



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL  
**CENTRAL STAFF**



# Childcare Near You

LISH WHITSON, LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

LAND USE AND NEIGHBORHOODS COMMITTEE

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# Outline

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- Childcare regulations
- Current conditions
- Proposal



Photo: U.S. Air Force/Rhonda Siciliano

# Childcare regulations

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## **Washington State**

### **Department of Children Youth and Families**

Licenses childcare centers

- Health, wellness and safety
- Programs and activities
- Indoor and outdoor space standards
- Feeding and napping
- Staffing requirements
- Licensing and record-keeping

## **City of Seattle**

Regulates childcare businesses and uses

- Business licenses
- Principal or accessory use
- Impacts to surrounding community
- Incentives to incorporate childcare in development

# State licensed childcare

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## **Family Home programs**

- Up to 12 children, based on age, staffing and expertise
- Treated as a home occupation under Seattle zoning

## **Childcare centers**

- Number of children regulated based on space and staffing
- Standards for space and operation

## **Not licensed, but regulated as a childcare center under zoning**

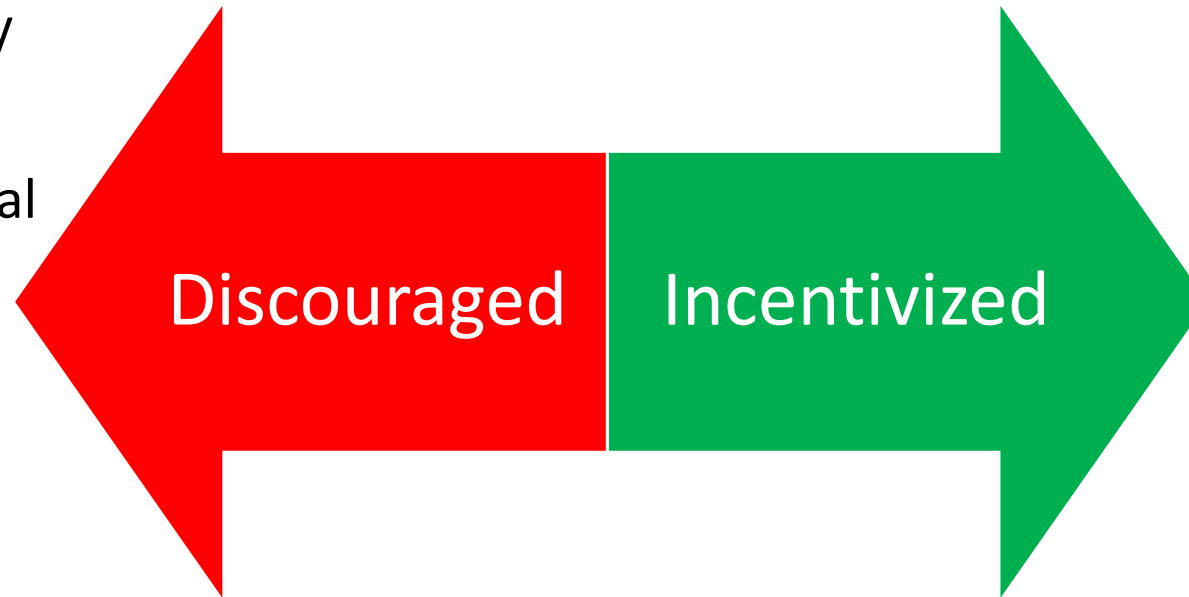
- Cooperative care for less than 4 hours a day
- Government-sponsored centers
- Drop-in childcare centers

# Seattle's childcare regulations

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## Single Family

- Limit size of family care centers
- Require conditional use approval for other childcare centers
- Allow appeals if approved



## Downtown

- Allow as a use permitted outright
- Bonus for on-site childcare centers
- Contributions for off-site childcare
- Exempt floor area in childcare use
- No size limit

# Seattle's childcare regulations

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## **Home occupations (family care centers)**

- Permitted outright up to 12 children
- Only within a dwelling unit
- No outdoor evidence, except play space and ADA access

## **Single Family zones**

- Conditional use, can be appealed the Hearing Examiner
- Must be 600 feet from any other institution
- Noise, odor, lighting, yards, appearance of bulk, parking and loading considered in conditional use review

# Seattle's childcare regulations

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## **Multifamily zones**

- Permitted outright, must be 600 feet from other institutions

## **Commercial zones**

- Permitted outright
- Size limits in Neighborhood Commercial 1 & 2 zones consistent with other uses in zone

## **Industrial zones**

- Permitted outright

# Seattle's childcare regulations

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## **Downtown and Seattle Mixed zones**

- Permitted outright
- Exempt from floor area limits
- Extra floor area allowed for provision of childcare onsite or contributions toward offsite childcare centers



# Demand for childcare

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## In 2018\*

31,700 households with children under 6

44,000 children under 6

In 75% of households with children under 6 all parents work outside the home

33,000 children under 6 may need some childcare

\* American Community Survey data

# Supply of childcare

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Approximately 16,400 spaces in 910 childcare centers in Seattle

50% of Seattle's Census Tracts meet definition of "childcare deserts"\*

24% of Seattle's Census Tracts contain no childcare centers

- \* "A childcare desert is any census tract with more than 50 children under age 5 that contains either no childcare providers or so few options that there are more than three times as many children as licensed childcare slots."

Source: America's child care deserts in 2018, Rasheed Malik, Katie Hamm, Leila Schochet, Cristina Novoa, Simon Workman, and Steven Jessen-Howard, Center for American Progress, 2018

# New childcare centers

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Recently permitted childcare centers (2015-2019):

- 51 centers received land use or building permits
- Average size of new childcare centers: 4,811 square feet
- Largest childcare centers are in Downtown and Industrial zones (>12,000 sf)
- Smallest childcare centers are in single-family and multifamily zones (1,400 sf)
- Average capacity of new childcare centers: 67 children
- Total capacity of new childcare centers: 3,400 children

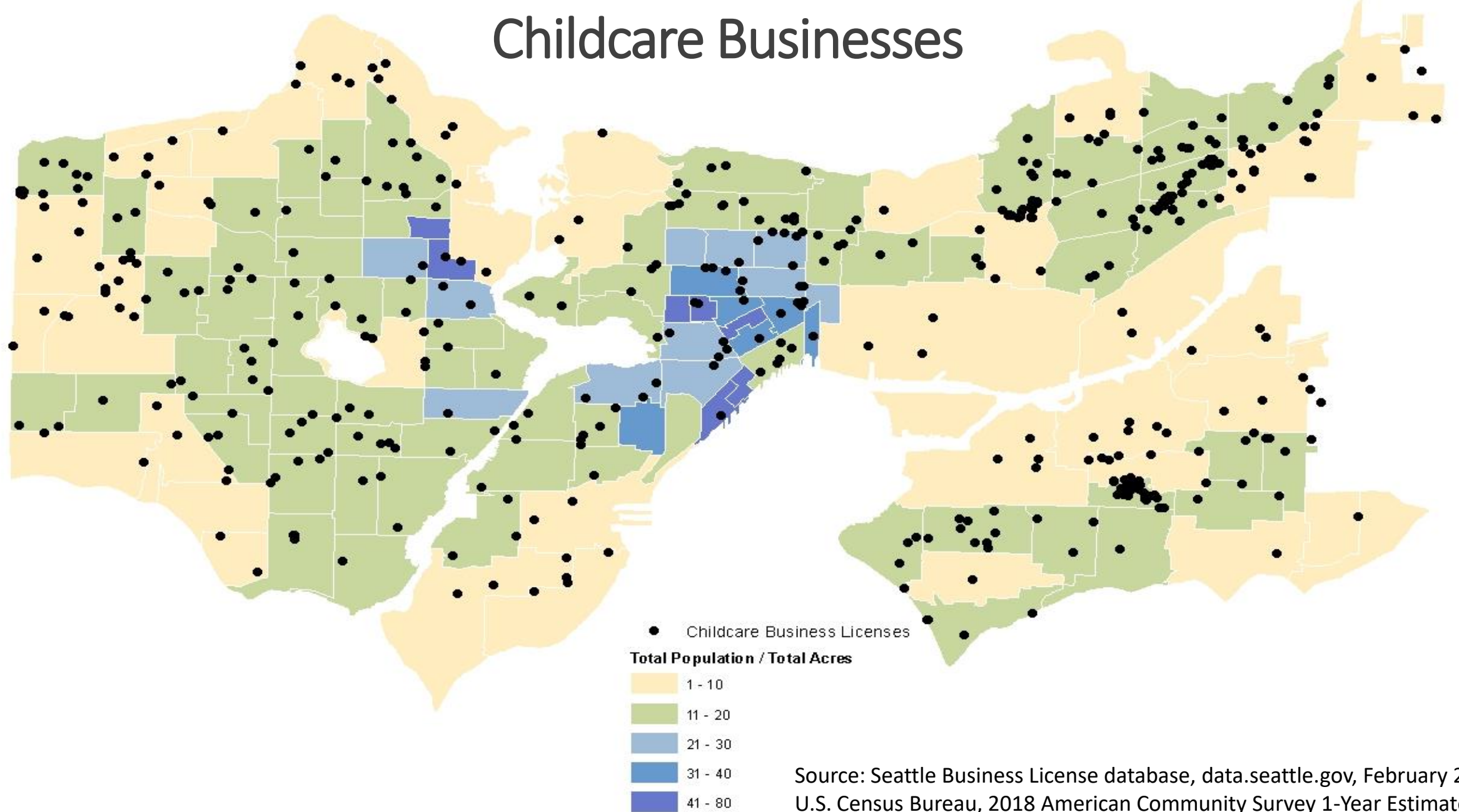
# Permitting timelines

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Time to approval:

- Averaged 161 days (~5 months) across all zones
- In single family zones where conditional use: 248 days on average (~8 months)
- In single family zones where permitted outright: 91 days on average (~3 months)

# Childcare Businesses



Source: Seattle Business License database, data.seattle.gov, February 2020  
U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

# Childcare Near You Package

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## **Home occupations (Family care centers)**

- Remove limit on the number of children
- Allow childcare in accessory buildings

## **Single Family zones**

- Permit outright
- Remove dispersal requirements

# Childcare Near You Package

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## **Multifamily zones**

- Remove dispersal requirements
- Exempt childcare from floor area limits in midrise and highrise zones

## **Commercial zones**

- Remove size limits (10,000 square feet in NC1 and 25,000 square feet in NC2)

# Childcare Near You Package

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## **Seattle Mixed zones**

- Allow at street level along key pedestrian streets
- Provide floor area incentives that currently apply to preschools to all childcare centers

## **Future Steps**

- Review incentive programs that mitigate increased height and density through provision of childcare space



# Questions?