

CITY OF SEATTLE
ORDINANCE 127025
COUNCIL BILL 120749

AN ORDINANCE relating to land use and zoning; amending Section 23.47A.012 of the Seattle Municipal Code to provide a 10-foot height limit exception in commercial zones in a portion of the Georgetown neighborhood.

WHEREAS, a 9.7 acre area of the Georgetown neighborhood along 4th Avenue South between S. Fidalgo Street and S. Dawson Street has been zoned commercial since the 1970s and the existing Commercial 1 zone that applies to the area allows a broad mix of commercial and residential uses and the height limit is 75 feet; and

WHEREAS, Watershed Community Development (WCD), formerly known as the Georgetown Community Development Authority (GCDA) was formed in 2019 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and operates affordable artist and artisan work spaces; and

WHEREAS, WCD is seeking to develop a mixed-use development that if fully built would include approximately 900 homes along with childcare, community resources, and cultural institutions on multiple blocks on land it owns in a portion of the 9.7 acre Commercial 1 zoned area; and

WHEREAS, numerous other properties in the 9.7 acre area are not owned by WCD and could be developed with a broad mix of commercial and residential uses; and

WHEREAS, the 9.7 acre area is completely surrounded by land designated Manufacturing Industrial Center (MIC) on the City’s Future Land Use Map and is in an industrial zone with an 85 foot height limit; and

WHEREAS, the Georgetown neighborhood contains a high number of artist studios and arts organizations and portions of the MIC near Georgetown contain a variety of industrial,

1 logistics, and manufacturing businesses, resulting in a higher likelihood of demand for
2 ground level arts and industrial uses in Georgetown compared to many other
3 commercially zoned areas of the city; and

4 WHEREAS, arts and industrial uses often need space with a high ceiling height of 16 feet or
5 greater to accommodate their activities; and

6 WHEREAS, in zones with a 75-foot height limit it is unlikely that a builder could maximize the
7 amount of housing that could be constructed using an economical non-high rise
8 construction type while providing tall ground floor spaces needed by arts and industrial
9 uses; and

10 WHEREAS, a height limit exception allowing an increase to 85 feet would allow a builder to
11 maximize the amount of housing that could be built in a non-high rise construction type
12 and accommodate ground floor ceiling heights of approximately 20 feet; and

13 WHEREAS, an 85-foot height limit in the 9.7 acre Commercial 1 zone would be the same as the
14 height limit in all surrounding zones; and

15 WHEREAS, it is a high priority for the City to support increased housing production to meet
16 strong demand and to increase the quantity of rent- and income-restricted affordable
17 housing; and

18 WHEREAS, WCD reports that it held meetings that were open to the public on February 27,
19 2022, and June 11, 2022, at which the proposed additional height was reviewed by
20 members of the public; NOW, THEREFORE,

21 **BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF SEATTLE AS FOLLOWS:**

22 Section 1. Subsection 23.47A.012.A of the Seattle Municipal Code, which section was
23 last amended by Ordinance 126685, is amended as follows:

1 **23.47A.012 Structure height**

2 A. The height limit for structures in NC zones or C zones is as designated on the
3 Official Land Use Map, Chapter 23.32. Structures may not exceed the applicable height limit,
4 except as otherwise provided in this Section 23.47A.012.

5 1. In zones with a 30-foot or 40-foot mapped height limit:

6 a. The height of a structure may exceed the otherwise applicable limit by
7 up to 4 feet, subject to subsection 23.47A.012.A.1.c, provided the following conditions are
8 met:

9 1) Either:

10 a) A floor-to-floor height of 13 feet or more is provided
11 for non-residential uses at street level; or

12 b) A residential use is located on a street-level, street-
13 facing facade, provided that the average height of the exterior facades of any portion of a story
14 that is partially below-grade does not exceed 4 feet, measured from existing or finished grade,
15 whichever is less, and the first floor of the structure at or above grade is at least 4 feet above
16 sidewalk grade; and

17 2) The additional height allowed for the structure will not allow
18 an additional story beyond the number that could be built under the otherwise applicable height
19 limit.

20 b. The height of a structure may exceed the otherwise applicable limit by
21 up to 7 feet, subject to subsection 23.47A.012.A.1.c, provided all of the following conditions
22 are met:

1 1) Residential and multi-purpose retail sales uses are located in
2 the same structure;

3 2) The total gross floor area of at least one multi-purpose retail
4 sales use exceeds 12,000 square feet;

5 3) A floor-to-floor height of 16 feet or more is provided for the
6 multi-purpose retail sales use at street level;

7 4) The additional height allowed for the structure will not allow
8 an additional story beyond the number that could be built under the otherwise applicable height
9 limit if a floor-to-floor height of 16 feet were not provided at street level; and

10 5) The structure is not allowed additional height under subsection
11 23.47A.012.A.1.a.

12 c. The Director shall reduce or deny the additional structure height
13 allowed by this subsection 23.47A.012.A.1 if the additional height would significantly block
14 views from neighboring residential structures of any of the following: Mount Rainier, the
15 Olympic and Cascade Mountains, the downtown skyline, Green Lake, Puget Sound, Lake
16 Washington, Lake Union, or the Ship Canal.

17 2. Within the Station Area Overlay District within the University Community
18 Urban Center, maximum structure height may be increased to 125 feet when all of the
19 following are met:

20 a. The lot is within two blocks of a planned or existing light rail station;

21 b. The proposed use of the lot is functionally related to other office
22 development, permitted prior to 1971, to have over 500,000 square feet of gross floor area to
23 be occupied by a single entity;

1 c. A transportation management plan for the life of the use includes
2 incentives for light rail and other transit use by the employees of the office use;

3 d. The development shall provide street-level amenities for pedestrians
4 and shall be designed to promote pedestrian interest, safety, and comfort through features such
5 as landscaping, lighting, and transparent facades, as determined by the Director; and

6 e. This subsection 23.47A.012.A.2 can be used only once for each
7 development that is functionally related.

8 3. On a lot containing a peat settlement-prone environmentally critical area, the
9 height of a structure may exceed the otherwise applicable height limit and the other height
10 allowances provided by this Section 23.47A.012 by up to 3 feet. In addition, 3 more feet of
11 height may be allowed for any wall of a structure on a sloped lot, provided that on the uphill
12 sides of the structure, the maximum elevation of the structure height shall be no greater than
13 the height allowed by the first sentence of this subsection 23.47A.012.A.3. The Director may
14 apply the allowances in this subsection 23.47A.012.A.3 only if the following conditions are
15 met:

16 a. The Director finds that locating a story of parking underground is
17 infeasible due to physical site conditions such as a high water table;

18 b. The Director finds that the additional height allowed for the structure
19 is necessary to accommodate parking located partially below grade that extends no more than 6
20 feet above existing or finished grade, whichever is lower, and no more than 3 feet above the
21 highest existing or finished grade along the structure footprint, whichever is lower, as
22 measured to the finished floor level above; and

1 c. Other than the additional story of parking allowed according to this
2 subsection 23.47A.012.A.3, the additional height shall not allow an additional story beyond the
3 number of stories that could be built under the otherwise applicable height limit.

4 4. In zones that are located within the Pike/Pine Conservation Overlay District
5 with a mapped height limit of 75 feet, the provisions of Section 23.73.014 apply.

6 5. In Commercial zones bounded by S. Dawson St. to the north, 5th Ave. S. to the
7 east, S. Fidalgo St. to the south, and 3rd Ave. S. to the west, the height of a structure may exceed
8 the otherwise applicable limit by up to 10 feet, provided all of the following conditions are
9 met:

10 a. The applicant makes a commitment that the proposed development will
11 meet the green building standard and shall demonstrate compliance with that commitment in
12 accordance with Chapter 23.58D;

13 b. The development includes at least five stories solely occupied by
14 residential uses;

15 c. At least 20 percent of the street frontage at street-level of the
16 development shall be street-level uses from the list in subsection 23.47A.005.D.1;

17 d. A floor-to-floor height of 20 feet or more is provided for the non-
18 residential uses at street level provided to comply with the provisions of subsection
19 23.47A.012.A.5.c; and

20 e. All dwelling units in the development have sound-insulating windows
21 and air cooling and ventilation systems meeting the requirement of subsection 23.47A.009.J.4
22 and 23.47A.009.J.5.

23 * * *

1 Section 2. This ordinance shall take effect as provided by Seattle Municipal Code
2 Sections 1.04.020 and 1.04.070.

3 Passed by the City Council the 14th day of May, 2024,
4 and signed by me in open session in authentication of its passage this 14th day of
5 May, 2024.

6 

7 President _____ of the City Council

Approved / returned unsigned / vetoed this 22nd day of May, 2024.

8 

9 Bruce A. Harrell, Mayor

10 Filed by me this 22nd day of May, 2024.

11 

12 Scheereen Dedman, City Clerk

13 (Seal)