



City of Seattle Mayor Tim Burgess

November 14, 2017

Honorable Bruce Harrell, President
Seattle City Council
City Hall, 2nd Floor
Seattle, WA 98199

Dear Council President Harrell:

I am pleased to transmit the attached legislation to complete the citywide implementation of Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) requirements. This legislation is a key piece of Seattle's strategy for addressing our affordability crisis and implements several recommendations of the Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda. The legislation is the culmination of over three years of work to implement MHA across Seattle. MHA is already in place in many of Seattle's densest neighborhoods including Downtown, South Lake Union, Chinatown/International District, University District, Uptown, and parts of the Central Area. This legislation would implement the program in all remaining urban villages and other multifamily and commercial areas across the city, creating a truly comprehensive program for housing affordability. It is estimated that the MHA requirements proposed in this ordinance will produce more than half of the 6,000 new affordable housing units that the requirements are estimated to generate over 10 years.

MHA requires that commercial and multifamily development projects address housing affordability by providing affordable homes or by making a payment to Seattle's Office of Housing to support development of affordable housing throughout the city. This legislation also provides for additional development capacity in the form of an increase in the amount of height or floor area in zones where MHA would apply. By enacting these two changes together, the proposed legislation will both increase the supply of new market-rate housing and result in the creation of new rent- and income-restricted housing, both of which support the City's growth management and housing policies and will help address housing affordability.

While MHA makes Seattle a more affordable and equitable City by allowing more people access to rent- and income- restricted homes near jobs, services, and amenities, this legislation also includes many changes that will enhance livability by improving design, supporting our urban forest, and encouraging green building. Examples of these changes include upper-level setbacks, new tree requirements for RSL zones, changes to Green Factor landscaping requirements, and updated green building incentives.

The proposed rezones also support the urban village strategy of our Comprehensive Plan by focusing growth where we have the best available infrastructure to support it. These changes would encourage more housing near transit, parks, and businesses, so more people can access jobs and outdoor space without needing a car. They would support a greater diversity of housing choices, including cottages, row houses, and small apartment buildings. Finally, these policies support our climate protection goals by encouraging greater use of transit, walking, and biking.

MHA represents a historic opportunity for the City to address our housing affordability crisis. I ask the Council to quickly begin discussion of this legislation, in order to support equitable growth by providing more housing choices for lower income individuals and families.

Thank you for your consideration and if you have any questions, then please do not hesitate to contact Sam Assefa, Director of the Office of Planning and Community Development, at (206) 386-1183.

Sincerely,



Tim Burgess
Mayor of Seattle

cc: Honorable Members of the Seattle City Council