

# One Seattle Plan Zoning Update

## Centers & Corridors Legislation

### DIRECTOR'S REPORT

**JANUARY 2026**

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# Overview

## Seattle continues to struggle with a persistent housing affordability crisis stemming primarily from insufficient housing supply for our growing population.

Over the next twenty years, the population of Puget Sound region is expected to grow substantially, which will further increase pressure on housing prices. The [One Seattle Plan](#) calls for increasing the supply and diversity of housing to help address several key challenges facing Seattle including affordability, homelessness, economic mobility, and climate change.

The City Council adopted the One Seattle Plan ([Ordinance 127375](#)) in December 2025, establishing a new citywide growth strategy. Council also adopted Neighborhood Residential Update legislation ([Ordinance 127376](#)) in December 2025, implementing changes to comply with Washington House Bill (HB) 1110 and update Seattle's Neighborhood Residential (NR) zoning.

This legislation described in this document, called **Centers and Corridors**, will help to implement the vision in the One Seattle Plan by increasing our capacity to build apartments and condos more widely in areas with access to transit, shops, and services. Specifically, this legislation would rezone land in newly designated Neighborhood Centers, in new and expanded Urban Centers, and along frequent transit corridors. It would also update development standards in Lowrise (LR) and Midrise (MR) zones including modifying height and floor area ratio (FAR) allowances in Lowrise zones, creating a new 6-story MR zone, updating setback standards in MR zones, removing maximum width and depth requirements in MR zones,

and implementing minor changes to FAR measurement techniques and standards for screening parking.

By increasing the supply and diversity of housing in neighborhoods across the city, this legislation will:

- Improve housing affordability by easing upward pressure on prices and increasing the range of available housing options
- Address a root cause of homelessness by making housing more accessible to people at all income levels
- Foster inclusive, mixed-income neighborhoods that reflect the diversity of the broader community
- Create communities where more people can access transit, shops, and services by walking, biking, and rolling
- Reduce regional sprawl and greenhouse gas emissions

This document summarizes the legislation as transmitted to Council in January 2026. Information on proposed and adopted amendments will be available on the [City Clerk's website](#) once the legislation is introduced.

# Background

Since 2022, the City has been working to update our Comprehensive Plan, which was adopted after three years of public process in December 2025 as the One Seattle Plan. The Plan is a roadmap for where and how Seattle will grow and invest in communities over the next 20 years, toward becoming a more equitable, livable, sustainable, and resilient city.

Two pieces of legislation implement zoning changes envisioned by the One Seattle Plan and its Growth Strategy element:

- 1 Permanent State Zoning Compliance Legislation.** Adopted in December 2025, this legislation updated NR zones to expand the variety of housing types allowed, including duplexes, triplexes, and stacked flats, consistent with new state requirements in HB 1110. Updating NR zones, which represent about two-thirds of Seattle, will help increase the supply and diversity of predominately family-sized homeownership opportunities.
- 2 Centers and Corridors Legislation.** This legislation, which is the subject of this Director's Report, would implement zoning changes in new and expanded centers and along transit corridors to increase opportunities for predominantly rental and condominium homes in areas with access to transit, shops, and services.

# Seattle's Growth Strategy

The Growth Strategy in the One Seattle Plan identifies five distinct “place types” that describe the types of residential, commercial, and industrial development appropriate in different areas of Seattle:

- **Regional Centers:** Seattle's seven regional centers represent the most densely populated neighborhoods, such as Capitol Hill and Downtown, with a mix of housing, office, retail, entertainment, and access to regional transit. These areas can include zoning for high-rise towers.
- **Urban Centers:** Zoned to accommodate a mix of housing, jobs, shops, and services with access to frequent transit, urban centers include residential and mixed-use structures up to eight stories, with potentially higher densities around light rail stations.
- **Neighborhood Centers:** A new designation situated in residential areas throughout the city, neighborhood centers are designed to accommodate a diverse mix of moderate-density housing, particularly apartments and condos. Neighborhood centers are located around existing commercial activity and frequent transit access. Zoning in these areas should allow residential and mixed-use buildings up to six stories in the core, and smaller apartment buildings and other attached or stacked homes on the periphery.
- **Urban Neighborhood:** Residential areas outside of centers, including all Neighborhood Residential zones, are designated as Urban Neighborhood. These areas are traversed by a network of frequent transit routes, where zoning for apartments up to six stories is identified as appropriate.
- **Manufacturing & Industrial Centers (MIC):** Seattle's two MICs comprise areas of concentrated industrial, manufacturing, and maritime activity with limited retail, office, and residential functions.

These place types are shown on the One Seattle Plan's Future Land Use Map on the following page. This Centers and Corridors Legislation would amend zoning in the newly designated Neighborhood Centers, in new and recently expanded Regional and Urban Centers, and along frequent transit corridors located throughout the Urban Neighborhood place type. These changes are necessary to expand capacity for apartments and condominiums, which supports the One Seattle Plan's vision to address our housing shortage and promote housing abundance and choice across the city's neighborhoods.

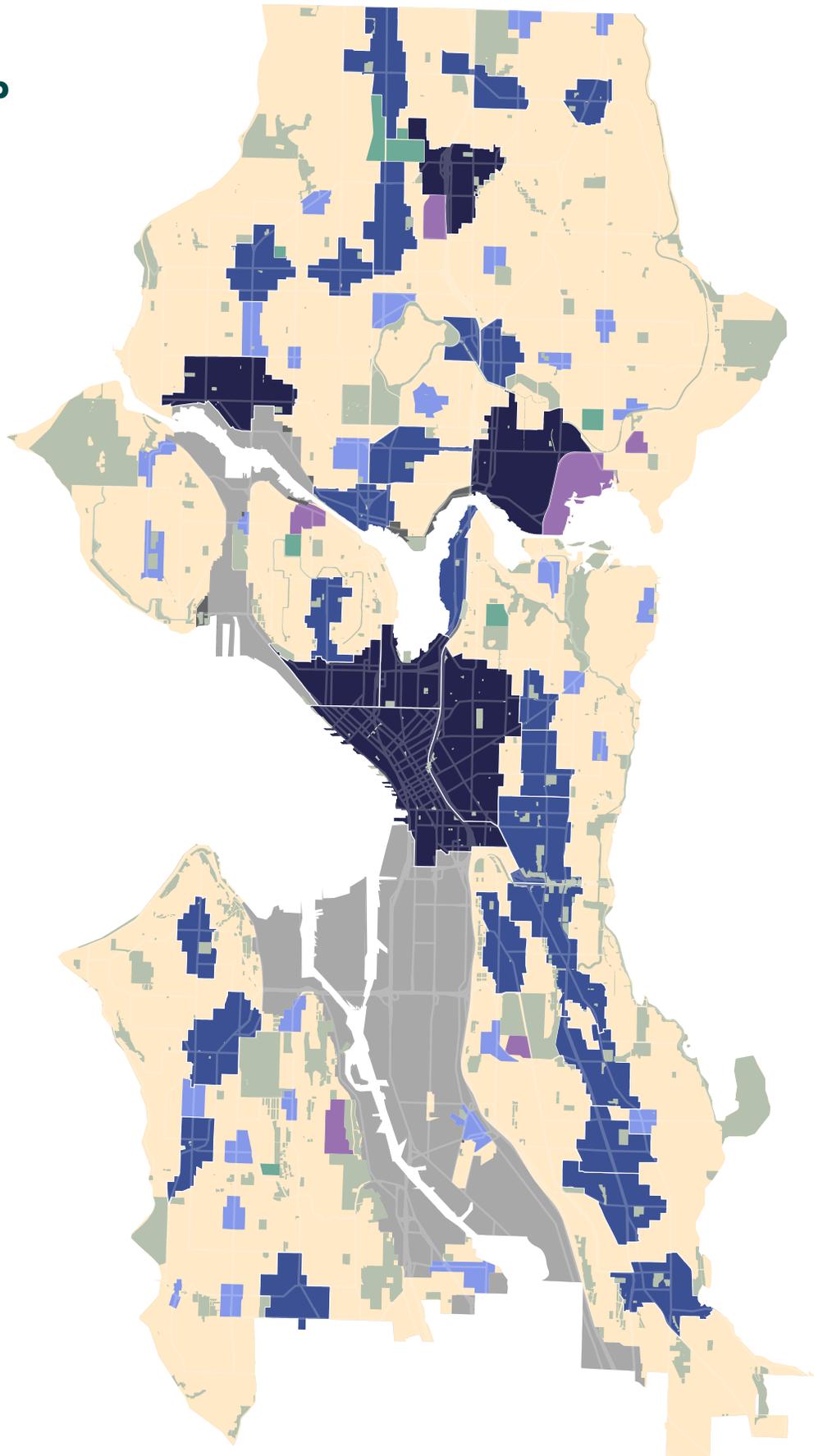
## One Seattle Plan Future Land Use Map

### Place types

-  Regional Center
-  Urban Center
-  Neighborhood Center
-  Manufacturing & Industrial Center
-  Urban Neighborhood

### Other areas

-  Industrial outside Manufacturing & Industrial Centers
-  Major Institution
-  Parks and open space
-  Cemetery



# Developing the proposal

Since 2022, the City's work to develop the One Seattle Plan and define a new approach to zoning has proceeded through four phases:

- In Phase 1, "**Listen and Learn**," we introduced the planning and engagement process to the public, gained insights into the major issue areas to be addressed, and established the tools and community relationships that informed the Plan update.
- In Phase 2, "**Shape the Plan**," OPCD released a scoping report with initial options for an updated Growth Strategy, including the potential location of Neighborhood Centers, several new or expanded Urban and Regional centers, and corridors around transit. After additional public engagement, OPCD refined those initial Growth Strategy options and began conducting environmental analysis.
- Phase 3, "**Refine the Plan**," began with the release of the Draft Plan, including the draft Growth Strategy, an initial proposal for updating NR zoning, and a Draft Environmental Impact Statement. OPCD conducted public engagement to get feedback and then began updating the proposal based on what we heard.
- Phase 4, "**Zoning Update Engagement**," began with the release of an detailed zoning maps and draft legislation to implement the vision in the One Seattle Plan. During the public comment period on the proposal and draft legislation, OPCD received more than 9,000 comments. Staff read and considered each comment individually. A summary of the engagement process and the comments received is available in the Zoning Update Public Comment Summary.

While Council review of the One Seattle Plan and updated NR zoning occurred in 2025, this legislation will be reviewed by Council in 2026.

| 2022                    | 2023                    | 2024                     | 2025            | 2026            |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Phase 1: Listen & Learn | Phase 2: Shape the Plan | Phase 3: Review & Refine | Phase 4: Zoning | Council Process |

In developing zoning proposals, OPCD used the descriptions of each place type in the One Seattle Plan to develop initial concepts and then considered local conditions to develop a specific proposal. Staff conducted site visits of all new and expanded centers, conducted visual surveys of transit routes, and closely reviewed online information about transit routes, environmentally critical areas (ECAs), slopes, and flood risk. This approach allowed staff to consider various goals, including:

- Expanding the supply and diversity of housing in neighborhoods across Seattle
- Implementing strategies to address ongoing displacement risk
- Allowing more people to live near transit
- Creating complete neighborhoods where more people walk, bike, and roll to shops and services
- Responding to urban form factors such as transitions, topography, and irregular lots
- Responding to environmental factors such as environmentally critical areas, steep slopes, large roads, and pollution generators such as highways
- Incorporating the knowledge and perspectives of community members and stakeholders across the city

# Proposal summary

This legislation would amend zoning in neighborhood centers, new and expanded urban centers, and along frequent transit routes. It would also implement changes to development standards to support the development of apartments and condos throughout Seattle. The rezones and changes to development standards are summarized below.

## Rezones

This legislation would implement rezones in:

- Twenty-nine new Neighborhood Centers and a 30th Neighborhood Center in South Park (previously designated as an Urban Center)
- Five Urban Centers with expanded boundaries (Greenwood, Queen Anne, Graham, Admiral, and Morgan Junction)
- A new Pinehurst–Haller Lake Urban Center
- Properties adjacent to frequent transit routes located in the Urban Neighborhood place type

The full zoning proposal is available on an interactive map located on the [Zoning Update website](#). The online map shows existing zoning, proposed zoning, and areas where the proposed zoning has changed since the October 2024 draft proposal. The map on the following page shows the geographic extent of the proposed changes.

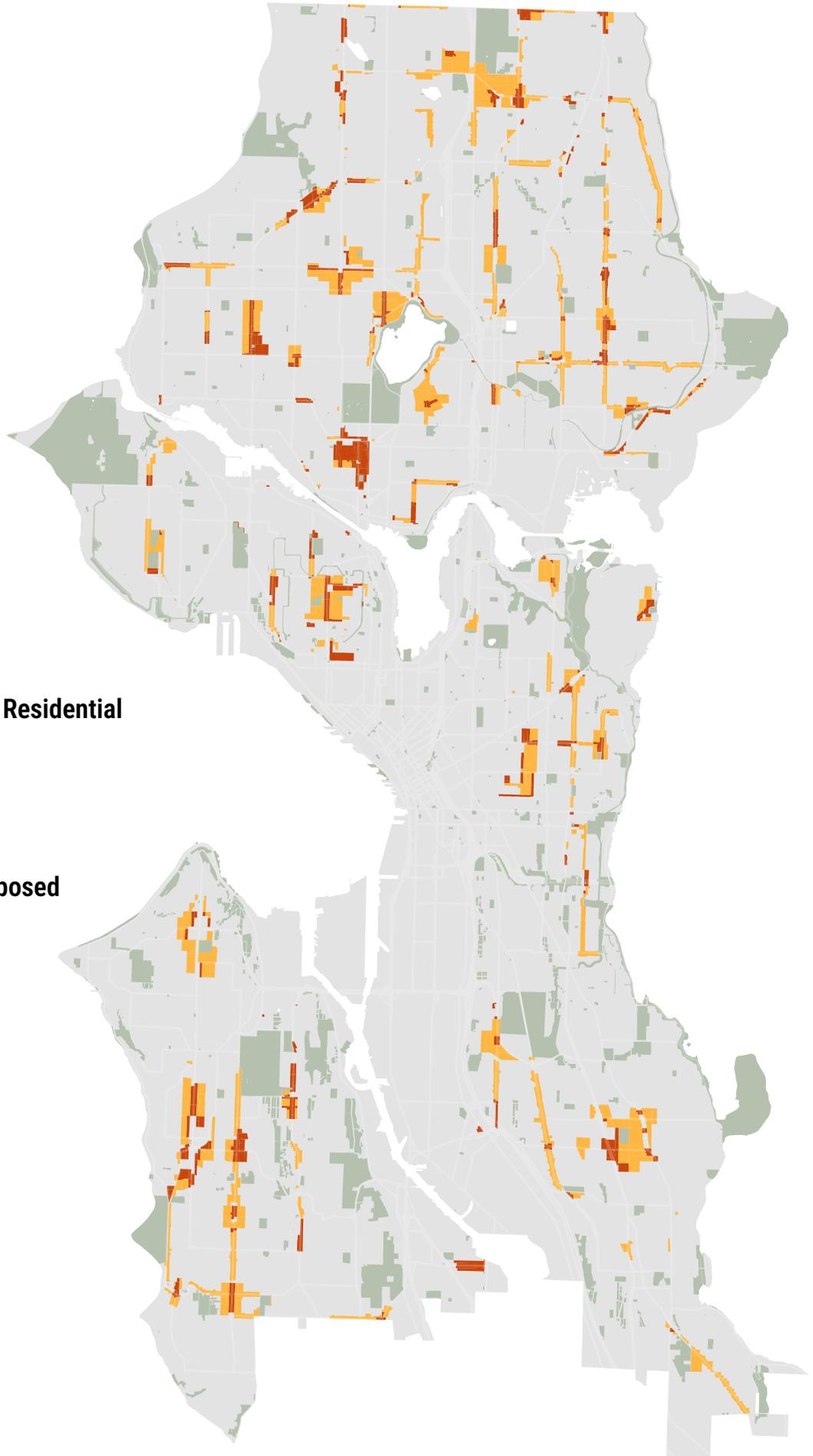
These changes aim to increase capacity for apartments and condominiums throughout the city. Consequently, most proposed rezones would

allow development of up to 5-6 stories, where construction of apartments and condominiums is considered more economically feasible. Building apartments and condominiums at a smaller scale is challenging given the higher requirements for energy efficiency, sprinklers, construction methods, elevators, accessibility, condo liability insurance, and solid waste. From 2020 to 2024, only two apartment buildings with 32 total units were built in residential zones with height limits of four stories or less.

Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) requirements would be applied to all rezoned properties. MHA requires that new development contribute to affordable housing by either providing affordable units on site or paying into a fund to build units offsite. All development in LR zones would be required to meet the standard affordability requirements, but properties rezoned to MR or Neighborhood Commercial (NC) zones could have higher affordability requirements (known as M1 and M2 requirements) based on the degree of the upzone.

### Rezone areas by existing zone

-  Neighborhood Residential
-  Other zone
-  No rezone proposed



## Changes to development standards

Below is a summary of the proposed changes to development standards, the primary goal of which is to make it easier to build apartments and condos in Lowrise and Midrise zones. Seattle currently has three Lowrise zones (LR1, LR2, and LR3) and one Midrise zone (MR).

### HEIGHT LIMITS IN LOWRISE ZONES

The height limits in Lowrise Zones would be updated in order to achieve the following goals:

- 1 Allow for more livable floor-to-floor heights
- 2 Provide an incentive for stacked flats in LR1 and LR2 zones consistent with the incentive Council recently added in NR zones
- 3 Make LR3 heights consistent across multiple geographies

Below is a summary of the specific changes proposed and the rationale for each change:

| Change   | Rationale  |
|--|--|
| <b>In LR1 zones, increase height for stacked flats in buildings with six or more principal dwelling units from 32 feet to 42 feet</b>          | Council recently increased the height limits for stacked flats in NR zones to 42 feet if the project meets a Green Factor score of 0.6. This change resulted in greater development potential in NR zones than in LR1 zones. This change to LR1 zoning would make the height limit for stacked flats consistent with the height limit in NR zones, which would incentivize development in LR zones consistent with the growth strategy of the One Seattle Comprehensive Plan. Green Factor is already required in Lowrise zones so it is not necessary to make this height contingent on meeting Green Factor as is the case in NR zones.  |
| <b>Increase height in LR2 zones from 40 feet to 42 feet</b>  | This change would improve floor-to-ceiling heights consistent with the recent change to increase heights in NR and LR1 zones from 30 feet to 32 feet. Generally, it is desirable to have 9 feet from floor to ceiling height plus 1 foot assembly between floors. Consequently, 40 feet is generally reasonable for a building on a flat lot with an entry at ground level. However, additional height is desirable to address situations such as when the entryway is raised, the site is sloped, extra sound-proofing is desired, or extra ductwork is required by the Energy Code.  |
| <b>Increase height allowed in LR3 zones from 40 or 50 feet, depending on the location, to 52 feet</b>  | Currently, height limits in LR3 zones are 50 feet inside regional centers, urban centers, and station areas and 40 feet (same as LR2) elsewhere. This change would make LR3 a five-story zone in all areas, making it easier to build apartments and condominiums and boosting housing capacity on those lots. Increasing the height from 50 to 52 feet would also improve floor-to-ceiling heights, consistent with changes in LR1 and LR2 zones.   |
| <b>Reduce the amount of additional height that can be achieved by projects with raised first floors in Lowrise zones from 4 feet to 2 feet</b> | Currently, housing developments with a partially exposed basement floor are allowed up to 4 feet of additional height. This provision was added to encourage partially daylit basements. We are proposing to reduce the amount of height that can be achieved through this bonus by 2 feet since the height limit in LR1 zones was recently increased by two feet and the height limit in LR2 and LR3 zones is proposed to increase by two feet as part of this proposal. Overall, the impact of these changes together is to ensure that projects with partially daylit basements would continue to have the same height limit while projects without basements could be two feet taller. |

### FAR FOR STACKED FLATS IN LR1 AND LR2 ZONES

The maximum building floor area allowed on a lot is equal to the floor area ratio (FAR) multiplied by the lot size. Council recently increased the FAR for stacked flats in NR zones to 2.0 for projects achieving a Green Factor score of 0.6. An FAR of 2.0 means that maximum building floor area allowed is equivalent to twice the lot area.

For stacked flats in LR1 and LR2 zones in buildings with six or more principal dwelling units, this legislation

would increase the FAR to 2.0 so it is consistent with the height limit in NR zones. This change would remove an incentive for developers to locate stacked flat projects in Neighborhood Residential rather than Lowrise zones. However, the substantial majority of projects in these zones are likely to continue to be townhouse. This bonus would be limited to buildings with six or more principal dwelling units so that it applies to apartments and condos rather than townhouses or detached homes with ADUs.

### FAR IN LR3 ZONES

This legislation would increase FAR in LR3 zones:

- 1 from 2.3 to 2.5 in areas inside regional centers, urban centers, and station areas (designated areas around certain light rail stations)
- 2 from 1.8 to 2.5 in areas outside regional centers, urban centers, and station areas, for consistency with FAR limits elsewhere

Currently, LR3 zones outside regional centers, urban centers, and station areas have height and FAR requirements that are similar to LR2 zones. In recent years, development in these zones have been almost entirely townhouses due to their very low height and FAR limits. Inside regional centers, urban centers, and station areas, LR3 zones still have a low FAR per story compared with other zones. Below is a chart comparing FAR and the typical number of stories allowed in different zones.

The proposed FAR increase would increase the feasibility of apartments and condominiums in these zones. Even with the increased FAR, though, a five-story apartment building with consistent floor plates on each floor would only occupy about half the lot.



| Zone  | FAR  | Height (stories) | FAR per story |
|---|------|------------------|---------------|
| <b>NR – stacked flats (as recently amended)</b> | 2.0  | 4                | 50%           |
| <b>LR1 &amp; LR2 – stacked flats (proposed)</b> | 2.0  | 4                | 50%           |
| <b>LR3 (existing)</b>                           | 2.3  | 5                | 46%           |
| <b>LR3 (proposed)</b>                           | 2.5  | 5                | 50%           |
| <b>MR1 (proposed)</b>                           | 3.2  | 6                | 53%           |
| <b>MR2</b>                                      | 4.5  | 7                | 64%           |
| <b>NC-55</b>                                    | 3.75 | 5                | 75%           |
| <b>NC-65</b>                                    | 4.5  | 6                | 75%           |

## SETBACKS, BUILDING WIDTH, AND BUILDING DEPTH IN MR ZONES

MR zones currently have the most complex requirements for building shape of any zone. These requirements including ground-floor setbacks, upper-level setbacks, and limitations on the width and depth of buildings. Setbacks refer to the distance that a building must be setback from property lines. Maximum building width and depth limits regulate the length of buildings as measured both parallel to and perpendicular to the front lot line.

In recent years, almost all MR development has sought multiple departures from Design Review Boards to make the project work. Even with departures, architects typically have little design flexibility

because the remaining standards necessitate a specific form. The upper-level setback requirement is particularly problematic because it requires different floor plates on different floors. Apartment buildings typically align units across floors so that piping, wiring, stairs, and vents have consistent vertical pathways. Requiring multiple floor plates throughout a building can increase cost and design complexity and result in less energy efficient buildings.

Additionally, House Bill 1183 prohibits upper-level setbacks for many types of buildings, so this change will help comply with this new law. Below is a summary of existing and proposed standards.

| Standard                                | Existing                                  | Proposed                                 |
|---|---|--|
| Front setback                           | 7 feet average, 5 feet minimum            | 7 feet average, 5 feet minimum           |
| Rear setback                            | 15 feet without alley, 10 feet with alley | 10 feet without alley, 0 feet with alley |
| Side setback                            | 7 feet average, 5 feet minimum            | 5 feet                                   |
| Upper-level front setback above 70 feet | 15 feet                                   | Removed                                  |
| Upper-level side setback above 42 feet  | 7 feet average, 5 feet minimum            | Removed                                  |
| Maximum width                           | 150 feet                                  | Removed                                  |
| Maximum depth                           | 80 percent of lot                         | Removed                                  |

### NEW MIDRISE ZONE

Currently, the LR3 zone allows for 5-story buildings and the existing Midrise zone allows for 7- or 8-story buildings, leaving no residential zone with a 6-story height limit. This legislation would create a new Midrise zone called MR1 and rename the existing MR zone MR2. The MR1 zone would have a height limit of 65 feet (which generally allows 6 stories), a maximum FAR of 3.2, and the same setbacks as MR2 zones. MR1 would be applied in limited areas of new and proposed centers, particularly adjacent to Neighborhood Commercial zones with a 65-foot height limit.

### HEIGHT LIMIT IN MR2 ZONES

This legislation would increase the height in MR2 zones from 80 to 85 feet. The proposed height increase would allow projects to accommodate ground-floor spaces with 12- to 15-foot ceilings without sacrificing a floor of residential construction. Higher ground-floor heights are important for ground-floor commercial spaces as well as safer and more efficient solid waste collection service.

### FLOOR AREA RATIO MEASUREMENT

This legislation would create a consistent approach to measurement of FAR across all zones. The main outcome of this change is that exterior stairs and corridors in NC zones would count toward FAR. However, these types of features are not common in those zones so the impact on future projects would likely be minimal.

### SCREENING

The code currently requires that parking in LR and MR zones is "screened from direct street view" by street-facing facades, garage doors, fence, wall, and/or landscaped area. The vagueness of this criterion has resulted in inconsistent interpretations by reviewers and a high degree of unpredictability. Some reviewers have required gates across driveways and fences around the entire front yard to ensure screening for parking at all angles, even when parking is located behind the house. The legislation would clarify that the direct view is measured perpendicular to a street and that gates across driveways are not required. This change is a technical edit to clarify how the regulations are applied.

## Comparison to October 2024 zoning proposal

OPCD received more than 9,000 responses to our request for feedback on the draft zoning maps. Responses included calls to reduce the area or intensity of the rezones, calls to increase the area or intensity of the rezones, and feedback on local circumstances in specific areas. Each comment was read and considered individually by staff. A summary of the engagement process and the comments received is available in the Zoning Update Public Comment Summary.

Overall, feedback identified four areas where the zoning proposal could be updated to better implement the proposed growth strategy:

- 1 Residents provided lots of local knowledge about specific circumstances in different locations that needed to be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- 2 The size of expansions in urban centers without light rail and bus rapid transit were large compared to the area of similar urban centers in other areas.
- 3 Given their linear nature, frequent transit routes contain a wide variety of sites with unusual topography or lot configurations that could be better addressed.
- 4 Addressing split-zoned lots (where the zoning changes in the middle of a lot) could remove existing barriers to development on many lots.

Additionally, the proposal was updated where center boundaries were changed in the One Seattle Plan. Below is a summary of how we amended the October 2024 zoning maps to address these topics:

### LOCAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Staff reviewed many comments about local circumstances on specific blocks and sites. The comments were reviewed individually given the goals used to develop the initial proposal including:

- Expanding the supply and diversity of housing in neighborhoods across Seattle
- Implementing strategies to address ongoing displacement risk

- Allowing more people to live near transit
- Creating complete neighborhoods where more people walk, bike, and roll to shops and services
- Responding to urban form factors such as transitions, topography, and irregular lots
- Responding to environmental factors such as environmentally critical areas, steep slopes, large roads, and pollution generators like highways

Changes were proposed in areas where public feedback identified local conditions suggesting a different zone might better align with these principles. Examples of feedback that resulted in changes included information on how topography, undeveloped rights-of-way, or irregular lot shapes affected site access or transitions with adjacent lots.

### URBAN CENTER EXPANSIONS

Some comments expressed concern that the proposed size of the urban centers without light rail or bus rapid transit (Greenwood, Queen Anne, and Admiral) were found to be larger than other centers with greater access to transit. In response, the urban centers without light rail or bus rapid transit were reduced to be more consistent with other urban centers.

### FREQUENT TRANSIT ROUTES

Many comments noted a high degree of variability along frequent transit routes in terms of factors such as slope and lot configurations. Staff reviewed all the frequent transit routes to reconsider these factors as well as specific feedback from residents. Based on this review, some proposed rezones along frequent transit routes were removed on steeply sloped streets (e.g., Madrona Drive), streets where transit service had changed or was proposed to change (e.g., southeast Magnolia, 10th Ave E in north Capitol Hill), historic boulevards (e.g., 10th Ave W in west Queen Anne), or where the initial proposal would have resulted in small areas of isolated lots with different zoning or irregular zoning transitions. Additionally, we applied LR2 (which has a four-story height limit) rather than LR3 (which has a five-story height limit) in some areas where a grade change would have resulted in more intense transitions between properties.

## SPLIT-ZONED SITES

Throughout Seattle, many sites have two or more zoning designations on different portions of the site. These instances of “split zoning” often create challenges for redevelopment by requiring a building design that accommodates two sets of development standards. OPCD staff used a GIS analysis to identify sites with split zoning. These sites were reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Instances of split zoning were generally unchanged where the split zoning was intended to acknowledge environmentally critical areas, major institution boundaries, or industrial areas. In other cases, the goal was to reduce the frequency and degree of split zoning while considering the following goals:

- Minimizing irregular zoning boundaries or isolated lots
- Creating a consistent pattern of zone boundaries across blocks
- Considering zoning transitions with adjacent lots
- Providing greater capacity on large sites with high opportunity for housing
- Resolving split-zoned lots generally resulted in applying the higher-density zone on a site.

## UPDATED CENTER BOUNDARIES

The zoning proposal was updated to reflect changes to center boundaries that were made in the One Seattle Plan. Where boundaries shrank and the lots were not adjacent to frequent transit routes, proposed changes to zoning were generally removed. Where boundaries were expanded, a new proposal was developed based on the principles used to develop the initial proposals.

In two neighborhoods the boundaries were substantially changed. In the Whittier Neighborhood Center, the boundary was shifted from a wider, circular shape around a single bus rapid transit stop to a more narrow, linear shape around three bus rapid transit stops. In this case, the updated proposal continues the zoning proposed for the center of the original boundary south throughout the center. In the Northwest Green Lake Neighborhood Center, the boundary was recentered along a single bus rapid transit stop. For this area, the zoning was increased next to the bus rapid transit stop to be more consistent with other centers focused around a bus rapid transit stop.

# Conclusion and next steps

This legislation represents an important step in implementing the One Seattle Plan and will make it easier to build apartments and condos in neighborhoods throughout Seattle. This change will help to increase the supply and diversity of housing in Seattle in order to reduce the cost of housing and to allow more people to find housing that works for them.

A summary of outreach efforts undertaken to evaluate the proposal is available at: [www.seattle.gov/opcd/one-seattle-plan/engagement](http://www.seattle.gov/opcd/one-seattle-plan/engagement). Council will also conduct a public hearing as part of their deliberation. The Director finds this proposal supports applicable City policies and increases zoning and recommends that the Council adopt this legislation.

Council will review the legislation and consider amendments before adopting final legislation. The legislation will be effective 30 days after it is passed by Council and signed by the Mayor.

More information on Council's process will be available on [Council's Comprehensive Plan website](#).