDT zoning are intended to accommodate existing single family structures as well as duplexes and triplexes. Townhouse development is gaining in popularity and tends to have many single family characteristics that are appealing to urban residents. The characteristics of development allowed in the LDT zone generally make them compatible with

single family structures and neighborhoods. The recommendation is to maintain an LDT zone.

The scale of development allowed in the L1 and L2 zones is similar. Consolidating L1 and L2 zones, will continue to ensure that townhouses and smaller scale flats will be available, while helping to simplify the code.

The Lowrise 3 and 4 zones are intended to accommodate moderate scaled, wood frame multifamily development. Three to four story apartment and condominium buildings are common. Townhouses are also common in the Lowrise 3 zone. With the exception of the greater presence of townhouses in the Lowrise 3 zones, the development in L3 and L4 is similar. Consolidating the Lowrise 3 and 4 zones, together with improved design of structures made possible through design review (explained more under Design Quality, in this report), will allow moderate scale multifamily development that fits in with the surrounding neighborhood while simplifying the Code.

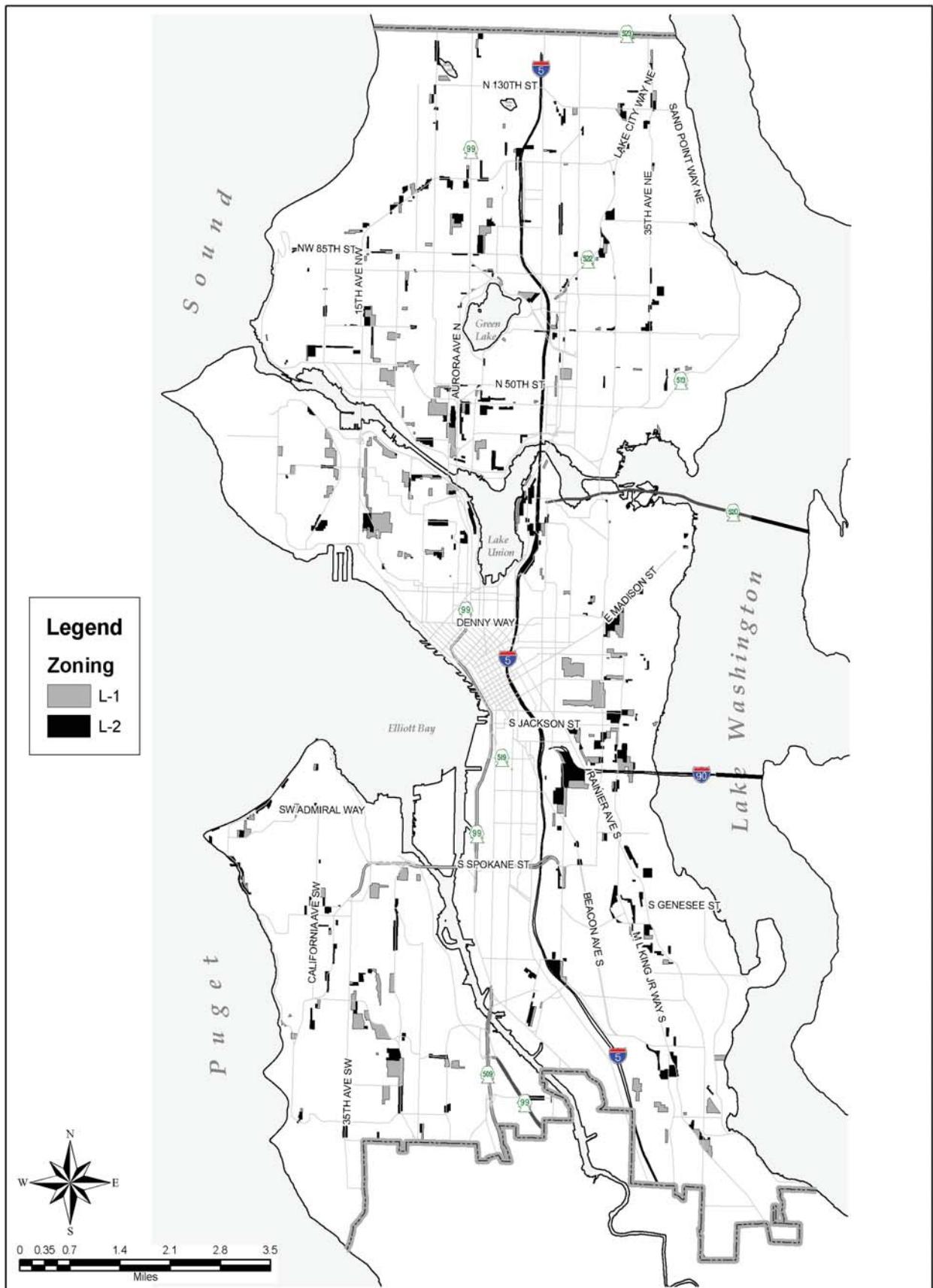
### *Recommendation*

Consolidate and rename all Lowrise zones, while maintaining Midrise and Highrise zones. The proposed new zones would be: Lowrise Residential 1, 2 and 3 (LR1, LR2, LR3), Midrise (MR) and Highrise (HR).

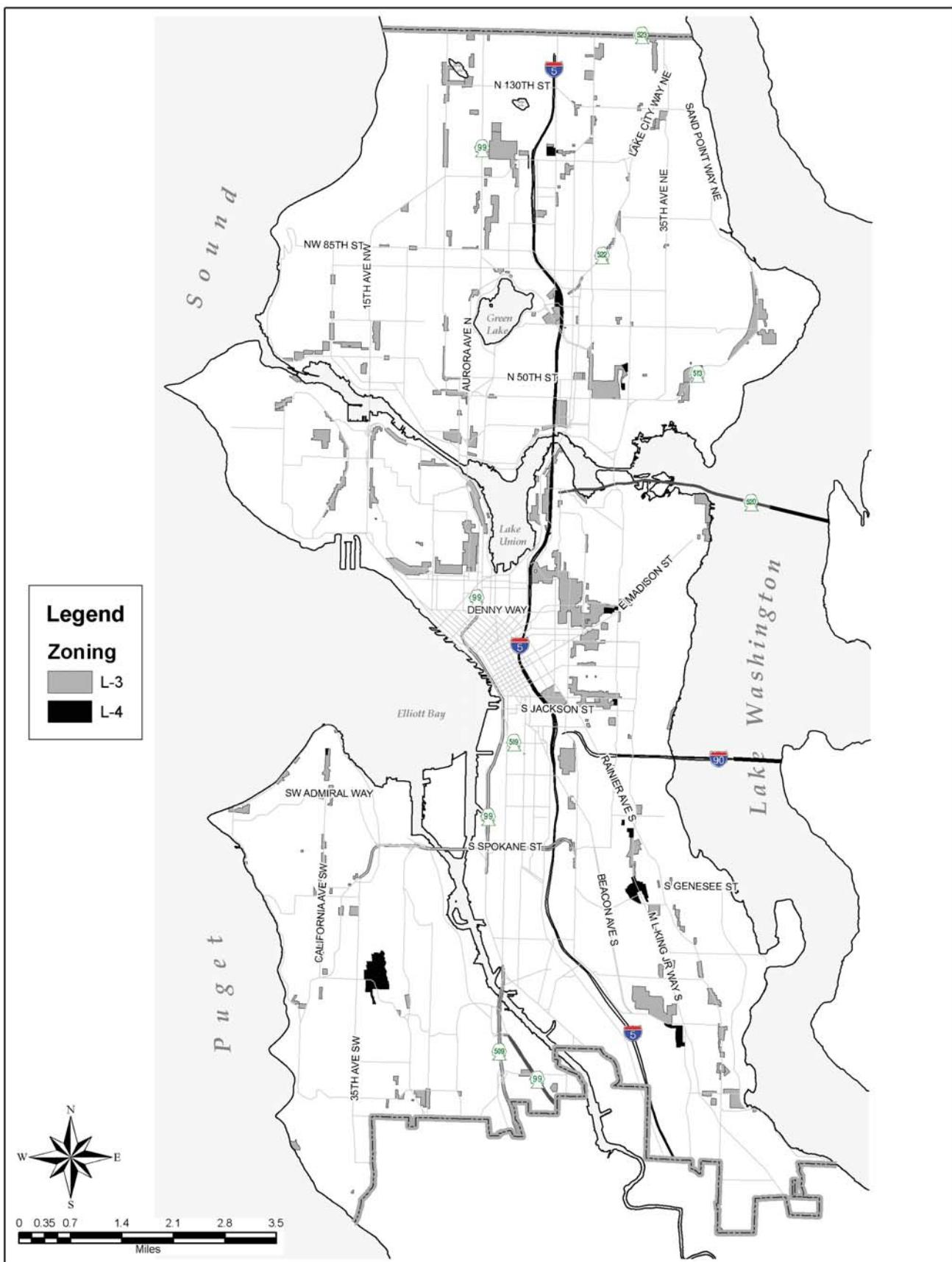
## Proposed New Zones

| New Zone  | Intended Primary Building Type*  |
|---|--|
| <b>Lowrise Residential 1 (LR1)</b><br>(replaces Lowrise Duplex/Triplex) | 2 to 3 story duplexes, triplexes and townhouses                            |
| <b>Lowrise Residential 2 (LR2)</b><br>(replaces Lowrise 1&2)            | 2 to 3 story townhouses or apartment buildings                             |
| <b>Lowrise Residential 3 (LR3)</b><br>(replaces Lowrise 3&4)            | 3 to 4 story apartment buildings or townhouses                             |
| <b>Midrise (MR)</b>   | 6 story apartment buildings, limited commercial uses permitted             |
| <b>Highrise (HR)</b>  | Residential towers up to 240' in height, limited commercial uses permitted |

\*The stated building type is primarily what is intended, although other types are allowed.



This map shows the general distribution of the current Lowrise I and 2 zones. Lowrise I zoned land makes up 716 acres and Lowrise 2 zoned land 764 acres. Combining these two zones would mean the new Residential 2 (R2) zone would apply to under 3% of the city's total land area.



This map shows the general distribution of the current Lowrise 3 and 4 zones. Lowrise 3 zoned land makes up 1,584 acres and Lowrise 4 zoned land 34 acres. Combining these two zones would mean the new Residential 3 (R3) zone would apply to about 3% of the city's total land area.

## Uses

Multifamily zones are primarily residential in nature. Generally, the regulation of uses in multifamily zones is not proposed to change. The variety of housing types permitted are complemented by accessory uses that support the principal residential purpose of the zones. Uses such as institutions (i.e. religious facilities, day cares, schools) that meet development standards would continue to be permitted outright. Institutions that do not meet development standards would continue to be permitted as conditional uses.

In Midrise and Highrise zones, limited ground floor businesses would continue to be permitted to serve the higher density residential population, while maintaining the residential character of the zone.

The current Residential Commercial (RC) zone allows a limited amount of nonresidential use at street level, including parking accessory to a nonresidential use in an adjoining commercial zone. The criteria for locating the RC zone and the purpose and function of the RC zone would remain unchanged.

### *Recommendation*

Multifamily zones should remain primarily residential in nature. Opportunities for nonresidential uses in certain Midrise and all Highrise zones, and in Residential Commercial (RC) zones, should be maintained.

## Design Quality

Current multifamily zones contain conflicting or redundant development standards that can diminish quality design in multifamily neighborhoods. Further, the overly prescriptive development standards can result in development that is not responsive to neighborhood context or character. An example is façade modulation, which is required without regard for overall composition of the façade design, articulation of uses or different units within a building.

The Design Review Program, initiated in 1994, has generally resulted in improved design of new structures in Seattle's neighborhoods. Development proposals with nine or more dwelling units in L3 and L4 zones and over 20 units in the Midrise and Highrise zones are subject to design review. In addition, applicants may volunteer for design review.



**Well designed townhouses in a Lowrise zone can create interesting streetscapes and multifamily neighborhoods.**



**A multifamily development with single family appeal.**

Design review allows for departures from development standards when a design solution is proposed that better meets the intent of the zone or when development standards inhibit good design. While it is a valuable program, there is a cost associated with undergoing Design Review. The cost to applicants, the City, and future owners or tenants, is largely the result of the time involved in the process, including community meetings and Design Review Board meetings.

For projects that are subject to design review, issues of compatibility and siting of development are effectively addressed. A principal focus of design review is a project's context. Design guidelines direct designers and project reviewers to look closely at local conditions in order to produce new buildings that fit in and enhance their surroundings.

For more information about the Design Review program, see DPD website:

[http://www.cityofseattle.net/dpd/Planning/Design\\_Review\\_Program/Applicant's\\_Toolbox/Design\\_Guidelines/](http://www.cityofseattle.net/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Applicant's_Toolbox/Design_Guidelines/)

For smaller projects that are not subject to design review, design related standards are recommended to provide for a minimum level of design quality and architectural interest. Basic standards, applied as part of the department's zoning review, will require architectural features as a relatively low cost way to provide visual interest without prescribing specific architectural styles. Other U.S. cities, such as Portland, Oregon, successfully include these types of requirements in their multifamily zoning.

### *Recommendation*

Require appropriate minimum design standards to multifamily projects that are not currently subject to Design Review.

# Flexibility

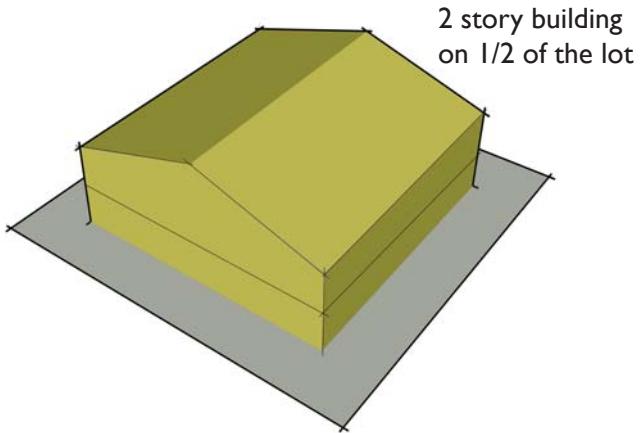
The concept of increased development flexibility within prescribed limits is based on the belief that simpler, less prescriptive code requirements can help new development fit in an existing neighborhood and better relate to local conditions. Flexible standards should focus on the objective to be achieved.

Flexibility can be aided with clear statements of policy intent. The standards can vary by project to be more responsive to the unique conditions of sites. Standards are based upon situations or characteristics of different development sites. For example, the regulation of density and bulk and scale on smaller, infill sites of 9,000 square feet or less would be accomplished with a floor area ratio (FAR) limit and requirements for yards or

## What is FAR?

- Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is a way to regulate the density and bulk and scale of buildings.
- FAR is the ratio of floor area in a building to the area of the land on which it is built.

FAR is the ratio of gross floor area in a building to the total area of the land on which it is built. If a one story building takes up the entire lot, the FAR is 1:1 or 1.0. A two story building on half of the lot also has a FAR of 1:1 or 1.0. If the building has two stories and occupies the entire lot, the FAR is 2:1 or 2.0. FAR is used extensively in downtown and is proposed in commercial zones to regulate density and/or bulk of new structures.



**For example: on a 9,000 square foot site where the building allowance is an FAR of 1 or 1:1, a building with 9,000 square feet could be built.**



This development in a Lowrise 3 zone, was possible only through the flexibility afforded by the Design Review process.

setbacks. On larger sites, additional requirements may apply, including maximum limits on structure width.

Density in a residential project generally refers to the number of dwelling units that occupy a development. Currently in Lowrise multifamily zones the density limit is based on lot area. For example, in L3 zones, one dwelling unit is allowed for every 800 square feet of lot area. However, this density limit is redundant as the number of units in a development is largely controlled by limits on bulk and scale, setbacks and open space and parking requirements.

## Recommendation

Replace existing density limits with a structure floor area ratio (FAR) to govern the bulk and scale of a structure. Flexibility, within limits, should govern the application of all bulk and scale requirements. Include clear intent statements to aid in understanding the purpose of development standards.

## Summary Comparison of Current and Proposed Standards

| Current Standards<br>(Prescriptive)  | Proposed Standards<br>(Flexible)        | General Intent   |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Density limits (number of units allowed per lot area)</li> <li>• Setbacks</li> <li>• Limits on width and depth of buildings</li> <li>• Lot coverage limits</li> <li>• Modulation</li> </ul> | Floor Area Ratio (FAR)<br>+<br>Setbacks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set appropriate scale of development</li> <li>• Provide for transitions to zones of lesser intensity</li> </ul> |

## Concept Proposal for FAR and Setbacks

| Floor Area Ratio (FAR)  | Setbacks in Lowrise Residential 1, 2 & 3 Zones   |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FAR would vary depending on the zone category to reflect the scale of building currently allowed</li> <li>• In addition to FAR, a maximum of 3 units would be allowed per structure in the LR1 zone</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5' setbacks from all property lines when surrounded by commercial or multifamily zoning</li> <li>• Front and rear yards required for lots abutting single family zones</li> <li>• For lots larger than 9,000 sq. ft. additional standards will be required (e.g. limits on building width)</li> </ul> |

# Height Limits in the New LR1, LR2 and LR3 Zones

A summary comparison of Lowrise 3 to Lowrise Residential 3 is on pages 20 and 21.

Development standards provide a transition in structures from zones of greater to lesser intensity. Height limits are key to this equation.

An inconsistency currently exists in height limits among Lowrise zones (see the chart on page 3 for a summary of MF zone height limits), particularly when compared to single family zones. In single family zones, a structure may be built up to 30 feet in height, however, in LDT, L1 and L2 multifamily zones, structures may only achieve a height of 25 feet. Lowrise 3 and 4 zones have height limits of 30 and 37 feet, respectively. An additional 5' to 10' in height is allowed for pitched roofs in all zones.

To restore consistency and a rational scale relationship among zones, it is proposed that the same height as permitted for single family structures in single family zones, be permitted for structures in the new LR1 and LR2 zones. 30' to 35' feet is generally needed to accommodate structures with three floors, which is common for townhouse and other multifamily structures with structured parking at ground level. In order to accommodate multifamily units with tall floor

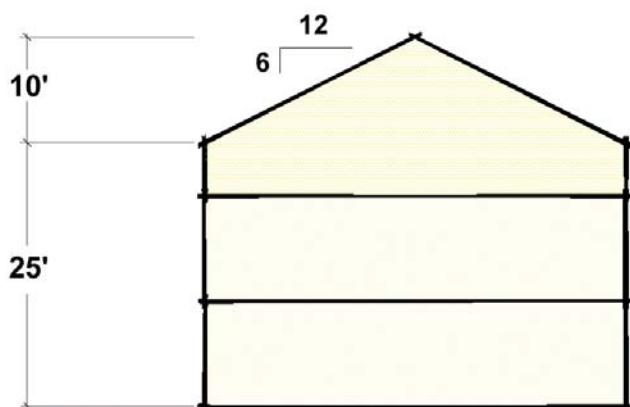


**Seattle's sloping topography can help accommodate underground parking without reducing the number of floors of residential use.**

to ceiling heights or a fourth floor the recommendation is to allow a height of 35' (40' with a pitched roof) in the new LR3 zone.

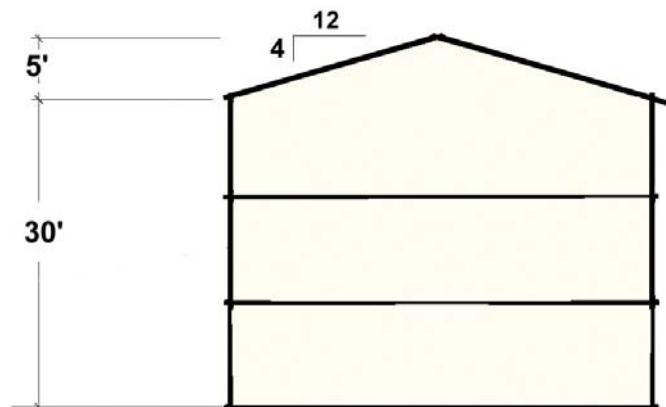
## Recommendation

Allow structures up to 30 feet in height in LR1 and LR2 zones; and a height of 37' in LR3 zones. Pitched roofs will continue to be encouraged by allowing additional height for a roof with a pitch of 6:12.



## Current

Duplex/triplex and Lowrise 1 & 2 Zones: 25' + 10' for pitched roof



## Proposed

- LR 1 & 2: 30' + 5' for pitched roof (same as single family zones)
- LR3: 35'+ 5' for a pitched roof

## Midrise (MR) and Highrise (HR) Zones

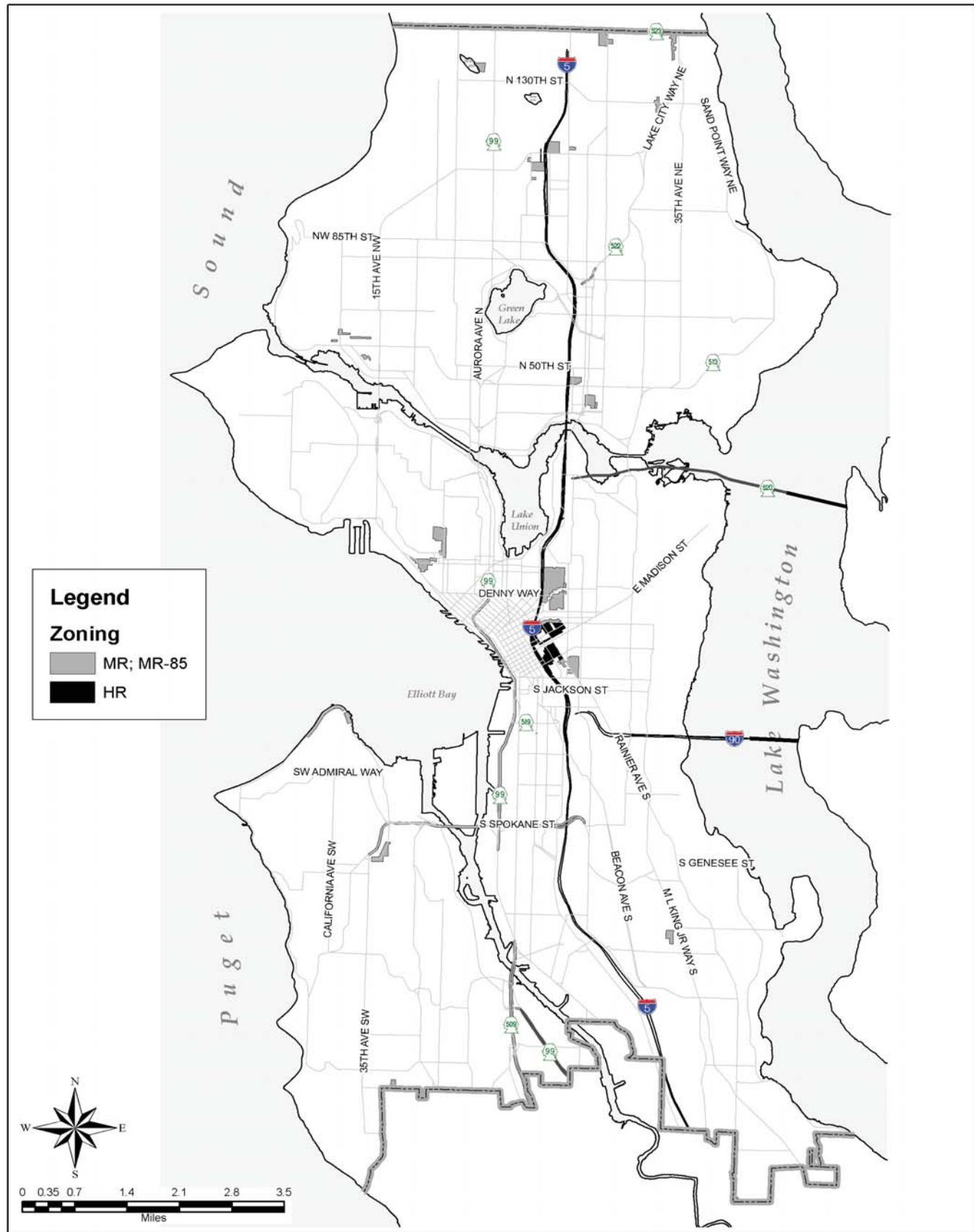
MR and HR zones allow substantially denser and taller/bigger development. These zones are generally only mapped in urban centers. The Northgate, University District and Capitol Hill Urban Centers contain the majority of MR zoning. The HR zone is mapped only within the First Hill Urban Center.

In MR and HR zones, there is no density limit, and in certain circumstances, nonresidential uses are allowed at street level. MR zones generally allow structures to 60 feet in height. In the HR zone, buildings may achieve a height of 160 feet. However, when affordable housing, open space or historic structures are provided or preserved, additional height up to a maximum of 240 feet is possible in HR zones.

Development standards in MR and HR zones will be generally maintained allowing current bulk and density of development. However, some general consolidation of standards relating to bulk and scale will be considered, as will rules governing increases in height, which may also be applied to the MR and HR zones.

### *Recommendation*

Generally, maintain MR and HR zone standards and requirements. Consolidate bulk and scale regulations. Update development incentives in Highrise zones, and explore their wider applicability, particularly in Midrise zones.



This map shows the general distribution of the Midrise (MR) and Highrise (HR) zones. MR makes up about 252 acres and HR makes up 51 acres.

# Open Space, Yards and Landscaping



**Landscaping can help buildings of different styles blend in a neighborhood.**

Current requirements for open space, setbacks (from property lines), and screening and landscaping are complex. Standards stipulate minimum required areas, dimensions and percentages of allowed overlap (for example, a portion of required open space can, in some cases, count toward required landscaping). These standards vary by zone, and by building type. “Open space” provided to meet these standards is intended to serve the needs of residents and is not public. In some cases, requirements can be met with balconies and rooftop decks.

It is important to meet the needs of residents for whom open space is intended, and current open space requirements do not necessarily meet this requirement either in amount or type. Open space is often cited, second only to required parking, as adding unnecessary expense to the cost of housing development.

The intent of what is to be achieved by setback and open space standards is confusing. Some believe that landscaped setbacks reinforce a residential appearance; plants and trees offset the environmental impacts of development; and separation between buildings preserves privacy.

The proposal to change multifamily open space and setback requirements is intended to focus standards on the intended primary result: amenities that provide for recreational needs, and landscaped setbacks for residential appearance. While outdoor space can meet the needs of residents, other amenities can be desirable too. Residential amenities, such as shared exercise rooms and community entertainment rooms may also count toward meeting requirements.

Experience in requiring residential amenities downtown and in the South Lake Union neighborhoods will help to inform the new regulations. Residential amenity requirements in multifamily zones will be aligned with amenity requirements in other zones. The amenity space requirement would be ten percent of the total gross floor area of residential use; half of the amenity area would be required to be outside. Eligible amenities will include individual and shared spaces such as rooftop decks, balconies and ground level open spaces.

A new way of evaluating landscaping is proposed, called the Seattle Green Factor. This concept, used in Europe, was initially developed for use here in the Neighborhood Business District Strategy. The green factor is used to evaluate the ecological (primarily improved water quality) and aesthetic benefits of landscaping. It encourages the planting of layers of vegetation in areas visible to the public and in the public right-of-way. A menu of options would be available including trees, shrubs and ground cover applied in setback areas as well as green roofs and green walls.

Landscaped setbacks in new development are important to maintain compatibility with surrounding development. However, some MF areas also provide a transition between commercial areas and other MF areas. In these situations setbacks are not needed for transition between structures. This would allow for appropriate development in the MF zoned areas near neighborhood business districts while maintaining transitions from the MF zoned areas to single family zones.

## *Recommendation*

Replace open space requirements with residential amenities; focus amenity, yard and landscaping requirements on the intent of what is desired to be achieved by each, avoiding redundancy and conflict. Provide for transition to lower density areas by the use of structure setbacks mirroring setbacks in abutting zones: yard-space required for MF zoned lots that abut single family areas would be greater than that required when abutting commercial, or other higher density zones.

# Parking

Seattle's parking requirements for residential use are intended, in part, to anticipate the amount of parking needed. Parking requirements, in large part, are based on parking demand. Current requirements for parking in multifamily zones are based on estimates of parking demand established in the 1980's. Since parking requirements for residential use were established, new goals for parking have been adopted and several amendments have been made to parking requirements in recognition of the local demand and characteristics of different types of residents and neighborhoods.

Comprehensive Plan goals and policies for parking support Seattle's transportation investments, encourage transit use and discourage an over-supply of off-street parking. Appropriate off-street parking requirements, combined with more effective on-street parking space management, shared parking opportunities, and transit availability can help to make better use of parking and further our long-term goals for a more pedestrian-oriented city.

Recent studies of parking demand have shown that the Land Use Code often requires more parking than is needed in new development. This undermines the goals of the Comprehensive Plan and adds significantly to the cost of housing. Parking provided in a garage can cost upwards of \$30,000 per space to build. The City Council recently reduced parking requirements for residential uses in several of the City's urban center neighborhoods based on new information about parking demand in these areas.



**Fitting parking and driveways onto a site can pose difficult design challenges.**

To be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and with recent Council actions, local data will be further examined to determine where parking requirements may exceed demand. Areas with similar characteristics, such as urban centers or high capacity transit areas, will exhibit similar parking demand and behavior. Parking requirements will be organized according to these area designations. Other concepts to be explored include elimination of minimum requirements, broadening opportunities for shared parking and establishing parking maximums. These efforts can help to better manage parking supply, without oversupplying parking that could run counter to transportation and environmental policies.

## *Recommendation*

Lower parking requirements in order to support transit, reduce the cost of housing, and meet growth management goals. Further explore ways to share parking and evaluate the effectiveness of eliminating minimum requirements and establishing maximum limits on parking.

## Conceptual Residential 3 (R3) Zone Example

New standards will more clearly establish appropriate bulk and scale of new structures, employing a floor area ratio (FAR), and setbacks from property lines. FAR will allow modulation of a structure's facade to occur relative to the allowed building envelope prescribed by setbacks and other development standards or requirements. Allowing architectural

features, such as bay windows, to extend a reasonable distance into required yards can further serve to articulate facades, and enhance architectural character. An example of how these proposed standards would apply in the proposed LR3 zone is shown in the following chart:

### Concept Example: Lowrise Residential 3 (compared to existing L3 standards)

|                                      | Building Height     | Building Width  | Building Depth            | Building Setbacks   | FAR   | Lot Coverage                                   |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|---|---------------------------|---|---|--|
| Lowrise 3 Today                      | 30' + 5' roof pitch | Apartments<br>75'<br>Townhouses<br>120'   | 65% of lot                | Front: avg. of neighboring properties<br>Side: min. 6'<br>Rear: 15% of lot depth up to 25', min. 15'  | --  | Apartments:<br>45%<br>Townhouses<br>50%        |
| Lowrise Residential 3 (LR3) Concept* | 35' + 5' roof pitch | FAR replaces width limits for lots up to 90' wide.<br><br>Maximum width to apply when lot is wider than 90' | FAR replaces depth limits | YARDS:<br>If abutting a Single Family zone:<br>Front: avg. of neighboring properties, min. 15'<br>Side: min. 5'<br>Rear: 15% of lot depth up to 25', min. 15'<br><br>All other: min. 5' from all property lines | FAR applied based on current allowances<br><br>Additional FAR permitted when affordable housing is provided | FAR and yard requirements replace lot coverage |

\*The example is intended to be conceptual, subject to further study.

|   | <b>Open Space</b>  | <b>Landscaping</b>  | <b>Modulation</b>   | <b>Parking</b>   | <b>Density Limit</b>  | <b>Design Review</b>   |
|---|--|---|---|--|---|--|
| <b>Lowrise 3 Today</b>                      | Apts: 25% of lot area or 30% if 1/3 is above ground<br><br>Townhouses: average 300 sf/unit, ground level & directly accessible; min. 200 sf/unit | Equivalent to 3 times the perimeter of the property line. May or may not count towards open space requirement | Variable depending on housing type and façade length and orientation<br><br>Generally, modulation must be 5' wide and 4' deep | 1 space/unit for townhouses varies up to 1.5 spaces/unit<br><br>Parking location required to side or rear of structure; access required from alley, if present; parking must be screened if in front | 1 unit/800 sf lot area, 1 unit/550 sf lot area for low income elderly | 9 units or more: Design Review Board<br><br>Voluntary: Administrative DR<br><br>All development standards are eligible for departure except height, density or parking |
| <b>Lowrise Residential 3 (LR3) Concept*</b> | Residential amenities @ 10% gross residential floor area   | All yards must be landscaped  | FAR, yards and design standards replace modulation requirements   | Parking eliminated or reduced based on local demand information and policy considerations<br><br>Same location, access and screening standards.  | FAR replaces density limit  | Same as above<br><br>Design standards apply for projects with up to 8 units and in the LR1 and LR2 zones   |

\*The example is intended to be conceptual, subject to further study.

A similar format would be developed for other new multifamily zones, generally in keeping with building types intended for each of these zones, summarized at right:

| <b>New Zone</b>                    | <b>Intended Primary Building Type*</b>          |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Lowrise Residential 1 (LR1)</b> | 2 to 3 story duplexes, triplexes and townhouses |
| <b>Lowrise Residential 2 (LR2)</b> | 2 to 3 story townhouses or apartment buildings  |
| <b>Lowrise Residential 3 (LR3)</b> | 3 to 4 story apartment buildings or townhouses  |

\*The stated building type is primarily what is intended, although other types are allowed.

## Affordable Housing

Cities across the country share Seattle's concern with the increased cost of housing and are looking for ways to make more housing available to wage earners whose incomes cannot keep pace with rising housing prices. Seattle currently uses a number of approaches to increase housing affordability, including direct subsidies for housing production for specified incomes.

Because of rapidly escalating housing prices, many cities are evaluating new development incentives to increase housing affordability. In particular, some cities are linking density bonuses, greater code flexibility, reduced parking, and expedited permitting to production of affordable housing. Preliminary recommendations to amend Seattle's multifamily zoning in similar ways, can help ensure an increased supply of affordable housing on- or off-site.



A green multifamily development.

## Green Building

Green, or sustainable building, is an approach to construction that applies principles of resource and energy efficiency, healthy buildings and materials, and ecologically and socially sensitive land-use to new development.

For single family and multifamily projects, the City encourages the use of LEED™ or Built Green™. LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Green Building Rating System™) is a nationally recognized green building standard developed by the US Green Building Council. Built Green™ is a green building program developed by the Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties, in partnership with government agencies in Washington State. Adoption of LEED and Built Green™ in the marketplace will support many of the City's housing and environmental goals by addressing the health of residents and the Northwest environment. The programs accomplish these goals by offering a menu of options that result in affordable, quality homes and multifamily projects that are more cost-effective to own and operate, healthier, safer, and more protective of the environment.

### *Recommendation*

Implement green building incentives such as density bonuses.

### *Recommendation*

Create and implement development incentives, such as density bonuses, code flexibility, or process incentives, in return for the production of affordable housing.



**Historical multifamily development often does not observe setback or modulations, yet are quite pleasing due to materials and architectural details.**

## Make the Code Easier to Use

The current code is overly reliant on text including complex requirements and layers of exceptions. New multifamily zoning will make better use of illustrations (e.g. drawings, maps and charts) and diagrams. Simple, straight forward sentence structure and language will help make the code easier to use. Fewer exceptions will be needed if regulations are less prescriptive.

### *Recommendation*

Use simple, straight forward text, flexible standards, graphics and tables, where appropriate, to assist the reader or permit applicant in understanding code requirements.



**Townhouses continue to be a very popular form of housing in Seattle.**



*For more information*

on the Urban Neighborhoods project go to the website at: [http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/planning/multifamily\\_code\\_update/](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/planning/multifamily_code_update/) or contact Mike Podowski at (206) 386-1988 or [multifamily@seattle.gov](mailto:multifamily@seattle.gov)