

Director's Report and Recommendation

Ballard Neighborhood Design Guidelines

November 30, 2018

PROPOSAL SUMMARY

The proposal is a legislative action to amend Section 23.41.010 of the Seattle Municipal Code to remove the Ballard Municipal Center Master Plan Area Design Guidelines and adopt the Ballard Neighborhood Design Guidelines to the list of neighborhood design guidelines, and to amend Subsection 23.41.012.B to remove language relating to the Ballard Municipal Center Master Plan Area Design Guidelines.

The purpose of the Ballard Neighborhood Design Guidelines is to provide supplemental guidance to the overarching city-wide design guidelines. Neighborhood-specific design guidelines are an important tool for the Design Review Boards in their review of proposed new development. Neighborhood-specific design guidelines provide direction with the goal of fostering urban design excellence in new multifamily and commercial projects. They also help community engagement in the design review process by integrating community design priorities articulated in the Ballard Urban Design and Transportation Framework (2016).

BACKGROUND AND PROPOSAL

Background

Ballard is a thriving neighborhood with thousands of residents, scores of independent businesses, and a cherished character. It is home to thriving retail shops and restaurants that are centered around the Ballard Avenue Landmark District, a dynamic manufacturing and industrial district that not only includes traditional maritime business, but also craft businesses and a growing brewing community.

Ballard Municipal Center Master Plan Area Design Guidelines, 2001

Ballard community members completed Ballard Municipal Center Master Plan Area Design Guidelines in 2001. The Ballard Municipal Center (BMC) was the priority element that emerged from the Ballard/Crown Hill Neighborhood Plan. This plan covered an area of approximately 30 acres - ten acres from 20th Avenue NW to 24th Avenue NW and from NW 56th Street to NW 58th Street, including abutting properties. The BMC strove to facilitate a healthy, vibrant urban core. The BMC Master Plan identified potential sites for the Ballard Commons Park, the Ballard Brand Library and a neighborhood service center. The Ballard Municipal Center Master Plan Area Design Guidelines established design criteria and guidelines for development surrounding these planned assets. The objective of the Ballard Municipal Center Master Plan Design Guidelines was to encourage high quality public and private development in the core of the

urban village. Key element of the guidelines was incentivizing upper level setbacks, townhouse development around the Ballard Common, and creating mid-block connections. Since 2001, the planned public investment has occurred, and key infill development has contributed to achieving the desired character and civic activation.

Urban Design and Transportation Framework, 2016

After many years of modest residential growth, Ballard has recently experienced more rapid growth and change. The business owners, community groups, and residents collaborated to form the Ballard Partnership for Smart Growth (now the “Ballard Alliance” or “Alliance”) to provide new neighborhood leadership on several priority areas including development character and transportation. The Ballard Alliance established an Urban Design and Transportation (UDaT) working group to work with the City to develop a community vision for land use code changes, urban design and transportation improvements needed within the Ballard Hub Urban Village.

The Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD), the Department of Transportation (SDOT), and Department of Neighborhoods (DON), and the Alliance worked with community stakeholders to complete a [sub-area planning initiative](#). This initiative resulted in development of the [Ballard Urban Design and Transportation Framework](#) (UDTF) 2016.

Working collaboratively over 18 months, the City and stakeholders documented what they wanted to preserve and build on, and what needed improving for downtown Ballard to thrive as it changed and grew. The resulting UDTF presented recommendations for amending zoning and development standards and adopting new neighborhood design guidelines arising from this dialogue. To address the interrelationship between mobility, the built environment and the public realm, the UDTF incorporated Move Ballard, an SDOT-led transportation report. The following principles, written jointly with the UDaT committee, directed the work:

- Support a vibrant downtown Ballard business district.
- Create a hierarchy of great streets and public spaces, with special attention to Market Street, and preserve green spaces.
- Expand the diversity of jobs to include more office, skilled manufacturing, industrial, and technical jobs. Protect and support Ballard’s thriving industries while ensuring appropriate balance between maritime/ industrial, retail and restaurants.
- Coordinate infrastructure projects to support existing and new businesses and residents, increase waterfront access, improve multimodal mobility, and steward public investments.
- Preserve the historic character of the neighborhood.
- Provide design guidance for areas that are likely to change, encouraging quality and variety.
- Balance the mobility needs of pedestrians, bicycles, transit, cars, and freight.
- Prepare for potential light rail investment.

- Support affordable housing.
- Embrace community equity, health, and sustainability as fundamental planning philosophies.
- Consider views of iconic streetscape and nature as downtown Ballard grows.

Recent Land Use Code Amendments, 2016

Since completion, the UDTF has guided City implementation actions. In the Fall of 2016, the City [adopted](#) zoning changes and new, area-specific development standards. The amendments modified development standards to require upper-level setback, and other measures to reduce the bulk of large development and support a welcoming street environment.

Community Engagement

OPCD employed extensive public engagement to guide the UDTF, and support the development of the Land Use Code Amendments and proposed Ballard Neighborhood Design Guidelines, including:

- *Working meetings with Ballard Partnership's Urban Design and Transportation (UDaT) subcommittee (24 meetings):* The UDaT served as the project advisory committee, holding 18 monthly meetings to address topics including land use, design standards, transit, public spaces, and development, and to produce the UDTF. The UDaT met an additional six times to help develop the proposed Ballard Neighborhood Design Guidelines.
- *Community-wide open houses (440 attendees):* OPCD and SDOT worked with the UDaT to host 4 open houses to provide community input and review of the committee work to produce the UDTF. The open houses focused on: 1) issues and opportunities; 2) urban design; 3) multimodal transportation; and 4) UDTF review. OPCD staff also held office hours at Ballard Library to raise awareness and answer question about legislation for the Land Use Code amendments. A fifth open house provided an opportunity to review the Proposed Ballard Neighborhood Design Guidelines.
- *On-line Engagement:* OPCD also used online engagement to expand input into issues and opportunities, including two online surveys (400 + participants), and email updates (294 subscribers).
- *Community Groups:* Project staff briefed many of the community organizations during the planning process and encouraged their membership to participate at community meetings. Groups included: North Seattle Industrial Association; Central Ballard Residents Association; the Ballard District Council; East Ballard Community Association; Sustainable Ballard; Groundswell Northwest; Ballard Chamber of Commerce; and the Ballard Avenue Landmark District board.

Proposal

Ballard Neighborhood Design Guidelines

The proposal replaces the 2001 Ballard Municipal Center Master Plan Area Design Guidelines with the Ballard Neighborhood Design Guidelines. The proposed Ballard Neighborhood Design Guidelines incorporate the intent of the Ballard Municipal Center Area Design Guidelines, and

expands the area in which neighborhood design guidelines apply to include the entire Ballard Hub Urban Village. The overriding objective of the Ballard Neighborhood Design Guidelines is to encourage new projects to reinforce the roles and characters of the distinct areas throughout the Ballard Hub Urban Village that collectively give Ballard its identity as a city within a city. These areas, “Character Districts” contribute layers of activities and building forms that support its social fabric and distinct character. The Character Districts described below create an active place to walk, shop, live and work.

Character Core - Ballard’s Downtown is centered on its “main streets” – NW Market Street and Ballard Avenue NW. Its inviting mix of historic and heritage buildings, and a welcoming business district with shops, restaurants and bars, and services define Ballard’s social and physical character. The guidelines seek to sustain this historic role and character of Ballard’s main streets as they evolve and grow. The proposed Ballard Neighborhood Design Guidelines strengthen and enliven the public realm and business district, and ensure new buildings integrate Ballard’s historic design precedents for well-detailed, quality construction.

Civic Core - The Civic Core has a quieter character of civic activities, neighborhood-oriented businesses, and a variety of residences. The tree-lined streets include more intimate open spaces giving a unifying public character. The Ballard Municipal Center Master Plan Area Design Guidelines envisioned a civic district and identified sites for a park, library, and Neighborhood Service Center. City and private investments have largely realized this vision. The proposed Ballard Neighborhood Design Guidelines strengthen a quieter, neighborhood-oriented streetscape and public realm, and ensure that the mix of public buildings, residences, and smaller businesses create a strong civic character.

General Commercial - The General Commercial area meets the weekly and monthly needs for goods and services. It will increasingly support more offices and residences on upper floors. It is also a major transportation hub. The proposed Ballard Neighborhood Design Guidelines support expected increases in walking and transit by promoting active storefronts, and orientation of the site to balance the transportation volumes. The guidelines also provide direction for integrating the larger scaled projects that will likely occur in this area, so that this gateway to Ballard communicates the unique character of this destination.

Commercial Mix - Local commercial streets provide opportunities for a mix of local businesses serving adjacent neighborhoods as well as services and shops serving north-west Seattle. They have potential for office and moderate density residential on upper floors which take advantage of the transit and auto access.

Residential In-Town - Multifamily neighborhoods provide in-town living opportunities that are close to shops, services and jobs. The design characteristics and community infrastructure should support a range of households - from singles to families and older people.

Residential / Neighborhood Retail - The Lowrise Residential Commercial zoned areas along 14th Ave. NW and 24th Ave. NW, are characterized by a mix of multifamily buildings - many with street-level entrances and small commercial uses. New projects should consider including small commercial uses at corners to continue this mixed character.

Industrial - The industrial areas in the urban village emphasizes “maker” and production uses, continuing tradition of people who use their hands and minds to create. They are both utilitarian and urban. The streets can be navigated by trucks and walkers. Some businesses have a retail element, while others are wholesale or industry focused.

The proposed Ballard Neighborhood Design Guidelines provide specific guidance for the Character Areas, and general guidance applicable throughout the Ballard Hub Urban Village. The proposed Ballard Neighborhood Design Guidelines are organized around the same themes as the citywide Seattle Design Guidelines, using the same classification system. The Ballard Neighborhood Design Guidelines only include the citywide topics where supplemental guidance is provided.

Land Use Code Text Amendments

The Land Use Code text amendments delete portions of Subsection 23.41.012.B that are related to Ballard Municipal Center Area Design Guidelines and long longer relevant.

- Subsection 23.41.012.B.11.b is amended to eliminate height departures that allow the City to grant an additional 9 feet for a development including townhouses that front a mid-block pedestrian connection or a park identified in the Ballard Municipal Center Master Plan. Subsection 23.41.012.B.38, adopted in 2016, incentivized through-block connections. Further, the Land Use Code allows street-level live/work units and this use is regularly incorporated at the street-level outside of Pedestrian zones. Consequently, this departure is no longer necessary to encourage the desired development.
- Subsection 23.41.012.B.14 is amended to delete a departure that may be granted to reduce parking requirements by 30 percent for ground-level retail uses that abut established mid-block pedestrian connections through private property as identified in the "Ballard Municipal Center Master Plan Design Guidelines." Under subsection 23.54.015.B, there is no longer a minimum parking requirement for areas with frequent transit service. The areas in which through-block connections are desired are within a frequent transit service area and therefore it is not possible to further reduce parking requirements.
- Map B for 23.41.012 Ballard Municipal Center Master Plan Area is deleted because the proposed Ballard Neighborhood Design Guidelines apply to the Ballard Hub Urban Village.

Comprehensive Plan and Neighborhood Plan Consistency

The proposed Ballard Neighborhood Design Guidelines and text amendments are consistent with the goals and policies of Seattle’s Comprehensive Plan, the Ballard Neighborhood Plan (1999), and the Urban Design and Transportation Framework (2016). The goals and policies included in the Comprehensive Plan Neighborhood Plans section for Crown Hill and Ballard are applicable to this proposal and were developed through a community-led planning effort. The Ballard Neighborhood Guidelines also are consistent with, and in most cases, augment the Ballard Municipal Center Master Plan Area Design Guidelines that the proposed Ballard Neighborhood Design Guidelines would replace. The Land Use Code text amendments delete the Ballard Municipal Center Master Plan Area Design Guidelines, and portions of subsection

23.41.012.B because Land Use Code amendments adopted in recent years, including the September 2016 amendments and the proposed Ballard Neighborhood Design Guidelines, make the affected subsections redundant or no longer relevant.

RECOMMENDATION

OPCD recommends approval of the proposed Ballard Neighborhood Design Guidelines and associated text amendments. This action will provide the Design Review Program with clearer direction to implement the Ballard community's vision for the built environments, as reflected in other adopted plans and policies. The proposed Ballard Neighborhood Design Guidelines reflect the values and expectations held by the community for multi-family and commercial building design excellence. In making the proposed recommendations to amend the provisions of the City's Land Use Code and in preparing the proposed Ballard Neighborhood Design Guidelines, OPCD has considered comments from residents, local businesses, affected departments, and other agencies and interests. These comments, as well as all environmental documentation that was prepared relevant to the proposed amendments, are available upon request.

APPENDIX

1. Proposed Ballard Neighborhood Design Guidelines
2. Ballard Urban Design and Transportation Framework (2016)