

August 10, 2017

MEMORANDUM

To: Planning, Land Use and Zoning Committee
From: Ketil Freeman and Lish Whitson, Council Central Staff
Subject: Uptown Rezone: Timing and Potential Amendments

On Tuesday, August 15, the PLUZ Committee will have another briefing on the Mayor's proposed rezone of the Uptown Urban Center. At this briefing Executive staff will discuss proposed development standards including heights, floor area ratio (FAR) limits, and setbacks; affordable housing; arts and culture incentives; and proposals for Seattle Center. On September 8, the PLUZ Committee will begin discussing amendments to the Mayor's proposal. A public hearing is scheduled for 5:30 on September 11 at the SIFF Cinema Uptown. The Committee could vote as early as September 19.

This memo (1) provides background on the proposed rezone and (2) identifies potential amendments to the Council Bill that the Committee may consider. These amendments have been identified through discussion with members of the community or as best practices identified during earlier zoning efforts. Councilmember may identify additional potential amendments prior to September 19.

Background

The bill would rezone the Uptown Urban Center, and add a new Seattle Mixed-Uptown (SM-UP) zone to the Land Use Code. The SM-UP zone would allow for higher heights and more development capacity throughout the urban center, and require affordable housing payments or on-site performance. The highest heights would be located southeast of Seattle Center. More modest increases would be located in the northwest and northeast corners of the urban center. The SM-UP zone would include incentive zoning provisions for the SM-UP 160 zone, including programs to permit the transfer of development potential from designated landmark structures, public open space sites, and historic vulnerable masonry structures. Floor area bonuses would be provided for green street improvements and onsite open spaces. The SM-UP zone would also include new pedestrian-oriented development standards along most streets in the urban center.

Potential amendments

Councilmembers have identified a number of potential amendments, which are listed in Attachment A. Specific language for those amendments Councilmembers want to move forward for consideration will be provided before the September 8 PLUZ Committee meeting.

Attachments:

- A. Potential Amendments to Uptown Rezone Bill

cc: Kirstan Arestad, Central Staff Director

Attachment A: Potential Amendments to Uptown Rezone Bill

Topic	Issue	Options	Discussion
1. Heights	A. Heart of Uptown (the area surrounding Queen Anne Avenue N between Harrison and Roy streets)	Increase heights to 85’ in the “Heart of Uptown” (5.25 FAR)	The Mayor proposed rezoning the “Heart of Uptown” from 40’ to 65’. Councilmember Johnson has proposed considering an increase to 85’ – an increase of two stories and 0.75 FAR. For a discussion of the pros and cons of the two heights, please see pages 24 and 25 of the Director’s Report accompanying the rezone legislation.
		Accept the Mayor’s recommendation.	
	B. Mercer/Roy corridor	Increase heights to 125’	The Mayor proposed rezoning the Mercer/Roy corridor from 40’ to 85’. Councilmember Johnson has proposed considering an increase to 125’ – an increase of four stories and 1.75 FAR. This additional height could leverage City-owned property in an area where Queen Anne hill rises swiftly to the north.
		Accept the Mayor’s recommendation.	
	C. 5 th Avenue W	Maintain current heights along 5 th Avenue W on sites with critical area designations	The Mayor proposed a standard HALA increase for property in the west part of the Uptown Urban Center. C2-40 zones would increase to C2-55 with an affordable housing requirement. MR zones which allow buildings up to 60 feet, or 75 feet with affordable housing would instead have an 80 foot height limit. There are steep slopes mapped in this area. Councilmembers have heard concerns from residents of the area that heights should not be increased for property with environmentally critical areas.
		Accept the Mayor’s recommendation	
	D. Design review departures	Remove ability to depart from height requirements	Currently there is a departure that allows projects up to 3 feet of additional height if the top floor of the structure is set back at least six feet from the abutting streets. Councilmembers should consider whether this departure continues to make sense given the height increases and upper-level setbacks proposed for Uptown.
		Accept the Mayor’s recommendation.	

Attachment A: Potential Amendments to Uptown Rezone Bill

Topic	Issue	Options	Discussion
2. Floor Area Ratio (FAR) and Height Incentives	A. FAR Incentive for arts Space and Landmark Preservation	Increase the FAR incentive from .5 to 1	The Mayor’s proposal establishes a .5 FAR incentive for provision of arts and cultural facilities or preservation of landmark structures. Councilmember Johnson has proposed increasing the incentive from .5 to 1 FAR.
	Accept the Mayor’s recommendation.		
	B. FAR Incentive for Public schools	Provide additional FAR to encourage co-development of sites with the Seattle School District	The Mayor’s proposal maintains an FAR incentive for school development, which provides that floor area developed with school space is exempt from chargeable FAR on a site. Councilmember Johnson has proposed adding an FAR incentive, as well, to encourage co-development of sites with the Seattle School District. This would be similar to existing regulations applicable to development in South Lake Union that provide a height bonus to encourage co-development.
		Accept the Mayor’s recommendation.	
C. Incentives for Family-sized Units	Provide a height or FAR incentive for development that meets family-friendly design standards.	This year the Council amended bills rezoning the University District and Downtown to include incentives for the provision of family-sized units and amenity areas for families. Councilmember Johnson has proposed expanding those incentives to Uptown	
	Accept the Mayor’s recommendation.		
D. Incentives for mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) compliance through performance.	Provide a height or FAR incentive to development that complies with MHA through performance.	The bill would implement the Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) program throughout the Uptown Urban Center. New development would be required to provide affordable units on site (performance) or make a payment in-lieu of providing units. Some Uptown residents have expressed preference for MHA performance. Councilmembers may propose height or density incentives to encourage performance, including, potentially, performance with a deeper level of affordability.	
	Accept the Mayor’s recommendation.		

Attachment A: Potential Amendments to Uptown Rezone Bill

Topic	Issue	Options	Discussion
3. Physical Development Standards	A. Upper Level Setbacks	Modify proposed upper-level setback standards.	The Mayor’s proposal would establish an average upper-level setback of 10’ for portions of structure above 45’ or 65’ in height along Roy Street, Queen Anne Avenue, 1 st Avenue, and 5 th Avenue. Councilmember Johnson may propose amendments reducing the required setback from 10’ to 5’, or an average of 5’.
		Accept the Mayor’s recommendation.	
4. Transportation and Parking	B. Transportation Management Programs (TMP)	Add a requirement for a TMP to reduce transportation impacts. A TMP requires a property owner to provide alternatives to reduce the number of SOV trips to and from the	According to the Downtown Seattle Association’s 2014 and 2016 Mode Split studies, Uptown has the highest share of single-occupant vehicle (SOV) work trips of any center-city neighborhood. The FEIS for the Uptown rezone indicated that the number of SOV trips in the Uptown Urban Center will almost double between 2015 and 2035. The City has used TMPs as a way to manage and limit SOV trips in other urban centers, including Downtown Seattle, South Lake Union, Northgate and the University District. The University TMP requirements are triggered by either expected SOV rates or overnight on-street parking rates. Councilmember Johnson has proposed using the University District requirements as a model for Uptown.
		Accept the Mayor’s recommendation.	
	C. Off-street parking maximums	Add an off-street parking maximum for some or all non-residential uses	The abutting urban centers, Downtown and South Lake Union, each have parking maximums of one space per 1,000 square feet for non-residential uses. No maximum is proposed for Uptown. With increases in density for non-residential buildings in Uptown, this may encourage the development of more auto-oriented office buildings in Uptown, resulting in increased SOV use compared to the adjacent urban centers. Councilmember Johnson has proposed considering parking maximums for non-residential development in Uptown.
		Accept the Mayor’s recommendation.	