



MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 24, 2013

TO: Councilmember Richard Conlin, Planning, Land Use and Sustainability Committee

FROM: Lyle Bicknell, Principal Urban Designer, and Nora Liu, Community Development Manager

RE: Land Use Code Amendments for the North Rainier Hub Urban Village

Beginning in 2009, a broad spectrum of dedicated community members and stakeholders worked with City staff to update the 1999 **North Rainier Neighborhood Plan**. The following goals in the 2010 **North Rainier Neighborhood Plan Update** describe the vision for the **North Rainier Hub Urban Village** and the Mount Baker town center:

A vibrant, business district that serves North Rainier residents and is a destination shopping area with stores that serve the greater Rainier Valley;

Development within the town center prioritizes housing that serves households across a range of incomes;

A town center that concentrates housing, commercial uses, services and living-wage employment opportunities; that is well served by transit and non-motorized travel options; and that is well designed and attractive to pedestrians.

The 2011 **Mount Baker Urban Design Framework** builds on these goals with the following recommendations:

- Create a “main street” shopping district on Rainier Avenue S. and S. McClellan Street
- Create a walkable, bikable town center with a complete network of sidewalks and bicycle infrastructure.
- Reinforce the identity of the town center with gateways and landmarks.
- Catalyze change with the redevelopment of opportunity sites, especially those fronting the prime retail corner
- Leverage light rail to create a transit accessible shopping destination for the greater Rainier Valley.
- Connect the town center to neighborhoods and open spaces with complete streets, historic boulevards and uphill pedestrian connections.



This proposal will promote these objectives in the following ways:

To further the goal of creating a diverse, mixed-use town center with retail, housing and jobs; and a strong pedestrian orientation, the ordinance changes the zoning designation of specific parcels within the Mount Baker Station Overlay from **Neighborhood/Commercial** to **Seattle Mixed**

Following the Neighborhood Plan Update recommendation key sites are rezoned to encourage redevelopment of parcels around the light rail station in a manner that incorporates housing, commercial services and amenities.

To bring light to the street, reduce the perceived bulk of adjacent buildings and to create a more pedestrian friendly environment, upper level setbacks are required on Rainier Avenue and Cheasty Blvd within the town center.

On Rainier Ave South and South McClellan Street blank facades are restricted, street level parking on private property prohibited, and ground-level uses are limited to pedestrian oriented businesses.

This proposal gives particular attention to the two parcels that comprise the thirteen acre site currently occupied by the Lowes Home Improvement Center. To ensure that future redevelopment will be pedestrian in character and scale the ordinance proposes a height limit of 125' and requires open space corridors through the interior of the site and a limit on lot coverage.

To address the goal for housing that serves households across a range of incomes the ordinance introduces incentive provisions for affordable housing consistent with chapter 23.58A. Where the height limit is 85 feet or less, extra height can be achieved by providing affordable housing on-site or through payment in-lieu. Where the height limit is greater than 85 feet, the public benefits required would be split between affordable housing and open space benefits. For residential development, 60 percent of the total extra floor area would be achieved by providing affordable housing and the remaining extra floor area would be achieved through provision of public open space. For commercial development, 75 percent of the total extra floor area would be achieved by providing affordable housing and the remaining extra floor area through provision of public open space.

Specific highlights of the proposal:

- Increases the allowed building height from 65' to 85' on key properties within the Light Rail Station Area Overlay
- Increases the allowed building height at the core of the Mount Baker town center to 125'
- Expands the boundary of the of the Station Area Overlay District to parcels recently rezoned to SM/R-65
- Changes the zoning designation from Neighborhood Commercial to Seattle Mixed on key sites proximate to the Mount Baker Light Rail Station
- Designates South McClellan Street and Rainier Avenue South as Class I Pedestrian Streets

Taken together these recommendations will help to realize the vision for a vital, walkable town center at the core of North Rainier Urban Village.

Thank you for considering this legislation. We are available to answer any questions you may have.