

Q&A on Crown Hill Urban Village Upzoning

All Responses are from Seattle's Office of Planning and Community Development
Posted on CrownHillUrbanVillage.org February 8, 2017

[Neighbors gathered November 5](#) 2016 to discuss the draft rezone maps for Crown Hill Urban Village. The CHUV [Committee for Smart Growth](#) documented the questions and sent them to the Office of Planning and Community Development for answers. The responses provided below are verbatim from the City (beyond editing for format).

Q: The Community wants to prioritize development along arterials, and encourage that type of development because it's more likely to add inclusionary affordable housing, add the most housing units to meet the City goals and jumpstart the neighborhood improvements that we want. Will rezoning the rest of the UV now serve to dis-incentivize this desirable development (because it's cheaper/easier/more profitable to build low-rise and RSL instead?)?

A: Probably not. Our economic analysis shows that economic feasibility in RSL and low-rise zones is similar to feasibility for NC-75 and NC-55 zones. And the analysis shows that as market conditions become stronger for redevelopment over time it is the NC zones would yield stronger feasibility than the LR and RSL zones.

Q: When the City releases housing capacity and zoning capacity estimates, can you delineate where the projected housing is expected to come from? For example NC as a different number than RSL?

A: To date we have shown and will continue to show estimated growth and housing production for an urban village as a whole. It is difficult to disaggregate down to the parcel level because it is very difficult to predict which of potentially redevelopable sites will redevelop during a timeline. However, as a part of the EIS we will include an analysis down to the parcel level of one possible pattern of predicted development based on a series of assumptions. This will be included in the release of the Draft EIS.

Note from CHUV: The City released estimates that rezoning will **add 996 new housing units** for CHUV

Q: Are there any rules requiring inclusionary MHA housing to be used for rental housing, and not storage or common areas? How would this be enforced?

A: Yes, required MHA housing units have to be used for housing. Occupancy and condition of the units is monitored annually by the City's Office of Housing. Additionally it would be extremely unlikely for an owner not to rent the housing units as housing, because the housing units generate income (just not as much as market income) for the owner. Units will still be generating rental income from low and moderate-income earners.

Q: If the UV boundary is NOT expanded and the development is concentrated within the current urban village instead, would the existing properties within the current UV boundaries be upzoned even more (for example Low-rise instead of RSL) to create additional capacity? Ditto with dropping building heights - for example NC75 to NC55 - would this force low-rise housing further into the UV to compensate for lost housing capacity?

A: Through the input process modifications to the draft zoning proposal is expected. Other options that meet the intent of the MHA program and are consistent with principles are possible. Different zoning alternatives will have a corresponding estimation of resulting growth and housing production.

Q: What are the Potential Tax Implications (Assessments, tax rates) of these zoning changes.

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Provided by the City to answer this question:

What happens to property values and taxes when zoning changes?

The King County Assessor determines property taxes by multiplying a citywide tax rate by the assessed value of a property. The assessed value is essentially the Assessor's estimate of how much a property could sell. If the Assessor's determines in the future that the value of additional development capacity, along with the cost of MHA requirements, has significantly increased the overall value of your property, then your property taxes would go up as well. Economic analysis suggests that value of the additional capacity and the cost of MHA are generally offsetting on most sites, but it is possible that value could increase in many cases. This change would not, however, happen automatically when a zoning change occurs. A property's assessed value increases only if there is evidence that the value of properties with similar zoning and location has increased.

A study of property values after a 2012 rezone near the proposed site of Roosevelt Light Rail Station provides some clues about how property values could potentially changes. In that area, a number of parcels were rezoned from single-family to Low-rise 3 and Midrise without the implementation of MHA requirements. Comparison of these parcels to adjacent single-family parcels showed no change in property assessments or tax for the rezoned properties for the first 3 years. In the four and fifth year, after groundbreaking of several large Midrise multifamily buildings, property values for the Midrise zoned properties increased while the Low-rise-zoned properties continue to show now difference from the single-family zoned areas. Even in the extreme case of a rezone from single-family to Midrise adjacent to the light rail station without MHA requirements, the increase in property assessment was only about 25%.

Q: Why expand the UV boundary? Why not build within existing village boundaries first, then add street by street rather than such a huge change that opens up a whole neighborhood.

A: Potential urban village boundary expansions were identified as a part of the Seattle 2035 planning process, based on the concept that a 10 minute walking distance to very good transit service. Boundary expansions for several urban villages around the city are being evaluated. Modifications to zoning will not be completed in phases. It is expected that one set of changes would be implemented for MHA and there would be no further modifications for some time.

Q: Changing residential to commercial in streets adjacent to 15th and up zoning to nc75 on 16th, Mary and 14th have tremendous impacts on those neighbors. What kind of design guidelines or other mitigations might be possible along these highly impacted side streets

A: We received a lot of input about these areas in community input processes. The city is considering lower scale zoning changes in these areas in at least one of the EIS alternatives as a response, so decision-makers have options to select from. Additionally, if larger than typical zoning changes are supported, additional special development standards can be considered for the adjacencies. Strategies include requiring residential uses on the streets off of 15th, upper level setbacks and/or ground level setbacks on the streets off of 15th.

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Q: The housing description of NC75 says that it would allow office towers and buildings with NO residential ... is this uniformly true with NC 75?

A: Neighborhood Commercial (NC) zones allow for a mix of uses. The base zone standards do allow for single purpose commercial buildings. However, these are very uncommon in locations outside of downtown since residential uses tend to be more economically viable. Additionally it is possible for specialized development standards to mandate a portion of residential uses or frontages, and there are several examples of such standards in select locations in the city.

Q: What measures are being proposed to give **small businesses options in new development spaces? Concerns are that NC spaces will be too large and unaffordable for small business (Like Takis or Holy Grounds) What adjustments /alterations are possible in NC zoning and the requirement for ground floor commercial to accommodate small business?**

A: There are different versions of NC zones. The 1, 2 or 3 after the NC zone indicates different standards for the maximum size of individual business uses. NC1 has smaller maximum business sizes. Additionally, in some specific areas specialized development standards include limitations such as maximum storefront width.

Q: The Crown Hill Business Association is interested in pursuing options to include **office space in residential development in an NC zone here in CHUV, including removing the FAR penalty for office space in a residential unit, because they believe including office space in new developments meets a real need in our community. What options might be available to meet this need?**

Waiting for a response

Q: **Would 16th (or Mary or 14th) be converted to a one-way street if Commercial Zoning goes in? Would this kind of change be made in the re-zone? What kinds of mitigations are possible to deal with commercial on 16th, Mary, 14th**

Waiting for a response

Q: **How do we mitigate the impact of building and development on neighbors? For example: Cutting or shearing trees that makes them weak and dangerous? Trash and piles of debris. Sidewalk Closures. Other neighbor safety issues. Who enforces developer safety when building?**

Waiting for a response

Q: **How will the MHA fee/inclusionary requirement be applied to property owners who develop their existing property (personal/ rental/build their own apartment building or townhouses?)?**

A: MHA will apply anytime that a builder is adding one or more additional units. MHA payment amount applies to the square footage that is newly developed.

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Q: How will RSL apply to building requirements for property owners who choose to develop their property: Sidewalks, ADA compliance, shared utility use. Any differences for personal use or rental? We have some property owners in RSL who want to develop their own lots for rentals. They are looking at this from a compliance/building point of view to build.

A: All existing building code regulations will apply. This includes ADA compliance (though for buildings with a small number of units, it is common for there to be no required ADA accessible units, the requirements usually require ADA units in larger buildings.) Existing regulations for utility connections will apply - usually a connections fee for additional units. Regarding sidewalks, in general multi-family developments are required to provide or contribute to sidewalks. We are working with SDOT to ensure that RSL developments that are adding units will be required to provide or contribute to sidewalks. If it is not feasible for a single lot building to provide a sidewalk there are mechanisms for that owner to agree to contribute to the sidewalk construction cost at the time a full-block sidewalk is added.

Q: Can there be a height cap so that buildings built in NC55 zoning is capped at 55 feet? (restrict the bonus and allowances and ability to add height to buildings beyond the height limit?) This question is about whether there are any proposals to limit the bonuses and other things that add height, especially in light of changes to design review.

A: The existing height limit regulations would apply. The height limit is measured to the average grade of a lot - so that the downhill side of a sloping lot could have taller facades and the uphill side would have lower facades. There are few or no height 'bonuses' in zones like the NC-55 zone. Limited height limit 'exceptions' are allowed for rooftop features - principally stair or elevator penthouses to allow rooftop access. These exceptions are limited to 25% coverage of the rooftop surface and must be located away from the edge of the building. The only true height 'bonus' that affects the NC-55 zone is the living building pilot project, which allows 10' of additional height only for buildings that meet an exceptionally high net zero environmental performance. A limit of 20 green building pilot projects citywide is in place. In over 8 years of the program there have only been two examples - the Bullet Foundation on Capitol Hill, and the Brooks company headquarters in Fremont.

Q: What are the lot coverage allowances for each zoning type: Currently and in proposed changes Community is looking for changes in distances in setbacks, lot lines, etc., I think. If you have a link to simple comparative that would be helpful.

A: See a link to this urban design document. The standards you want to look at are setbacks and FAR limits. These are the standards that govern how much of the lot can be covered.

<http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/HALA/Policy/MHA%20Urban%20Design%20Summary.pdf>

Q: What design guidelines are possible to accommodate residential needs and mitigate impacts of commercial on the residential needs on adjacent side streets on 16th, Mary, etc. Also, there is a lot of interest here in coopting Ballard Partnership guidelines to assist with design guidelines for CHUV. Are those applicable with modifications?

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A: Development standards that are specialized to some of those conditions in Crown Hill could be added. These would be regulations in the land use code, which are a little different from design guidelines. We are already planning on bringing in some of the ideas from the Ballard work to NC zones citywide. Design guidelines are the guiding ideas about design from neighborhoods that are used in the design review process. The neighborhood could also work with the City to update its design guidelines. See resources on design guidelines and design review here:

<http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/aboutus/whoweare/designreview/designguidelines/default.htm>

Q: Are there ways to make sure we get affordable housing included in these large NC buildings, and try to make sure there is inclusionary MHA housing built here, on-site? We are assuming that NC75 or 55 is probably the most likely place in the UV that would get inclusionary housing - and the rest would go to the fee - is this a correct assumption?

A: It is probably more likely that larger buildings would provide affordable housing on site. However it is not correct to assume no on site performance housing in small developments. We have indications from some small builders that they would like to find a viable way to build performance housing. Payment and performance are an option for all developments. It is important to keep in mind also that funds generated from payment have a criteria to be used nearby where they are collected. Office of Housing also seeks to invest in urban villages across the City. This could result in a whole building of affordable housing in Crown Hill. These developments often provide other community benefits like providing gathering spaces and other community goals. (i.e. 12th Ave. Arts on Capitol Hill, and Roberto Maestas Place in Beacon Hill.)

Q: What will be done to protect seniors and other vulnerable citizens from displacement as the neighborhood is redeveloped? (mitigations beyond RSL zoning which we think will cause less displacement?)

A: MHA itself is an anti-displacement tool. The displacement you describe is a real concern but is not a risk because of the MHA implementation; it is a risk because of a strong economy and growth that is taking place in Seattle. Without MHA there is no guarantee any new housing in Crown Hill will be affordable. The Environmental Impact Statement will include a detailed displacement analysis that will identify and quantify potential displacement in every urban village. Other tools to prevent displacement include strategies to preserve existing housing that the City and others are working on. MHA funds can also be used to acquire and preserve existing affordable housing.

Q: How will building requirements be different for areas with and w/out sidewalks? Will it impact setbacks or other requirements?

A: In general all new multi-family and commercial development is required to provide sidewalks and we are working on tools to require sidewalks in RSL. SDOT has standards for the configuration and width of required sidewalks, and in some cases buildings must be setback in order to achieve the necessary sidewalk width. Usually sidewalk widths can be accommodated within the Right of Way however.

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Q: Is SDOT open to making some streets one way since many are very narrow with cars parked on both sides? How are changes like that made when dealing with zoning/planning?

A: Those types of traffic and circulation decisions would need to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by SDOT. Right of way and circulation conditions could be evaluated in a planning process that includes a transportation element. Interdepartmental planning of this nature occurs from time to time in neighborhood areas where resources allow.

Q: How can we get developers to build complete sidewalks in areas where there aren't any? We've discussed this, but can you clarify possible options or where this might be pursued - a sidewalk fund or something or requirements to connect patchwork sidewalks or something?

A: In general all new multi-family and commercial development is required to provide sidewalks and we are working on tools to require sidewalks in RSL. In the RSL zone in particular the tool could be a form of agreement where if it is not feasible for an individual property owner to build the sidewalk for a single location, they would sign a document indicating no protest to contribute a payment (along with other property owners) to fund new construction of a full block (or similar amount) at a future time when the sidewalk construction is feasible.

Q: How can we make sure residents who need their cars can find parking near their home?

1) A neighbor suggested creating a **Restricted Parking Zone (RPZ) for residents only**, and making it so a building that provides no off street parking is not eligible for RPZ membership, and the number of RPZ permits granted is tied to the number of provided off-street spots. Could this work here?

2) Our area is already being used as a **park and ride for commuters**, making access to our homes increasingly difficult.

3) We have no sidewalks so walking to our homes is already more dangerous than in other areas. **Street parking in areas with no sidewalks blocks access to mailboxes and can interrupt mail delivery, and parked cars lining streets are a concern for emergency vehicle response.** Can current UV parking rule (right now there is NO parking required in development in an UV) be adjusted in areas where street parking poses safety concerns?

A: An RPZ could be created if certain criteria are met, and would be evaluated by SDOT. However, RPZ rules do not treat certain groups of residents differently from others. All residents are eligible. An RPZ would help ensure residents are prioritized for accessing on street parking. Sidewalk and other design improvements to the curb condition are the best solution for the walking challenges and mailbox access. These would be good issues to study in a planning process that addresses the Right of Way. Study of an RPZ could happen on any timeline if resources allow.