

March 11, 2025

MEMORANDUM

To: Land Use Committee
From: Ketil Freeman, Analyst
Subject: Clerk File 314511 – University of Washington Medical Center – Northwest Hospital

The University of Washington Medical Center has applied for a new Major Institution Master Plan (MIMP) for the University of Washington Medical Center Northwest Hospital (UWMC – Northwest) campus and a rezone to increase the height limits allowed under the current Major Institution Overlay (MIO). The application for the MIMP is contained in [Clerk File \(CF\) 314511](#).

This memorandum (1) describes how major institutions are regulated, (2) sets out a chronology for the UWMC - Northwest MIMP renewal, (3) briefly describes the proposed final MIMP, (4) outlines requirements of quasi-judicial decision-making, and (5) discusses next steps.

Regulation of Major Institutions

Hospitals and post-secondary educational institutions exceeding specified size thresholds are regulated as major institutions. Major institutions are subject to a zoning overlay, the Major Institution Overlay (MIO), that authorizes an institution to deviate from the development standards in underlying zoning, if the institution prepares a MIMP. The purpose of a MIMP is to “balance the needs of the Major Institutions to develop facilities for the provision of health care or educational services with the need to minimize the impact of Major Institution development on surrounding neighborhoods.”¹

A MIMP is required to contain three components: (1) a development standards component, which establishes physical development standards to govern future development; (2) a development program component, which sets out the types of uses and magnitude of future development; and (3) a transportation management component, which is used to address traffic generated by the institution.

A MIMP is prepared with the review and participation of a Development Advisory Committee (DAC). Advisory committee members are drawn from members of the public with “experience in such areas as consensus building, community organizing, land use and zoning, architecture or landscape architecture, economic development, real estate development, and educational or medical services.”² The DAC also includes voting non-management representatives of the institution and four or more non-voting representatives of the institution and City departments.

¹ [Seattle Municipal Code \(SMC\) 23.69.025](#).

² [SMC 23.69.032.B](#).

A DAC is created by resolution and staffed by the Department of Neighborhoods (DON). Among other things, the DAC convenes public meetings about the proposed MIMP, provides comment on environmental documents, reviews and comments on the draft recommendation for the MIMP by the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI), and issues its own report and recommendation.

After the advisory committee and SDCI have issued their recommendations, the Hearing Examiner convenes an open-record public hearing on the MIMP and decides any State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) appeals. Finally, the Hearing Examiner holds an open record hearing and makes a recommendation to the Council.

UWMC - Northwest MIMP Chronology

- 1991 – Current MIMP for Northwest Hospital is approved.
- 2009 – UW acquires Northwest Hospital and it becomes UWMC - Northwest
- September 2022 – UWMC – Northwest submits notice of intent for a new MIMP.
- March 2023 – Composition of DAC is approved by [Resolution 32088](#).
- April 2023 to May 2024 – DAC convenes 16 public meetings.
- July 2024 – DAC publishes final report and recommendation.
- September 2024 – SDCI publishes recommendation to conditionally approve the MIMP.
- October 2024 – Hearing Examiner holds open record public hearing.
- December 2024 – Hearing Examiner recommends conditional approval of the MIMP.

Proposed Final MIMP – Brief Summary

The UWMC – Northwest campus is located in the northwest corner of the Northgate Urban Center. The underlying zoning of the site is Lowrise 2 (LR2) multifamily residential. Lowrise 3 (LR3) multifamily zoning extends to the south and west of the site. Zoning to the east and north is Neighborhood Residential, with the exception of a pocket of LR2 abutting the northeast corner of the site. The MIO overlay currently allows heights for major institution uses ranging from 37 feet to 105 feet. See Figure 3.3 (page 20 of Exhibit 1). Development in the vicinity consists of residential uses to the northeast, north, and west of the site and cemeteries to the east and south of the site.

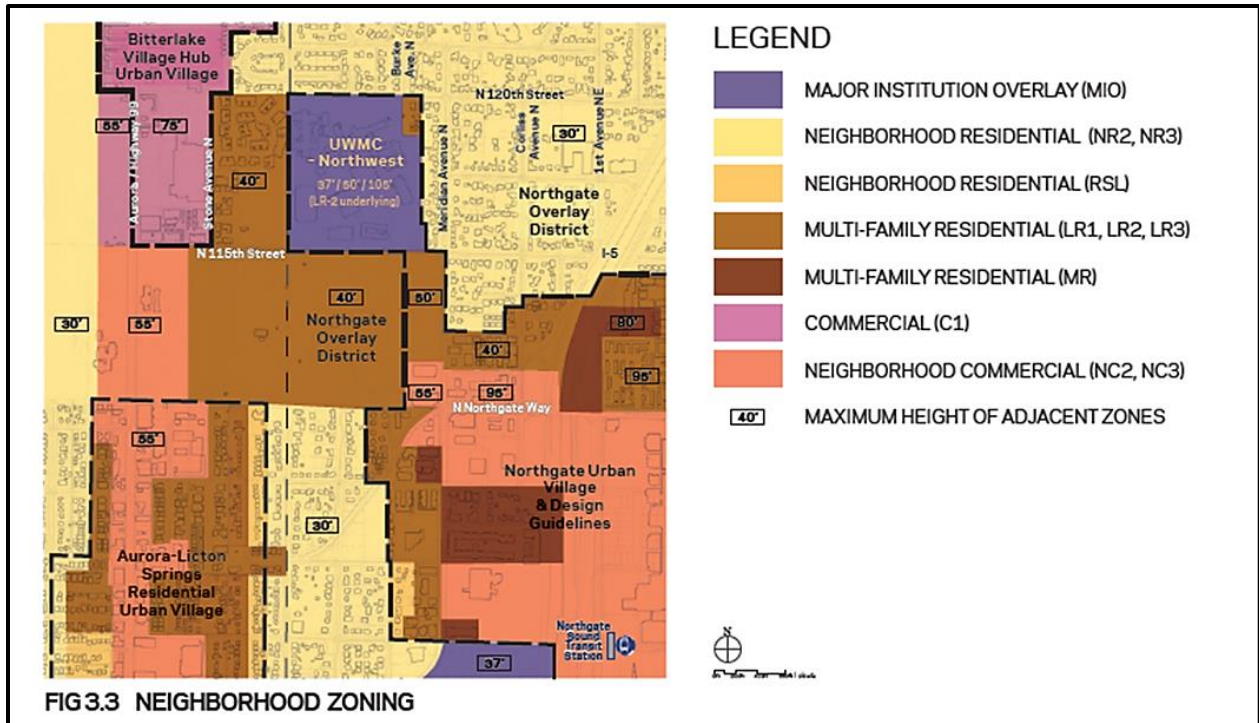
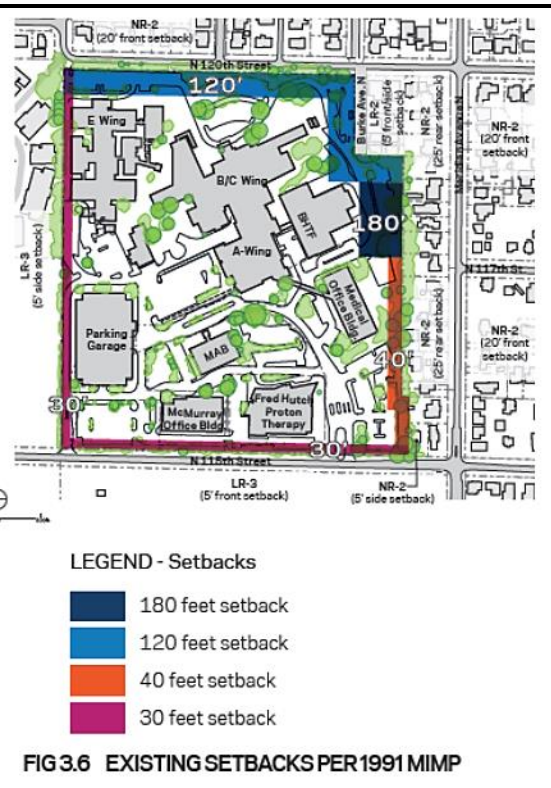
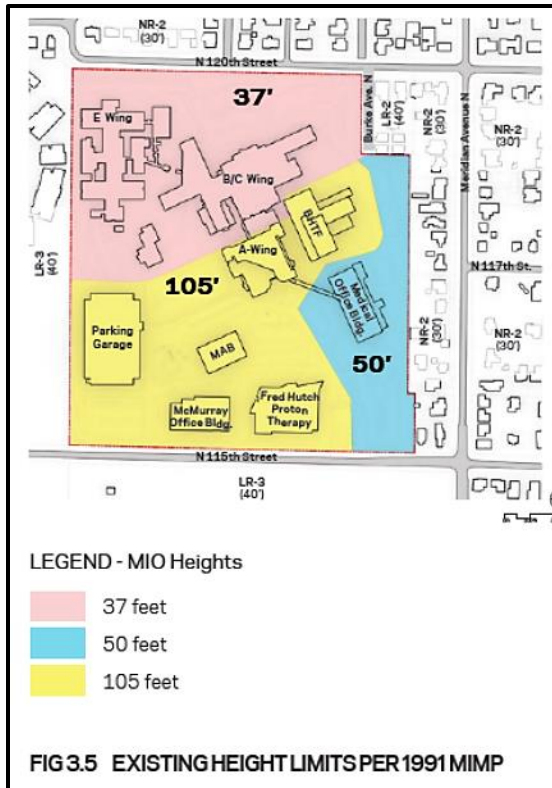


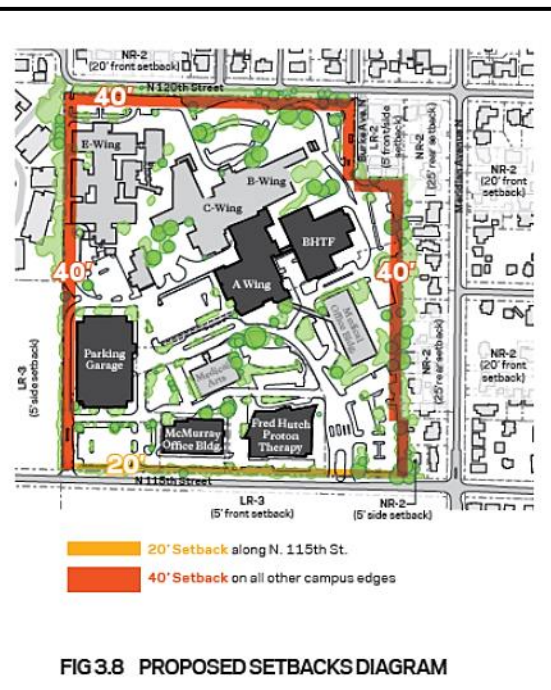
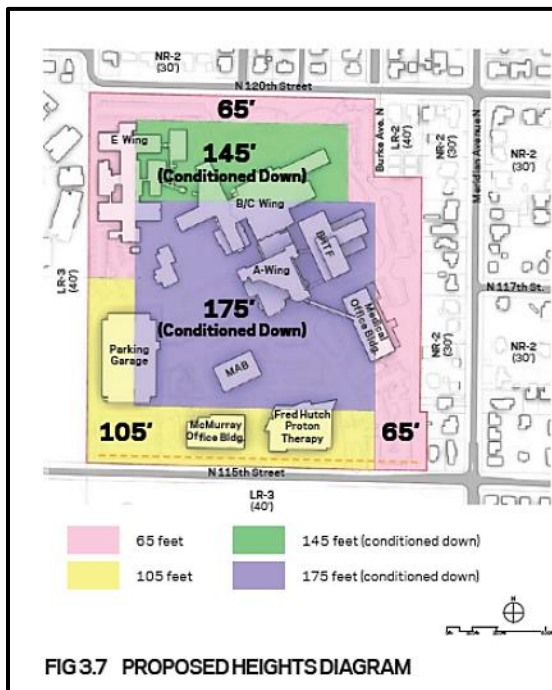
Figure 3.3 – Page 20 of Exhibit 1

The entire 33-acre site is owned by the University of Washington, although two buildings are occupied through a ground lease as a medical office building and as a facility for Fred Hutchinson. Existing buildings on the site were developed between 1960 and 2023. The most recent development on the site is the Center for Behavioral Health and Learning. Height bulk and scale impacts from the institution are currently mitigated by locating taller structures away from adjacent residential uses and through ground-level setbacks.

The site is one of two hospital campuses operated by UWMC under the same state license. The other is UWMC – Montlake on the University of Washington campus. UWMC – Northwest has 381 of 910 beds under that license.



Figures 3.5 and 3.6 – Page 27 of Exhibit 1



Figures 3.7 and 3.8 – Page 29 of Exhibit 1

Existing facilities at UWMC-Northwest currently contain approximately 738,000 gross square feet of hospital, clinic/research, education, and other support space. The proposed MIMP would increase this square footage by about 800,000 gross square feet to approximately 1.6 million gross square feet. This expansion would be accomplished within the existing MIO boundaries primarily by increasing allowable height. The most significant height increases would occur on the interior of the campus, where maximum heights would increase to 200 feet, although proposed MIMP conditions would limit the heights of future structures below those limits. See Figures 3.5 and 3.6, Exhibit 1, page 27, and Figures 3.7 and 3.8, Exhibit 1, page 29.

The increased height, bulk, and scale of future development are proposed to be mitigated by ground level setbacks, MIMP-specific development standards, and application of design guidelines, among other things. Design guidance is contained in Chapter V of the proposed final MIMP. See Exhibit 1, pages 46 – 65. Development standards are contained in Chapter VI of the proposed final MIMP. See Exhibit 1, pages 66-83.

The current Single Occupancy Vehicle (SOV) commute SOV rate is 75 percent. The proposed MIMP would establish a new SOV goal of 50 percent. The SOV target is proposed to be achieved through commute trip reduction strategies including transit subsidies, parking management, telecommuting, and other incentives to increase non-SOV mode share. Primary access to the campus for staff, patients, and visitors would continue to be from North 115th Street. The transportation management program is contained in Chapter VII of the proposed final MIMP. See Exhibit 1, pages 84-99.

A complete list of conditions for MIMP approval, which were agreed to by the City and UWMC – Northwest and recommended by the Hearing Examiner, is contained in Attachment 1.

Procedural Matters

Type of Action and Materials in the Record

Action on the MIMP application by the Council is quasi-judicial. A quasi-judicial action is, “an action of the City Council that determines the legal rights, duties, or privileges of specific parties in a hearing or other contested case proceeding.”³ Quasi-judicial actions are subject to the state Appearance of Fairness Doctrine prohibiting *ex-parte* communication. Council decisions must be made on the record established by the Hearing Examiner. The Hearing Examiner establishes the record at an open-record hearing. The record contains the substance of the testimony provided at the Hearing Examiner’s open-record hearing and the exhibits entered into the record at that hearing.

³ [Council Quasi-judicial Rules II.I. Resolution 31602.](#)

The entire record, including an audio recording of the Hearing Examiner's hearing, is available digitally for review at Councilmembers' convenience. Many exhibits from the hearing as well as the Hearing Examiner's exhibit list, minutes of the public hearing, and the Hearing Examiner's recommendation are publicly available through CF 314511. Because of the large volume of the record, the entire record is not contained in CF 314511. Records available online include:

- The proposed final UWMC – Northwest MIMP, December 11, 2014 (Exhibit 1).
- The Final Report and Recommendation of the DAC, including meeting minutes and public comment, July 15, 2024 (Exhibit 7).
- The SDCI Director's Recommendation, September 3, 2024 (Exhibit 12).
- The Hearing Examiner's Finding and Recommendation, December 20, 2024

Next Steps

To approve a MIMP the Committee must make recommendations to the Full Council on two pieces of legislation: (1) a Council Findings, Conclusions and Decision that is added to the Clerk File and conditionally approves the MIMP and associated rezone and (2) a bill amending the zoning map to show the new MIO boundaries and height limits. Staff will develop draft approval documents including a council bill for consideration by the Committee in April. Unlike other types of Quasi-Judicial decisions, there is no deadline for Council action on a MIMP.

Attachment:

1. Recommended Conditions for MIMP Approval

cc: Ben Noble, Director
Yolanda Ho, Deputy Director
Lish Whitson, Supervising Analyst

Attachment 1 – Recommended Conditions for MIMP Approval

CONDITIONS OF MASTER PLAN APPROVAL

MIO 1. The single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) performance goal of 50% is established at the adoption of the MIMP, per 23.54.016.C SMC.

As additional transit capacity is added to the area through regional planning efforts in the future, the Transportation Management Plan will reflect a progressive reduction in the SOV goal in alignment with the SOV targets established by the City of Seattle’s Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) requirements (Chapter 25.02 SMC), as described below.

The major transit infrastructure improvements anticipated at the time of MIMP adoption include the following two milestones:

1. 2030: The transportation network is anticipated to include the Lynnwood Link extension (2024), Line 2 Link to downtown Redmond (2025), NE 130th Link infill station (2026), Federal Way Link extension (2026), and Stride S3 Line (2027).
2. 2038: The transportation network is anticipated to include the West Seattle Link extension (2032) and Everett Link extension (2037).

UWMC – Northwest shall meet with the City after the completion of the first CTR survey following each of the milestones above are reached (i.e., in 2030 or once all improvements in milestone 1 are completed, whichever is later) to review and adjust the SOV goal. The updated SOV performance goal at this site shall follow the relevant standards outlined in Director’s Rule 01-2021 (or any successor rule) on Transportation Management Programs.

MIO 2. Revise the MIMP’s Landscape and Open Space section to note “Tree Protection – Retention of existing street and campus trees shall be encouraged along property perimeters. No trees shall be removed from the City right-of-way without approval of SDOT.”

MIO 3. Amend the MIMP language to clarify the loop drive must provide a minimum 20’ landscaped setback from east and west property edges, as well as the north property edge, with the exception of the property edge adjacent to the existing cemetery.

MIO 4. Amend the MIMP’s Landscape and Open Space section to include a North Campus Edge bullet and language stating a minimum 20’ landscaped setback from the north campus edge shall be provided, maintaining existing mature trees as feasible.

CONDITIONS OF REZONE APPROVAL

Rezone 1. As described in the Master Plan, structures in areas designated MIO- 160 shall be limited to 145 feet in height, and all structures in areas designated MIO-200 shall be limited to 175 feet in height, subject to exceptions to height limits set forth in the Master Plan.

CONDITIONS OF SEPA APPROVAL

PRIOR TO ISSUANCE OF MASTER USE PERMIT

SEPA 1. At the time of Master Use Permit application, related tree survey and arborist report as necessary will be submitted for review.

SEPA 2. At the time of individual permits, water, sewer, and stormwater shall be evaluated to verify the capacity of each utility service to serve each specific new development project.

Attachment 1 – Recommended Conditions for MIMP Approval

SEPA 3. At time of individual permit application submit transportation information related to coordinating the following improvements with SDOT:

- a. Install no right turn on red signage at the intersection of Aurora Avenue N and N 115th Street – a key intersection for pedestrians traveling between campus and RapidRide stops at Aurora Avenue N and N 115th Street. These improvements will be triggered when the first development project is approved by SDCI.
- b. Calculate the LOS at Meridian Avenue N/N 115th Street intersection with each MIMP project implementation and evaluate mitigation options with SDOT when the project degrades the intersection to LOS F or increases intersection delay by more than 5 seconds when the baseline or with-project LOS operates at LOS F. The EIS identified the potential for a traffic signal, however lesser mitigation could be identified as appropriate, including but not limited to a traffic circle/roundabout. UWMC-Northwest responsibility would include the costs associated with the design and construction of the improvement. The final design of any improvement must accommodate the movements of buses and emergency vehicles destined for the hospital. The cost to the institution shall not exceed the cost of a traffic signal if a more expensive solution was desired by SDOT.
- c. UWMC-Northwest will design and construct protected bike lanes on Meridian Ave N between N Northgate Way and N 115th Street, as approved by SDOT – completing a gap in the bicycle connection between Northgate Link light rail station and the UWMC-Northwest campus. The requirement to construct these improvements would be triggered when the first patient occupiable area and/or administrative office area project that results in an increase in site-wide vehicle trip generation is approved by SDCI, and completion of these improvements shall be a condition precedent to occupancy of said project. To avoid a requirement to construct these improvements with a particular project, UWMC-Northwest must demonstrate to SDOT and SDCI that there will be no increase in site wide vehicle trip generation during the MUP process for the proposed development. The central utility plant and parking increases will not trigger the protected bike lane improvements.

This improvement is not meant to be a corridor restoration project for full street improvements.

Improvements excluded from this condition include:

- Corridor-wide curb line modifications
- Intersection curb ramps, except as may be required under SDOT DR 01-2017, “Right-of-Way Opening and Restoration Rules”
- Corridor-wide modifications to other modal facilities such as sidewalks
- Modifications to the curb line or signal system at the Meridian Ave N/Northgate Way intersection

Modification to the typical cross section to match existing conditions at N 115th Street and Northgate Way would need to occur (e.g. transition bike lanes to/from the existing sharrows) without modifying the signal system or existing curb lines at the intersection. Construction will follow the SDOT Director’s Rule 01-2017 ROW Opening and Restoration Rules.

- d. Ensure construction of curb, gutter, and sidewalk along the south side of N 120th Street between Meridian Avenue N and west to the existing improved section. The requirement to install these improvements would be triggered when the medical center development cumulatively increases the patient occupiable area and/or administrative office area by greater than 250,000 net new gross square footage. The central utility plant and parking increases will not trigger the curb, gutter, and sidewalk improvements.

Attachment 1 – Recommended Conditions for MIMP Approval

DURING CONSTRUCTION FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

SEPA 4. At the time of building permit application for each building proposed within the UWMC Northwest MIO, the Applicant shall provide a Construction Management Plan that has been approved by SDOT and focused on the current proposal. The submittal information and review process for Construction Management Plans are described on the SDOT website page “Construction Use in the Right of Way” or its successor page.

SEPA 5. Locate the Central Utilities Plant facility a minimum 50’ from the nearest residential property line and provide noise studies at time of permit review.

SEPA 6. Contractors shall meet the following noise control criteria:

- a. The use of electric equipment and machinery is preferred. If noise levels on any equipment or device cannot reasonably be reduced to criteria levels, either that equipment or device will not be allowed on the job or use times will have to be scheduled subject to approval.
- b. The sound pressure level of each piece of equipment cannot be greater than 85 dBA at a distance of 50 feet. Rubber-tired equipment is to be used whenever possible instead of equipment with metal tracks. Mufflers for stationary engines are to be used in the hospital areas and areas within 100 feet of the campus boundary. Construction traffic should be routed through nearest campus exit.
- c. Air compressors are to be equipped with silencing packages.
- d. Jack hammers and roto hammers may be used where no other alternative is available; core drilling and saw cutting equipment is preferred.
- e. Specific scheduling of construction-related noise activities is required at the UWMC Northwest Hospital.