



Legislative Department Seattle City Council Memorandum

Date: November 15, 2011
To: Committee on the Built Environment (COBE)
From: Sara Belz, Central Staff Analyst
Subject: **Council Bill (CB) 117271: Roosevelt Legislative Rezone**

On November 16, 2011, COBE will have its fourth discussion on legislative rezone options for the Roosevelt Residential Urban Village. The Committee previously took up the issue at its August 10 and October 12 meetings and at a public hearing at Roosevelt High School on September 19.

At its October 12 meeting, COBE reviewed the three legislative rezone proposals that have been developed for Roosevelt. Maps that illustrate all three options are attached to this memorandum.

- **Option 1: State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Draft Proposal, April 2011**
This rezone option is similar to the proposal developed by the Roosevelt Neighborhood Association in 2006. It was released by the Executive in April 2011 as a draft proposal and served as the basis for the Department of Planning and Development's (DPD) SEPA analysis.
- **Option 2: Executive's Proposal (CB 117271), June 2011**
After reviewing and considering comments on its April 2011 draft proposal (Option 1), the Executive published its official rezone recommendation for Roosevelt in June.
- **Option 3: Sustainable, Livable Roosevelt Proposal, September 2011**
In response to the Executive's proposal, the Roosevelt Neighborhood Association developed a third rezone option in September and titled it Sustainable, Livable Roosevelt.

The key differences between the three proposals are summarized in the following table.

	Option 1: SEPA Draft Proposal	Option 2: Executive's Proposal	Option 3: Sustainable, Livable Roosevelt Proposal
1. Proposed zoning east of I-5 between NE 66 th and NE 68 th Streets	Lowrise 3	Lowrise 3	Midrise
2. Proposed zoning in the vicinity of NE 65 th Street and Roosevelt Way NE	Neighborhood Commercial 3 (NC3) with a 65 foot height limit	NC3 with height limits ranging from 65 to 85 feet	NC3 with height limits ranging from 65 to 85 feet ¹
3. Proposed zoning between NE 65 th and 66 th Streets, and 12 th and 15 th Avenues NE ("the high school blocks")	Neighborhood Commercial 2 (NC2) with a 40 foot height limit and a pedestrian designation	NC2 with a 65 foot height limit and a pedestrian designation	NC2 with a 40 foot height limit and a pedestrian designation

¹ The boundaries of the area where 85 foot building heights would be permitted under Option 3 differ from those described under Option 2.

As this rezone process moves forward, the Council may choose to adopt one of these three options, with or without amendments, or to develop its own rezone proposal. Councilmembers also have the authority to amend a legislative rezone proposal by carving out parcels that are proposed for rezoning, thereby maintaining the current zoning applied to those properties.

Issues and Questions

A focused discussion on rezone options for the high school blocks is scheduled for the November 30 COBE meeting. On November 16, the Committee will be asked to address and provide direction to staff on other key elements of the legislative rezone proposals developed for Roosevelt. Central Staff and DPD have studied each of the issues described below and identified action options and considerations for COBE’s review.

Issue #1: Zoning east of Interstate 5 between NE 66th and NE 68th Streets.

Current zoning in this area is a mixture of Lowrise 1, Lowrise 2, and Single Family 5000. The Executive proposes rezoning this area to Lowrise 3, which would yield capacity for up to 183 housing units. The Sustainable, Livable Roosevelt proposal recommends rezoning this area to Midrise. According to DPD, applying Midrise zoning in this area would yield capacity for up to 399 housing units, or 216 more than would be permitted under the Executive’s proposal. This portion of the rezone area is all located within about 650 feet of Interstate 5.

Options	Considerations
<p>1. Rezone this area to Lowrise 3, consistent with Executive’s proposal.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The original rezone proposal developed by the Roosevelt Neighborhood Association in 2006 recommended Lowrise zoning for this area. • Rezoning this area to Lowrise 3 would allow increased residential development to occur adjacent to a freeway, which could raise public health concerns. However, the new housing unit capacity that would be created under Lowrise 3 zoning would be about half of what Midrise zoning would accommodate. • If this area is rezoned to Lowrise 3, applying special development standards in order to mitigate some of the public health concerns associated with living near a freeway could suppress developer interest in the affected properties.
<p>2. Rezone this area to Midrise, consistent with the Sustainable, Livable Roosevelt proposal.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If fully built out under Midrise zoning, this area could accommodate hundreds of additional housing units within four blocks of the planned light rail station and two existing park and rides. • DPD’s SEPA analysis for Roosevelt did not consider the application of Midrise zoning within the rezone area. Applying Midrise zoning to the blocks immediately east of Interstate 5, between NE 66th and NE 68th Streets, would likely result in development impacts beyond those evaluated in DPD’s SEPA analysis. <i>If COBE is interested in</i>

	<p><i>rezoning this area to Midrise, DPD will need to complete additional environmental analysis, which may include a redo of SEPA.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building a significant amount of new housing within two blocks of the freeway will likely raise public health concerns. The Environment Impact Statement (EIS) prepared for South Downtown recommends “maintaining a distance of approximately 330-650 feet between residential uses and [transportation and port] facilities for the purposes of avoiding adverse exposure of residents to air pollutants.” • Rezoning this area to Midrise, rather than to Lowrise 3, could provide the Council with more flexibility to apply special development standards without curbing developer interest. Such standards could be designed to help mitigate some of the negative health impacts associated with living near a freeway (e.g., minimum requirements for air filtration systems and window and wall construction). However, adding specialized zoning language to the Seattle Municipal Code that only applies to specific areas creates challenges for DPD’s plan review and code enforcement staff. • No formal development plans or projects are currently associated with the proposed rezone of this area to Midrise.
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COBE Recommendation:

Issue #2: Height limits in the vicinity of NE 65th Street and Roosevelt Way NE.

Most of this area is currently zoned NC3 with a 65 foot height limit. Both the Executive’s proposal and the Sustainable, Livable Roosevelt plan recommend rezoning portions of this area to allow building heights of up to 85 feet near the future light rail station site.

Options	Considerations
<p>1. Maintain the area’s existing height limit of 65 feet.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Roosevelt Neighborhood Association’s original 2006 rezone proposal for this area called for 65 foot height limits. • Roosevelt is a Residential Urban Village and 65 feet is the maximum height limit generally found in Residential Urban Villages. • The planned extension of light rail to Roosevelt is a major public investment and creates a unique opportunity for the City to support transit-oriented development through higher density zoning.

<p>2. Rezone this area to allow building heights of up to 85 feet as recommended in the Executive’s proposal.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under the Executive’s proposal, building heights of up to 85 feet would only be permitted between Roosevelt Way NE, NE 64th Street, 12th Avenue NE, and the half-block north of NE 67th Street. These boundaries encompass the parcels that most immediately surround the future light rail station site. Building heights west of Roosevelt Way NE would remain limited to 65 feet. • Hub Urban Villages and Urban Centers are more common locations for buildings measuring up to 85 feet.
<p>3. Rezone this area to allow building heights of up to 85 feet as recommended in the Sustainable, Livable Roosevelt proposal.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under the Sustainable, Livable Roosevelt proposal, the area where 85 foot building heights would be allowed would be centered on the intersection of NE 65th Street and Roosevelt Way NE. This intersection functions as the center of the Roosevelt neighborhood’s commercial area. • Compared to the Executive’s proposal, this option would not significantly increase the total area where 85 foot building heights would be permitted. Although it would extend 85 foot height limits to the west side of Roosevelt Way NE, between NE 64th and NE 66th Streets, it would also reduce the height limit along the north frontage of NE 67th Street, between Roosevelt Way NE and 12th Avenue NE, from 85 feet to 65 feet.
<p>4. Rezone this area to allow building heights of up to 85 feet between 9th Avenue NE, NE 64th Street, Roosevelt Way NE, and NE 67th Street (eliminates the notch in the 85 foot area in Sustainable, Livable Roosevelt proposal).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If COBE recommends rezoning the blocks east of I-5 between NE 66th and NE 68th Streets to Lowrise 3, this option would allow buildings with heights of up to 85 feet to be constructed next to multifamily residential structures that could not exceed 40 feet in height. • Compared to the Executive and Sustainable, Livable Roosevelt proposals, this option would slightly increase the total area where 85 foot building heights would be permitted.

COBE Recommendation:

Issue #3: Application of incentive zoning.

At its November 16 meeting COBE is likely to take action on CB 117302. Passage of the legislation would allow the City’s incentive zoning provisions to be applied in urban villages when properties are rezoned to Lowrise or Commercial designations that create additional development capacity. If CB 117302 passes out of COBE on November 16 and the Committee would like to apply incentive zoning within the Roosevelt legislative rezone area, Central Staff will work with DPD to ensure the final version of the rezone legislation reflects this recommendation.

COBE Recommendation:

Issue #4: Designation of festival streets and/or green streets.

At its October 12 meeting, COBE discussed the possible designation of festival streets and green streets in the Roosevelt Residential Urban Village. Potential locations for such streets include the following:

- Northeast 66th Street, from 8th Avenue NE to 15th Avenue NE – green street; potential festival street opportunity between Roosevelt Way NE and 12th Avenue NE
- Brooklyn Avenue NE, from NE Ravenna Boulevard to NE 66th Street – green street
- 14th Avenue NE, from NE 65th Street to NE 66th Street – green street and/or festival street

A map that illustrates the locations and designations described above is attached to this memorandum.

Festival street status allows a portion of a right-of-way to be closed to through-traffic for a specified number of events during a year. Designating a portion of a right-of-way as a festival street is a relatively simple and straightforward process that can be initiated by neighborhood residents or business owners by submitting an application to the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT). No fees are currently associated with the issuance of festival street permits.

Neighborhood green streets are classified as a special street “type” in the City’s Right-of-Way Improvements Manual. They are defined as non-arterial streets outside of downtown Seattle that include features such as enhanced pedestrian facilities, unique landscaping, historic character elements, and traffic calming. In comparison to festival streets, green street designations are usually more complex, particularly if they include the creation of a Concept Plan. Concept Plans include detailed design recommendations for individual green streets as well as information about existing utility and transportation infrastructure. The development of a Concept Plan requires the commitment of City resources for DPD, SDOT, and Seattle Public Utilities staff time.

Because the designation process for festival streets is generally less complicated, the following table focuses specifically on green streets.

Options	Considerations
1. Develop and pass a companion resolution requesting one or more of the corridors described above be designated as a neighborhood green street in the City’s Right-of-Way Improvements Manual, without approved Concept Plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifying new green streets for inclusion in the Right-of-Way Improvements Manual without requesting the creation of accompanying Concept Plans substantially reduces the City staff costs associated with establishing a green street.• The Right-of-Way Improvements Manual includes basic design principles that apply to all green streets regardless of whether they have a Concept Plan. The principles are intended to inform the design of right-of-way improvements associated with private development and public capital projects that occur along designated green streets.• The basic design principles included in the Right-of-Way Improvements Manual offer only general guidance to

	<p>private property owners, public agencies, and other parties that may be impacted by a green street designation. In-depth information about the location of existing utility infrastructure, site-specific design recommendations, and other details normally included in a Concept Plan are not provided.</p>
<p>2. Develop and pass a companion resolution that 1) requests one or more of the corridors described above be designated as a neighborhood green street in the City's Right-of-Way Improvements Manual; and 2) calls on DPD, SDOT, and Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) to develop associated Concept Plans.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The detailed design and infrastructure information included in Concept Plans is intended to provide design review boards, property owners, developers, and public agencies with specific guidance on how the vision for an identified green street should be implemented. • The presence of an approved Concept Plan can reduce the time and costs associated with obtaining a street use permit to make improvements to a green street. • Creating a Concept Plan for a green street is generally a six to eight month process and requires DPD, SDOT, and SPU staff time. • If additional funding is not appropriated to DPD, SDOT, and SPU to complete any requested Concept Plans for new green streets in Roosevelt, the departments will have to complete the necessary work using existing resources. This could affect progress on other projects that may be priorities for Councilmembers.

COBE Recommendation:

Issue #5: Neighborhood design guidelines.

Also as part of a companion resolution, COBE may want to request that DPD and the Roosevelt community work together in 2012 to update the neighborhood's design guidelines. Design guidelines establish qualities of architecture, urban design, and public space that can help make a proposed development project a successful part of a community. They are also the primary tool used by the city's design review boards in their evaluations of proposed projects.

Options	Considerations
<p>1. Request update of the Roosevelt neighborhood's design guidelines.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roosevelt's existing design guidelines date from 2000, before a Sound Transit light rail station was planned for the neighborhood and before Roosevelt High School underwent a major renovation or received historic landmark status. • Completing an update of Roosevelt's design guidelines within the next year will increase the number of new development projects that the document will influence.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with the Roosevelt community in 2012 to update the neighborhood's design guidelines will require DPD staff time. As a result, other neighborhood planning projects scheduled to move forward in 2012 could be delayed.
<p>2. Do not request update of the Roosevelt neighborhood's design guidelines.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If Roosevelt's design guidelines are not updated, the Northeast Design Review Board will continue to rely on the existing version of the document, which precedes several significant projects and changes that have come to the neighborhood in recent years.

COBE Recommendation:

Next Steps

COBE's next opportunity to discuss legislative rezone options for Roosevelt, including the blocks immediately south of Roosevelt High School, will likely be on November 30. If you have questions about any of the issues raised in this memorandum or the attached documents, please feel free to contact me at any time (4-5382 / sara.belz@seattle.gov).