

September 14, 2021

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Land Use and Neighborhoods Committee  
**From:** Lish Whitson, Analyst  
**Subject:** Council Bill 120149: Belltown Small Lot Development Standards

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On Wednesday, September 22, the Land Use and Neighborhoods Committee (Committee) will hold a public hearing and may vote on [Council Bill \(CB\) 120153](#), which amends the Land Use Code to provide an alternative set of development standards for predominantly residential development on small lots in Downtown Mixed Residential (DMR) zones with maximum height limits at or above 140 feet. A briefing on the legislation was provided at the [August 11](#) Committee meeting.

The proposed legislation is intended to facilitate residential development using innovative construction techniques in Belltown's residential areas. Under CB 120153, predominantly residential development on sites up to 14,500 square feet in DMR zones in Belltown, would be provided with an option of using fewer setbacks and increasing lot coverage, allowing for the use of modular development technologies that are less amenable to shifts in the façade than traditional steel-frame construction. This is intended to encourage the redevelopment of smaller lots in Belltown using potentially cheaper and faster technology.

This memorandum provides more detail regarding the existing and proposed rules for lot coverage and setbacks under the DMR zone in Belltown.

### Background

The DMR zone is intended to "provide a mixed use community where housing and associated services and amenities predominate" ([Seattle Municipal Code \(SMC\) 23.34.110](#)). The zone is mapped in northern areas of Belltown and in the Little Saigon area of the Chinatown/International District. Height limits in the DMR zone in Belltown allow buildings with heights of 95 feet, 145 feet and 280 feet. Height limits in the DMR zone in Little Saigon allow buildings with heights of 95 feet and 170 feet. CB 120153 would apply to the DMR zones with maximum height limits of 145 feet and 280 feet, which are only found in Belltown.

SMC Section [23.49.156](#) requires a site that is at least 19,000 square feet for structures over 145 feet high. In DMR zones with 280 foot height limits, this section limits the height of structures on sites smaller than 19,000 square feet to 145 feet.

The DMR zone uses limits on lot coverage to limit the bulk of buildings. Those standards encourage buildings to have smaller footprints as they get taller. For buildings up to 145 feet, SMC Section [23.49.158](#) allows 100 percent coverage of lots up to 65 feet. Between 65 feet and

85 feet, 75 percent of the lot may be covered. Above 85 feet, coverage is limited to 65 percent of lot area.

In addition to the lot coverage limit, SMC Section [23.49.166](#) controls the bulk of buildings by requiring a 10 foot setback from designated green streets for portions of structures above 65 feet, and an additional one foot setback for every five feet in building height above 85 feet. At a height of 145 feet, the required setback from a green street is 22 feet.

### **Council Bill 120153**

CB 120153 would add a new section to the SMC, Section 23.49.167, that would allow structures on lots less than 14,500 square feet in size, with at least 75 percent of floor area in residential use to use alternative lot coverage and green street setback standards if the structure also complies with new building width and depth requirements.

Rather than requiring compliance with three different lot coverage limits, the alternative standards would use two lot coverage limits, with different standards for lots below and lots greater than 8,000 square feet. The smallest lots would be able to choose to either (1) have a lot coverage limit of 80 percent above 25 feet, or (2) participate in the Living Building Pilot program, limit their structure height to 135 feet, and have a lot coverage limit of 85 percent above 25 feet. For lots larger than 8,000 square feet, a lot coverage limit of 75 percent would apply above 45 feet.

Alongside the alternative lot coverage limits, new maximum width and depth limits would apply to portions of structures parallel to street lot lines. Above 45 feet, structures would be limited to 100 feet wide for portions of structures parallel to avenues, and 120 feet wide for portions of structures parallel to east/west streets.

Development choosing to use the alternative standards would have a standard 10 foot setback from a green street above 25 feet, rather than the different setbacks based on different building heights.<sup>1</sup>

### **Process**

The Committee received a briefing on this bill at its August 11 meeting. A public hearing is scheduled for the September 22 Committee meeting. If the Committee is ready to vote on the bill at the September 22 meeting, it will need to waive the Council rules that limit voting at a meeting when a public hearing is held.

cc: Esther Handy, Executive Director  
Aly Pennucci, Policy and Budget Manager

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<sup>1</sup> If the development is on the south side of the green street, the standard setback rules would apply.