

Director's Report and Recommendation

Neighborhood Design Guidelines for the Capitol Hill Urban Center Village

December 31, 2018

PROPOSAL SUMMARY

This proposal is a legislative action to amend Section 23.41.010.B of the Seattle Municipal Code, approving revised neighborhood design guidelines for the Capitol Hill Urban Center Village.

The purpose of these neighborhood design guidelines is to provide supplemental guidance to the overarching Citywide Design Guidelines. Neighborhood design guidelines are an important tool for the Design Review Boards in their review of proposed new development. The neighborhood design guidelines provide direction with the goal of fostering urban design excellence in new multifamily and commercial projects.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

The Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) and the Seattle Dept. of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) worked with community stakeholders to assess the existing neighborhood design guidelines and propose changes to address current design issues and priorities. This proposal, submitted for City Council review and action, includes revised Capitol Hill Neighborhood Design Guidelines.

Neighborhood design guidelines for the Capitol Hill Urban Center Village were originally adopted in 2005. The City of Seattle, working with the Capitol Hill EcoDistrict and other community stakeholders, assessed recent development and identified current priority design issues in the Capitol Hill Urban Center Village that could be addressed through updated neighborhood design guidelines. The updated neighborhood design guidelines for Capitol Hill are intended to promote new development that reinforces the neighborhood's architectural qualities, walkable urban form, historic character and natural features in ways that support a socially equitable, environmentally resilient and culturally vibrant neighborhood.

Although the City has not revised the Capitol Hill Neighborhood Plan, other community planning efforts pointed to a need for updated neighborhood design guidelines. These include:

- Adoption of the Urban Design Framework (2011) and Supplemental Design Guidelines (2013) for the Light Rail Station Sites;
- The upcoming development of the LINK light rail station construction staging sites that will mend the community fabric to create a new heart and civic center of the community.

- Establishment of the Capitol Hill EcoDistrict in 2011, and the Capitol Hill Arts District in 2016;
- Expansion of the boundaries of the Capitol Hill Business Improvement District in 2012 and 2014;
- Zoning changes associated with Mandatory Housing Affordability that could allow increased height and density in new development;
- Changes to the Citywide Design Guidelines in 2013 that resulted in duplication between citywide and neighborhood design guidelines; and
- More robust community efforts to provide early input on proposed developments.

While the neighborhood design guidelines for Capitol Hill were reformatted in 2013 as part of an effort to standardize all neighborhood design guidelines, the 2013 amendments did not offer additional guidance to address these changes. Today's proposed neighborhood design guideline amendments incorporate ideas from these efforts.

In developing these neighborhood design guidelines, the City initiated a partnership with Capitol Hill Housing's EcoDistrict program who helped to create and convene a dedicated "working group" for this effort. The City worked with this group to assess recent developments, identify issues and priorities, review and comment on drafts. The working group met monthly from April 2017 to June 2018, including two walking tours of the neighborhood. Other outreach included two community open house events (with an option to participate online), targeted outreach to other community organizations: Capitol Hill EcoDistrict Steering Committee, Capitol Hill Arts District, Capitol Hill Community Council, Pike Pine Urban Neighborhood Council, 15th Avenue Merchants Association, Broadway BIA, Capitol Hill Chamber, Capitol Hill Historical Society. The November 2017 Open House was attended by over 60 people, and the online survey was completed by over 500 people. Over 670 individuals subscribed to the project email list received periodic updates. During the SEPA process, notice emails announcing the availability of the draft neighborhood design guidelines and the opportunity to review and comment were sent to this list of 670 community stakeholders. Ten individuals submitted minor comments during the SEPA comment period. There was no appeal of the SEPA determination.

OPCD Proposal and Analysis

The character of the Capitol Hill Urban Center Village has changed significantly since the adoption of the existing neighborhood design guidelines in 2005. Between 2005 and 2016 over 50 developments have gone through the design review process. The record-breaking amount of new development has changed the design context and character of Capitol Hill, and current priorities are not fully addressed in the current neighborhood design guidelines. The proposed neighborhood design guidelines offer additional clarification, especially in the areas of neighborhood context, public realm and building materials.

Comprehensive Plan and Neighborhood Plan Consistency

The Capitol Hill Neighborhood Design Guidelines are consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan (2017), and Capitol Hill Neighborhood Plan (1999).

RECOMMENDATION

OPCD recommends approval of the Capitol Hill Neighborhood Design Guidelines. This action will provide the Design Review Program with clearer direction to implement the community's priorities for the built and natural environments. The 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 neighborhood design guidelines, OPCD has considered comments from citizens, 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.