

**CITY OF SEATTLE  
DETERMINATION OF NON-SIGNIFICANCE BY  
THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

**Applicant Name:** Seattle Department of Planning and Development

**Address of Proposal:** Bitter Lake Hub Urban Village

**SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION**

This proposal is to adopt recommended rezones and area-specific development standards for the Bitter Lake Hub Urban Village. The proposal includes rezones changing existing Commercial 2 (C2-65) to Commercial 1 (C1-65), changing existing Commercial 2 (C2-65) and increasing allowable heights, to Commercial 1 (C1-85), changing existing Commercial 1 (C1-65) and increasing allowable heights, to Neighborhood Commercial 3 (NC3-85), changing existing Commercial 1 (C1-40) and increasing allowable heights, to Neighborhood Commercial 3 (NC3-65), changing existing Commercial 1 (C1-65) to Commercial 2 (C2-65), increasing the allowable height from Commercial 1 (C1-65) to Commercial 1 (C1-85), applying a Pedestrian (P) designation and increasing allowable heights from Commercial 1 (C1-65) to Commercial 1 (C1P-85) and designating Linden Avenue N as a principal pedestrian street, and applying a Pedestrian (P) designation, changing Commercial 1 (C1-65), and increasing allowable heights, to Neighborhood Commercial 1 (NC3P-85) .

The following approval is required:

SEPA - Environmental Conditions - Chapter 25.05, Seattle Municipal Code.

**SEPA DETERMINATION:**     Exempt     DNS     MDNS     EIS  
  
 DNS with conditions  
  
 DNS involving non-exempt grading, or demolition,  
or involving another agency with jurisdiction.

## **BACKGROUND DATA**

### Background

The proposed rezones are located within the Bitter Lake Hub Urban Village. The Department of Planning and Development has worked with members of the community to identify a preferred development direction for this area. The proposed rezones and Code amendments are the product of a two year neighborhood plan update process that engaged a broad cross section of the community through hands-on workshops, interactive meetings with community-based organizations, conversations with property owners, questionnaires and other means. All of the proposed rezones are within the current boundaries of the Bitter Lake Hub Urban Village and are within areas designated Commercial/Mixed Use on the Seattle Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use Map.

### Proposal Description

#### Zoning

The proposed rezones include 38 parcels on approximately 40 acres of land, centered on the neighborhood core around Linden Ave. N and N 130th St. The proposed rezones also include two parcels on approximately 1.25 acres of land located on Aurora Avenue N. The rezone areas below are depicted on maps provided in the Environmental Checklist that accompanies this report.

Area A: Rezone from Commercial (C2-65) to Commercial (C1-65).

Area B: Rezone and increase allowable height limits from Commercial (C2-65) to Commercial (C1-85).

Area C: Increase the allowable height limit from Commercial (C1-65) to Commercial (C1-85).

Area D: Apply Pedestrian (P) designation and increase allowable heights from Commercial (C1-65) to Commercial (C1P-85). Designate Linden Avenue N as a principal pedestrian street.

Area E: Apply a Pedestrian (P) designation, rezone and increase allowable height limits from Commercial (C1-65) to Neighborhood Commercial (NC3-85).

Area F: Rezone and increase allowable heights from Commercial (C1-65) to Neighborhood Commercial (NC3-85).

Area G: Rezone and increase allowable heights from Commercial (C1-40) to Neighborhood Commercial (NC3-65).

Area H: Rezone from Commercial (C1-65) to Commercial (C2-65).

Analysis undertaken by the Department of Planning and Development estimates that the proposed rezones will increase the housing development capacity within the rezone areas by about 455 housing units (20% of existing capacity), and 1,910 new jobs (49% of existing capacity). A conservative approach to assessing the potential impact of

increasing capacity is to assume that the market would yield corresponding increase in development. Increasing the 20-year growth estimate by 20% and 49% respectively could mean that over the next 20 years the Bitter Lake Hub Urban Village could expect 180 more housing units and 368 more jobs with the proposed zoning in place than it would see with the current zoning.

#### Development Standards

- Require development on parcels over 8 acres within an area along Linden Avenue N to create an interior corridor in order to achieve a scale that is compatible with surrounding development, and to allow for pedestrian and vehicular circulation.
- Apply a 5-foot upper level setback on portions of a structure greater than 45 feet along Linden Ave. N and the interior corridor, to reduce the bulk of structures.
- Permit residential and live-work uses at the street-level in Commercial zones along Linden Avenue N between N 135th St. and N 145th St.

#### Incentive Zoning

Under this proposal, the extra height and floor area allowed through this rezone could only be obtained by providing by providing affordable housing on site or through a payment in lieu through the incentive provisions described in the Seattle Municipal Code Chapter 23.58A.

#### Public Comments

Proposed changes to the Land Use Code require City Council approval. Public comment will be taken on the proposed amendments at a future scheduled Council public hearing.

#### **ANALYSIS - SEPA**

The initial disclosure of the potential impacts from this proposal was made in the environmental checklist dated July 25, 2014. The information in the checklist, the information and analysis in the Director's Report and Recommendation, the March 2012 BBH Neighborhood Plan Update, a copy of the proposed text changes, and the experience of the lead agency with review of similar legislative actions form the basis for this analysis and decision.

As noted above, all of the proposed rezones are located within the existing Bitter Lake Hub Urban Village. Potential impacts of the rezone proposal are analyzed below.

#### Short-term Impacts

As a non-project action, the proposed amendment will not have any short-term impact on the environment. Future development affected by this legislation and subject to SEPA will be required to address short-term impacts on the environment.

### Long-term Impacts

Most long-term impacts of this proposed action are expected to be minor. Impacts to noise, light and glare, shadows, air quality (including greenhouse gas emissions), drainage, use of energy and natural resources, and most public services and facilities may slightly increase, due to larger structures and greater levels of activity on various sites, but are not expected to be significant. Projects developing pursuant to this proposed action would be subject to environmental review if they meet or exceed environmental review thresholds. In addition, projects would need to comply with existing codes and regulations, including the Land Use Code, Environmentally Critical Areas regulations, Stormwater Code, and Grading Code.

The most likely adverse impacts of the proposed action would be to land use; height, bulk, and scale; traffic and transportation; and public services and utilities. These topics are discussed further below:

### Land Use

The Land Use SEPA policy states, in part, that “it is the City’s policy to ensure that proposed uses are reasonably compatible with surrounding uses and are consistent with any applicable, adopted City land use regulations, the goals and policies set forth in Section B of the land use element of the Seattle Comprehensive Plan regarding Land Use Categories, and the shoreline goals and policies set forth in section C-4 of the land use element of the Seattle Comprehensive Plan for the area in which the project is located”. The proposal would result in no direct impacts to land and shoreline use as it is a non-project proposal. The proposal would represent a moderate change in the types of land use allowed within the area. The rezone proposal would aid in encouraging future development that would be consistent with the intent of the area’s neighborhood plan and Comprehensive Plan policies, by encouraging denser mixed-use patterns along Linden Avenue N within the Bitter Lake Residential Urban Village and strengthening the development of the town center. The type of mixed-use development anticipated will allow continued intensification of land uses, which could support an active town center with greater mix of housing choices and a more vibrant neighborhood-serving retail district as envisioned in the Neighborhood Plan.

Seattle Municipal Code 25.05.675 identifies SEPA policies regarding public view protection. Bitter Lake Playground is listed as a public viewpoint. It is the City's policy to protect public views of significant natural and human-made features: Mount Rainer, the Olympic and Cascade Mountains, the downtown skyline, and major bodies of water including Puget Sound, Lake Washington, Lake Union and the Ship Canal, from public places consisting of the specified viewpoints, parks, scenic routes, and view corridors. There are currently no views of these features from the playground to its location in a topographic depression, surrounding development and trees.

Negative impacts could also include increased shading and private view blockage where development occurs. Minor shading impacts on adjacent properties could occur particularly on the north side of the rezone area; however these impacts will tend to be minimized by the area’s

location along a ridge. Overall, because of the small difference in magnitude of these impacts relative to what could occur under existing conditions as well as for the other reasons discussed in specific sections of this checklist, the impact is not expected to be significant. No portion of the proposed rezones is within the City's Shoreline District.

The proposed rezone generally supports Comprehensive Plan goals and policies for Mixed-Use Commercial Areas. Specifically, the rezones are proposed to facilitate the following:

- LUG-17: "Create strong and successful commercial and mixed-use areas that encourage business creation, expansion and vitality by allowing for a mix of business activities, while maintaining compatibility with the neighborhood-serving character of business districts, and the character of surrounding areas."
- LUG19: "Include housing as part of the mix of activities accommodated in commercial areas in order to provide additional opportunities for residents to live in neighborhoods where they can walk to services and employment."
- LU104: "Consistent with the urban village strategy, prefer the development of compact concentrated commercial areas, or nodes, in which many businesses can be easily accessed by pedestrians, to the designation of diffuse, sprawling commercial areas along arterials, which often require driving from one business to another."
- LU116: "Seek to focus development in transit and pedestrian-friendly urban villages while maintaining compatibility between new development and the surrounding area through standards regulating the size and density of development."
- LU117: "Generally permit a greater intensity of development in pedestrian and transit supportive environments found in pedestrian-oriented commercial areas within urban villages than is permitted in general commercial areas or outside of urban villages."

The increased density that could result from the proposed rezone is consistent with the goals and policies cited above. The proposed rezone area is entirely within the Bitter Lake Hub Urban Village. This area is generally well-served by transit.

Development on parcels proposed to be rezoned will be subject to design review if they exceed thresholds for design review established in the Land Use Code. Design review considers the context and character of surrounding development in applying City design guidelines, thus providing an additional opportunity to address any potential incompatibilities between new development and development on adjacent parcels. It is not anticipated that the proposed text amendments will result in significant land use impacts, pursuant to SMC 25.05.675 J.

#### Height, Bulk, and Scale

In general, the height, bulk and scale of projects developed pursuant to the proposed rezones would not be substantially different than what could be built under current zoning and would largely maintain existing transitions from high- to low-density zoning. The greatest proposed

height limits of 85' are proposed for the neighborhood core where higher residential and commercial density is consistent with comprehensive and neighborhood plan goals. The proposal also includes a new requirement that portions of development above 45 feet set back 5 feet from the property line along Linden Avenue N and along the required interior corridor that would reduce the bulk of facades facing residential zones. The neighborhood core is also buffered from surrounding single family residential areas by moderate density multifamily zoning.

Bulk and scale impacts of projects developed pursuant to this proposed rezones may also be addressed by the City's design review process. Specific height, bulk and scale impacts of proposed development will be determined at the time of project review. The proposed rezones are not expected to have a significant impact on height, bulk, and scale, pursuant to SMC 25.05.675 G.

### Transportation

The proposed rezones will increase development capacity on various parcels in the affected area; projects developed pursuant to proposed rezones may generate higher volumes of traffic and have greater transportation impacts than projects proposed under the current zoning.

A conservative approach to assessing the potential impact of increasing capacity is to assume that increasing the 20-year growth estimate by 20% and 49% respectively could mean that over the next 20 years the Bitter Lake Hub Urban Village could expect 180 more housing units and 368 more jobs with the proposed zoning in place than it would see with the current zoning. This theoretical increase to the 20-year growth estimate provides the basis for analyzing the level of impacts the neighborhood could experience due to the proposed rezones.

In general, the Bitter Lake Urban Village is part of the City's urban center and urban village strategy that seeks to focus Seattle's share of the region's growth in areas that can be efficiently served by urban infrastructure. Much of the area is already served by needed infrastructure – roads, sidewalks, water and sewer, schools and parks. Where there are deficiencies, they are localized and can generally be addressed by individual developments.

In total, a theoretical increase of 368 more jobs (of the type we would expect to find in a mixed-use are) would generate about 15,497 new daily trips, with 561 of these trips occurring in the AM peak hour and 1,425 occurring the PM peak hour. Assuming development over 40 acres, this works out to about 387 new daily trips/acre, with 14 AM peak hour trips/acre, and 36 PM peak hour trips. Given the uncertainty of the forecasts, it might be reasonable to represent these potential increases as ranges, such as 13,947 – 17,047 daily trips, which is 10 percent less than and more than the basic estimate. The additional residential units would generate roughly 1,200 new daily trips, 90 AM peak hour trips, and 110 PM peak hour trips.

The affected areas are located along a network of arterials and SR 99. RapidRide and regular bus service will provide alternatives to driving. Additionally, the proximity of residential and commercial uses may mean more people complete trips by foot or bus.

The transportation impacts of individual projects developing pursuant to these proposed text changes will be evaluated through SEPA review at the time of permit applications; if appropriate, mitigation will be required at that time.

### *Parking*

The proposed rezone could also result in additional demand for on-street parking spaces due to increased residential and commercial use. There are no minimum residential parking requirements in Urban Villages where the residential use is within 1,320 feet of a street with frequent transit service. All of the affected areas meet this criterion. There are also no parking maximums, so the number of parking spaces contained in any future development would be determined by market demand. In practice, residential development has constructed parking at a rate of approximately 0.88 spaces per unit. Typically non-age restricted buildings provide a little more than one parking space per unit and senior housing apartments provide less than 1 space per residence. Some recent commercial development in the area, such as the Key Bank, has provided off-street parking, while the commercial spaces associated with the mixed use development at Linden Avenue N and N 130<sup>th</sup> Street appears not to have provided off-street parking. DPD staff has observed that existing Linden Avenue N on-street parking experiences high occupancy throughout the day and weekends due, in part, to the Bitter Lake Playfield and amount of existing development in the area. Conversely, the surface parking lots appear not to be fully occupied during business hours.

The proposed changes would not affect existing parking standards, and therefore would not result in direct impacts. To the extent that proposed rezone results in additional commercial and residential development, demand for on-street and off-street parking spaces could increase. It is likely that development will continue to provide some parking to meet demands. Given existing utilization rates and area conditions, it is not anticipated that this proposal will have significant impacts on on-street parking.

### *Public services and utilities*

The gaps analysis prepared by the Department of Parks and Recreation indicates that there is an unmet need for park space in the rezone area. The Bitter Lake Community Center and playfields are located on Linden Avenue N and serve much of the area affected by this proposal. Parks recently invested in improvements to play areas and a P-Patch around Bitter Lake Reservoir, and they are currently considering acquisition of additional park space in the area.

A review by Seattle Public Utilities staff indicates that the overall water, sewer and drainage utility systems are likely to be adequate to serve future demand levels. While some specific improvements may be needed, these improvements will be identified and remedied at the time of the future development. New development projects in this area could be required to perform analysis of development-related impacts on utility system infrastructure and, where necessary, to construct improvements that increase capacity and avoid service degradation. New development will also be required to provide storm water control as required under the Drainage Code.

There are no known capacity constraints within the area's substation and electrical system that could be exacerbated by this rezone. Minor site-specific feeder line improvements may be needed to accommodate future development, but would be coordinated at the time of future development.

The amount of growth in the Bitter Lake Hub Urban Village is within the range covered by the City of Seattle's Comprehensive Plan for Fire Protection and Police Services. The Police Department has selected a site within the rezone area for the location of the new North Precinct. The Fire Department is currently upgrading the station located near the rezone area.

Consequently it is unlikely that this proposal will result in significant indirect or cumulative impacts related to transportation or public services/utilities, other public services, including fire and police services, parks, and schools relative to already existing needs served by existing facilities and opportunities.

### Conclusion

The proposed rezones in the Bitter Lake Hub Urban Village are not expected to have significant adverse impacts. The allowed height, bulk, and scale of development are consistent with neighborhood plan and comprehensive policies and would generally maintain existing transitions from high- to low-density areas. Furthermore, design review will be required of projects over the size threshold, further reducing potential height, bulk, and scale impacts. Increased trips will be accommodated by the existing arterial capacity and existing and the mixed-use nature of the area are likely to reduce levels of auto traffic from development projects in the rezoned areas.



**DECISION – SEPA**

This decision was made after review by the responsible official on behalf of the lead agency of a completed environmental checklist and other information on file with the responsible department. This constitutes the Threshold Determination and form. The intent of this declaration is to satisfy the requirements of the State Environmental Policy Act (RCW 43.21C), including the requirement to inform the public agency decisions pursuant to SEPA.

Determination of Non-Significance. This proposal has been determined to not have a significant adverse impact upon the environment. An EIS is not required under RCW 43.21C.030 2c.

Determination of Significance. This proposal has or may have a significant adverse impact upon the environment. An EIS is required under RCW 43.21C.030 2c.

**RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS – SEPA**

None.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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