



City of Seattle

Edward B. Murray, Mayor

Seattle Department of Planning and Development

Diane M. Sugimura, Director

Date: August 13, 2014

To: Councilmember Mike O'Brien, Chair
Planning Land Use and Sustainability (PLUS) Committee

From: Aly Pennucci, DPD, Senior Planner
Mike Podowski, DPD, Land Use Policy Manager

Subject: Council Bill 118167 - Minimum Density

Background

The proposal responds to requests from neighborhood groups that have reacted to development that wastes development capacity (one story where 4 to 6 are allowed) and are inconsistent with the urban character of pedestrian-oriented commercial districts. This issue has generated interest in a minimum size requirement for new buildings. In response, City Council adopted interim legislation in September 2013 (Ordinance 124270) that established a minimum floor area ratio¹ (FAR) requirement on lots in pedestrian designated areas in Urban Centers, Urban Villages and the Station Area Overlay District. The interim period expires on September 15, 2014. FAR has traditionally been applied as a maximum limit.

The proposal would apply to areas with a pedestrian zone designation and pedestrian designated streets in the Seattle Mixed and Northgate Overlay zones. DPD conducted outreach in conjunction with the larger pedestrian zone mapping project, through the project website, and multiple community meetings.

Proposed Amendments

In summary, the proposal would:

1. Continue to apply a minimum FAR requirement to all lots with a pedestrian designation in Urban Villages, Centers and the Station Area Overlay Districts and add a minimum FAR requirement to lots within the Northgate Overlay District along designated Major Pedestrian Streets and lots zoned Seattle Mixed that abut a Class 1 or Class 2 Pedestrian Street;
2. Identify the development threshold (addition or removal of more than 1,000 square feet) for the requirement; add flexibility for existing structures and larger lots that do not conform to the

¹ Floor Area Ratio (FAR), means the amount of gross floor area allowed within structures per square foot of the lot. For example, a lot of 20,000 square feet with a maximum FAR of 3 would allow a building containing 60,000 square feet (i.e. a three story building that occupied the full lot or a six story building that occupied half the lot). The same lot with a minimum FAR of 2 would be required to provide a building containing, at minimum, 40,000 square feet (i.e. a two story building that occupied the full lot or a four story building that occupied half the lot).



minimum FAR requirement (to allow improvements to existing buildings); allow demolition to create a vacant lot; and exclude parks and open space;

3. Continue to include provisions that specify portions of a lot that would not be included in calculating the minimum FAR requirement, such as wetlands or steep slopes; and
4. Allow waivers for lots that contain a designated landmark or lots within a Landmark District, and add flexibility for lots within the Pike/Pine Conservation Overlay District.

The proposal is intended to strike a balance that promotes new development that is consistent with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan and fulfills the desires of neighborhood groups while allowing flexibility for property owners to invest in and improve existing buildings. Thank you for your consideration of this legislation.