

Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) Implementing Zoning Maps



PRELIMINARY Summary of input from the HALA Community Focus Groups

November 2016



Introduction

Background

As part of the Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA), the City of Seattle is committed to a goal of building or preserving 20,000 affordable homes over 10 years. A critical part of achieving this goal is the implementation of Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA). MHA will create 6,000 homes affordable for 75 years to households earning no more than 60% of the area median income (AMI). Under MHA, multifamily and commercial development will be required to contribute to affordable housing, with additional development capacity allowed to minimize the impact of MHA requirements on the cost of new housing. These housing contributions are consistent with a state-approved approach for similar programs. (See <http://tinyurl.com/MHA-overview> for background on MHA.)

Community Focus Groups

The Community Focus Groups comprise resident volunteers from neighborhoods across the city, who informed the HALA process. A key topic for the Community Focus Groups is land use and zoning changes that can affect neighborhoods.

- Community Focus Groups meet monthly, March–November 2016.
- Each of the four groups is composed of 20–40 people.
- Groups include representatives of every urban village and neighborhood area in Seattle.
- The meetings are intended to elicit constructive dialogue about housing programs.
- Meetings are open for other members of the public to observe and provide comment during a set time on the agenda.

The City values participation by a broad range of community members who reflect our City’s diverse population. Focus

Groups are assembled to provide balanced representation from a range of different demographics and perspectives including:

- Traditionally under-represented groups, including minorities, immigrants, refugees, and non-native English speakers
- Renters
- Households with children
- Experienced neighborhood advocates

PRELIMINARY Focus Group Input on Draft MHA Maps

To implement MHA, the city is seeking community input on a set of zoning changes in existing commercial and multi-family zones and in urban villages and centers. In March through June, Focus Group members provided input on a set of Principles to guide the possible zoning changes. (See the summary of Focus Group input on principles, and the principles statements on page 4.)

Based on the principles, city staff prepared Draft MHA zoning maps for review, releasing a set of maps for an example urban village for each Focus Groups in September. In October, draft maps for all remaining urban villages and centers were provided for comment to Focus Group members and other community members. The draft maps are online for dialogue at HALA.Consider.it.

This document is a preliminary summary of Focus Group member input on the Draft MHA maps. We collected input in the following ways:

- **September 2016 Meeting:** Focus Group members reviewed one example map from each Focus Group.

- **Distribution Online:** Participants received the draft MHA Maps for review online via e-mail in advance of the October meeting.
- **October 2016 Meeting:** Focus Group members participated in an exercise and a group discussion of each map for that Focus Group.
- **Individual Focus Group Member Comments:** Some Focus Group members communicated in e-mails, phone calls or informal dialogues with city staff.
- **November online meeting and drop-in hours:** Focus Group members will review this preliminary summary and provide additional input.

While this preliminary summary does not reproduce every specific comment received, it seeks to summarize themes, and attempts to capture all specific MHA zoning map suggestions. During discussion of the maps, many comments addressed broader MHA program concepts. General input about MHA is summarized as part of the discussion themes for each Focus Group.

MHA Principles

The MHA Implementation Principles

The City developed a set of Principles to help guide MHA implementation choices. The statements reflect what the City heard during months of in-person and online conversations in neighborhoods. The Principles guide choices about future changes to zoning or urban village boundaries for MHA implementation in neighborhoods.

Principles that form the foundation of MHA

- 1 Contribute to the 10-year HALA goal of 20,000 net new units of rent- and income-restricted housing. Specifically, the MHA goal is at least 6,000 units of housing affordable to households with incomes up to 60% of the area median income (AMI), units that will remain affordable for 50 years. In 2016, 60% of the AMI is \$37,980 for an individual and \$54,180 for a family of four.
- 2 Require multifamily and commercial development to contribute to affordable housing.
- 3 Contributions to affordable housing will be provided by including affordable housing on site or by providing a payment to the Seattle Office of Housing for creation of new affordable housing.
- 4 Ensure MHA creates affordable housing opportunities throughout the city.
- 5 In alignment with a state-approved affordable housing based incentive zoning approach (37.70A.540), new affordability requirements are linked to allowing some additional development capacity in commercial and multifamily zones (in many cases this includes one additional floor).
- 6 Allow a variety of housing types in existing single-family zones within urban villages.
- 7 Expand the boundaries of some urban villages to allow for more housing near high-frequency transit hubs.
- 8 Maintain Seattle as an inclusive city by providing housing opportunities for everyone: people of all ages, races, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds and households of all sizes, types, and incomes.
- 9 Evaluate MHA implementation using a social and racial equity/justice lens.

Community generated principles that will guide MHA implementation

- 1 Housing Options
 - a Encourage or incentivize a wide variety of housing sizes, including family-sized homes and not just one-bedroom and studio homes.
 - b Encourage more small-scale multi-unit housing that is family friendly, such as cottages, duplexes or triplexes, rowhouses, and townhouses.
- 2 Urban Design Quality: Address urban design quality, including high-quality design of new buildings and landscaping.
 - a Encourage publicly visible green space and landscaping at street level.
 - b Encourage design qualities that reflect Seattle's context, including building materials and architectural style.
 - c Encourage design that allows access to light and views in shared and public spaces.
- 3 Transitions: Plan for transitions between higher- and lower-scale zones as additional development capacity is accommodated.
 - a Zone full blocks instead of partial blocks in order to soften transitions.
 - b Consider using low-rise zones to help transition between single-family and commercial / mixed-use zones.
 - c Use building setback requirements to create step-downs between commercial and mixed-use zones and other zones.

MHA Principles

4 Historic Areas

- a In Seattle's Historic districts, do not increase development capacity, even if it means these areas do not contribute to housing affordability through MHA.
- b In other areas of historic or cultural significance, do not increase development capacity, even if it means these areas do not contribute to affordability through MHA.

5 Assets and Infrastructure

- a Consider locating more housing near neighborhood assets and infrastructure such as parks, schools, and transit.

6 Urban Village Expansion Areas

- a Implement the urban village expansions using 10-minute walksheds similar to those shown in the draft Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan update.
- b Implement urban village expansions recommended in Seattle 2035 but with modifications to the 10-minute walkshed informed by local community members. Consider topography, "natural" boundaries, such as parks, major roads, and other large-scale neighborhood elements, and people with varying ranges of mobility
- c In general, any development capacity increases in urban village expansion areas should ensure that new development is compatible in scale to the existing neighborhood context.

7 Unique Conditions

- a Consider location-specific factors such as documented view corridors from a public space or right-of-way when zoning changes are made.

8 Neighborhood Urban Design

- 9 Consider local urban design priorities when zoning changes are made.

Hub Urban Villages

Ballard

First Hill–Capitol Hill

Lake City

Northgate

University District

West Seattle Junction

Delridge
outside area

Discussion themes

Transportation

Focus Group members emphasized the importance of transportation in making land use decisions. Some were concerned about parts of their neighborhood where missing sidewalks, inadequate bike infrastructure, and busy roads make it hard or unsafe for people to walk or bike.

Density near transit

There was generally strong support for allowing more people to live near major transportation investments in light rail and bus rapid transit.

Support for (M1) and (M2) zoning

In several Hub Urban Villages, Focus Group members suggested increasing zoning changes so that development there would have higher MHA requirements at the (M1) and (M2) levels.

Transitions

Focus Group members noted that, as Hub Urban Villages welcome more people and jobs, it is important to provide transitions between areas allowing taller buildings and single-family areas outside the urban village.

Open space

Focus Group members generally agreed that with greater density comes a need for parks and open spaces.

Provide notice

Focus Group members emphasized the importance of communicating directly with people who will be affected by the zoning changes and who may not yet be involved in the MHA process, especially people living in single family areas.

Other urban villages

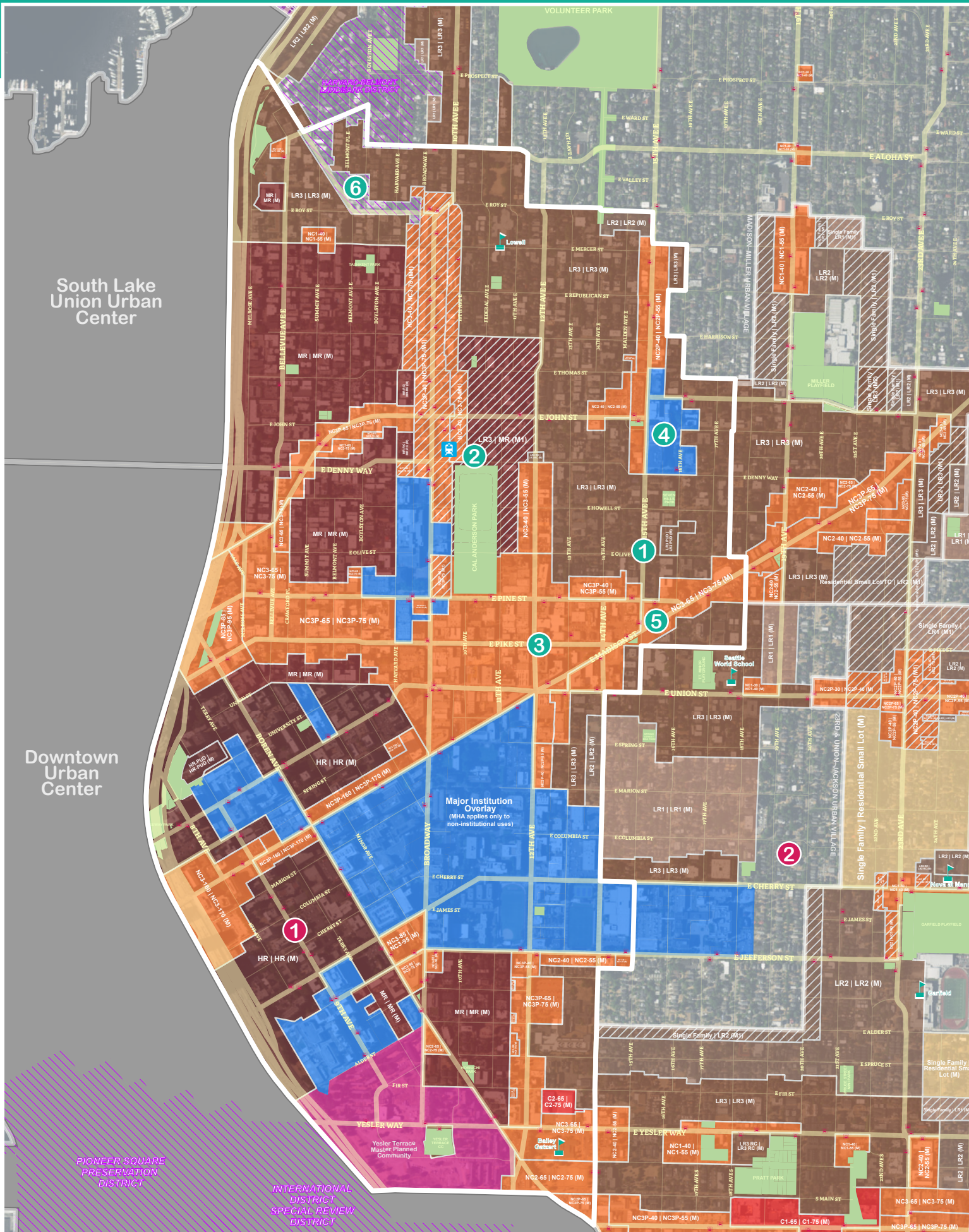
Focus Group members were interested in discussing the maps not only for Hub Urban Villages but for MHA citywide. This would allow them to take stock of how all neighborhoods will share in the need to increase housing choices and create affordable housing — an important part of what makes MHA an effective program.

University District

Focus Group members from the University District participated in the discussion about the draft MHA zoning maps. The U District planning process, begun several years ago, has resulted in legislation that would make zoning changes that would implement MHA. Therefore, the Focus Group discussion did not cover map changes for the U-District area.

First Hill–Capitol Hill

Expansion Area Urban Villages
Hub Urban Villages
 Medium Density Urban Villages
 Lower Density Urban Villages



Comments & Suggestions — Generally Supported

- 1 Along 12th Ave and E John St, consider creating a continuous corridor of Neighborhood Commercial zoning.
- 2 Consider greater density, and therefore higher MHA requirements, near the Capitol Hill light rail station. Aim for mostly (M2) zoning changes to make the most of this transportation investments. The Lowrise 3 (LR3) area east of the station could become Midrise (MR)
- 3 Along E Pine St, incentivize amenities (e.g., parks and other open space) that improve residents' quality of life.
- 4 Explore potential partnerships with Kaiser Permanente (which just purchased Group Health) to include and/or support affordable housing as part of any future expansion.
- 5 Expand housing options more along E Madison St in anticipation of the bus rapid transit (BRT) line planned there.
- 6 Focus Group members from this urban center generally agreed that historic districts should not be exempt from zoning changes and affordable housing requirements, especially the Harvard–Belmont Historic District. One option would be to focus only on landmarked structures, but without exempting the whole district.

Varied Opinions

- 1 Some Focus Group members suggested expanding Highrise (HR) zoning beyond its current locations in First Hill to other areas in this urban center.
- 2 Several people asked why the draft zoning map proposes no changes to the single-family area surrounded by the First Hill–Capitol Hill, 23rd & Union–Jackson, and Madison–Miller urban villages. Some Focus Group members suggested that this area should be an urban village and MHA should apply there, especially given its proximity to Capitol Hill and downtown.
- 3 There were concerns that First Hill is already dense, and additional growth without creating new open space or improving existing parks is a problem for livability.

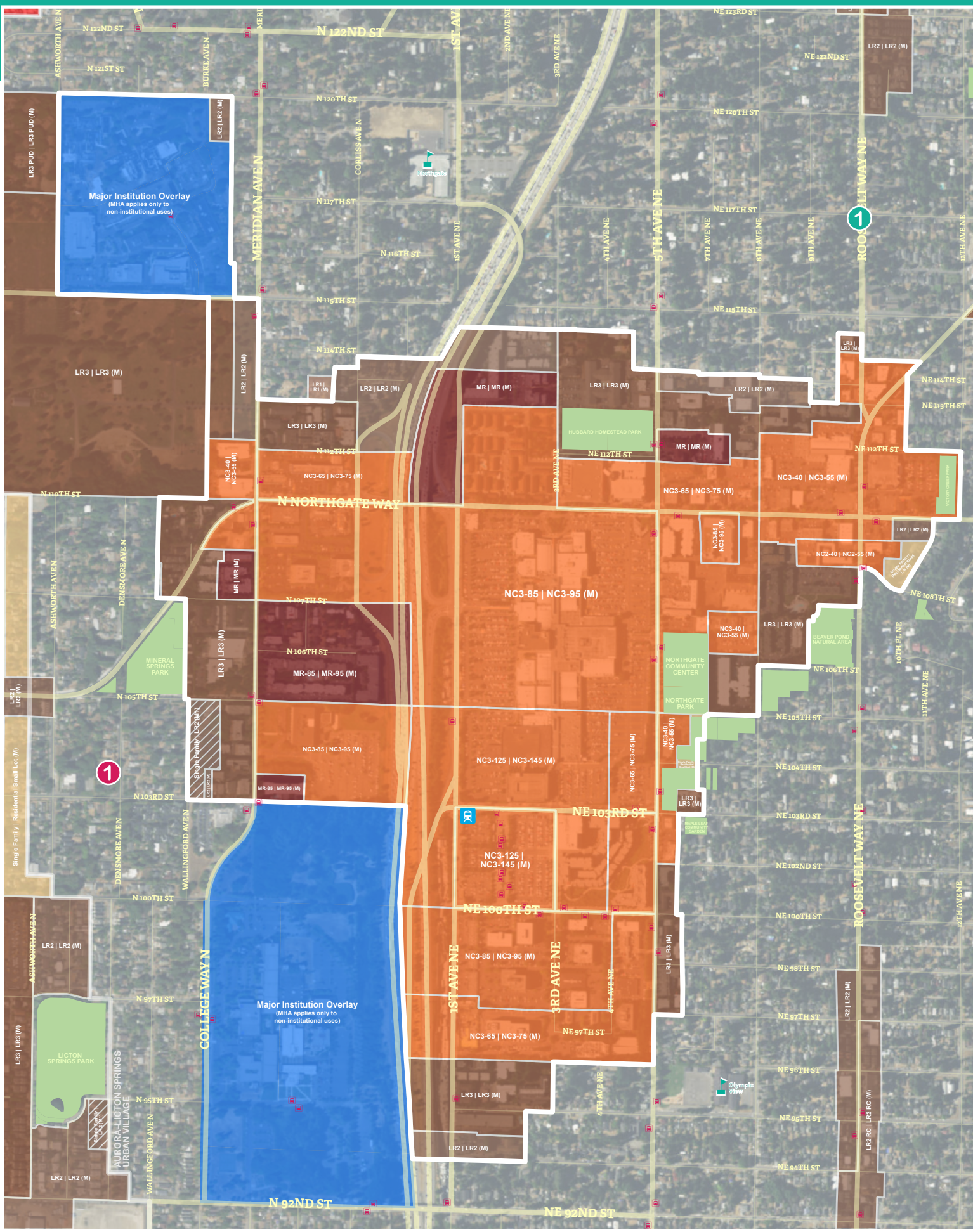
Northgate

Comments & Suggestions — Generally Supported

- 1 There was a suggestion to create a continuous commercial corridor along Roosevelt Way NE. This area is outside the urban village and not currently proposed to have zoning changes as part of MHA implementation.

Varied Opinions

- 1 Some Focus Group members suggested including the area between the Northgate and Aurora–Lifton Springs urban villages in MHA zoning changes because it is close to transit and schools and therefore would support some MHA Principles. This area is not currently proposed to have zoning changes.

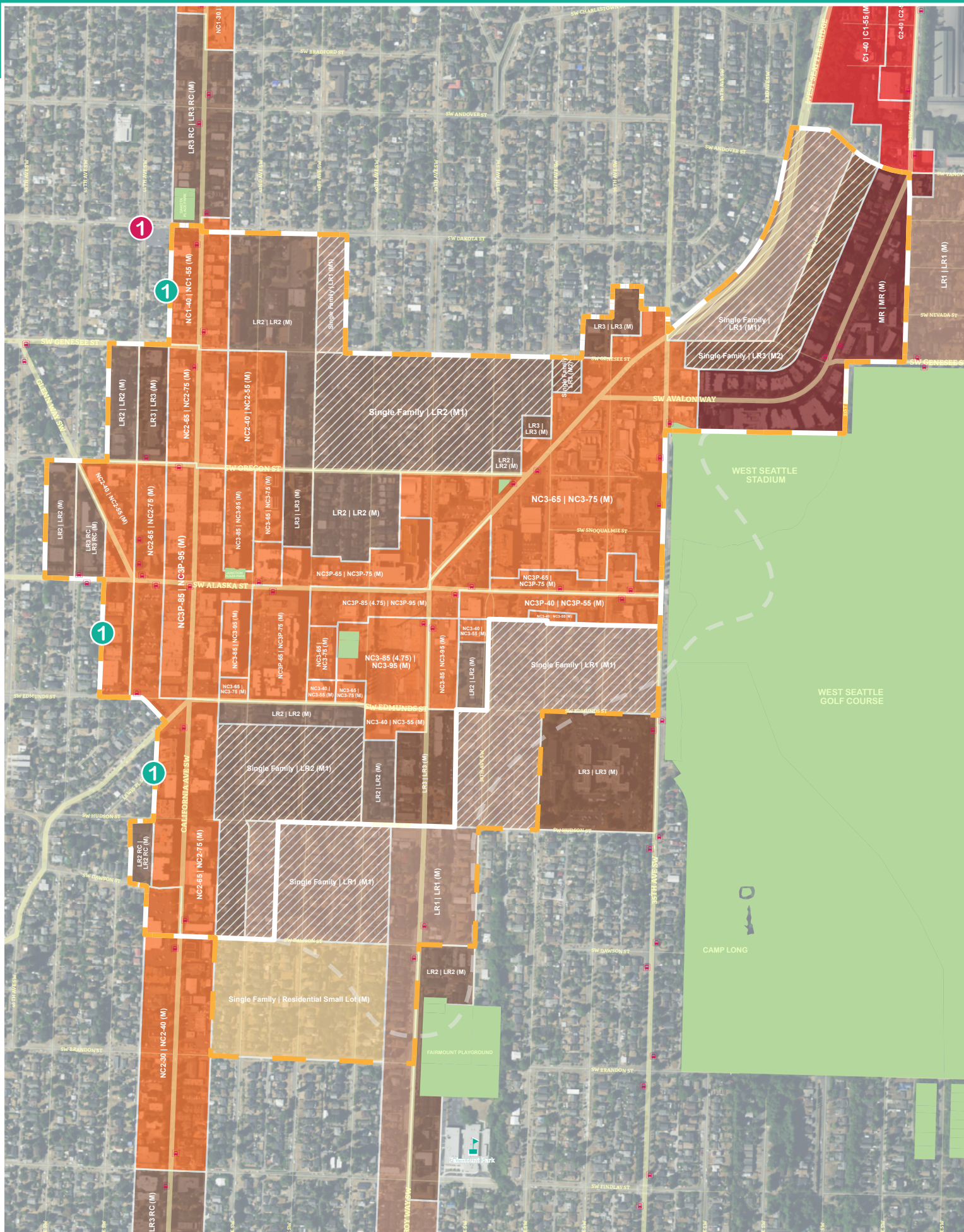


West Seattle Junction

Expansion Area Urban Villages
Hub Urban Villages
Medium Density Urban Villages
Lower Density Urban Villages

Comments & Suggestions — Generally Supported

- 1 Existing zoning creates abrupt transitions between Neighborhood Commercial (NC) zoning and single-family areas.



Varied Opinions

- 1 Some Focus Group members encouraged making zoning changes outside the current urban village boundary beyond the expansion area shown in the draft zoning map in order to improve transitions between NC areas along arterials and single-family areas.
- 2 Some Focus Group members are concerned that new development will make existing parking challenges even worse. To address this, some people suggested that new development should be required to have off-street parking.