

Design Review Exemption Legislation

September 4, 2024



Purpose and Goals

- **Downtown Activation Plan goals:**
 - Revitalize Seattle's core to support more living, jobs, shopping, and cultural opportunities
 - Stimulate investments in new development
 - Efficient permitting, with flexibility retained for new building design



A trend toward Design Review reform

- State law (ESHB 1293) mandated reforms to shorten the process
- Explore how codes can best support a straightforward permit process, with flexibility and design quality
- Financing and economy is challenging for new construction
- Code complexity adds additional challenges

Source: DSA, 2024



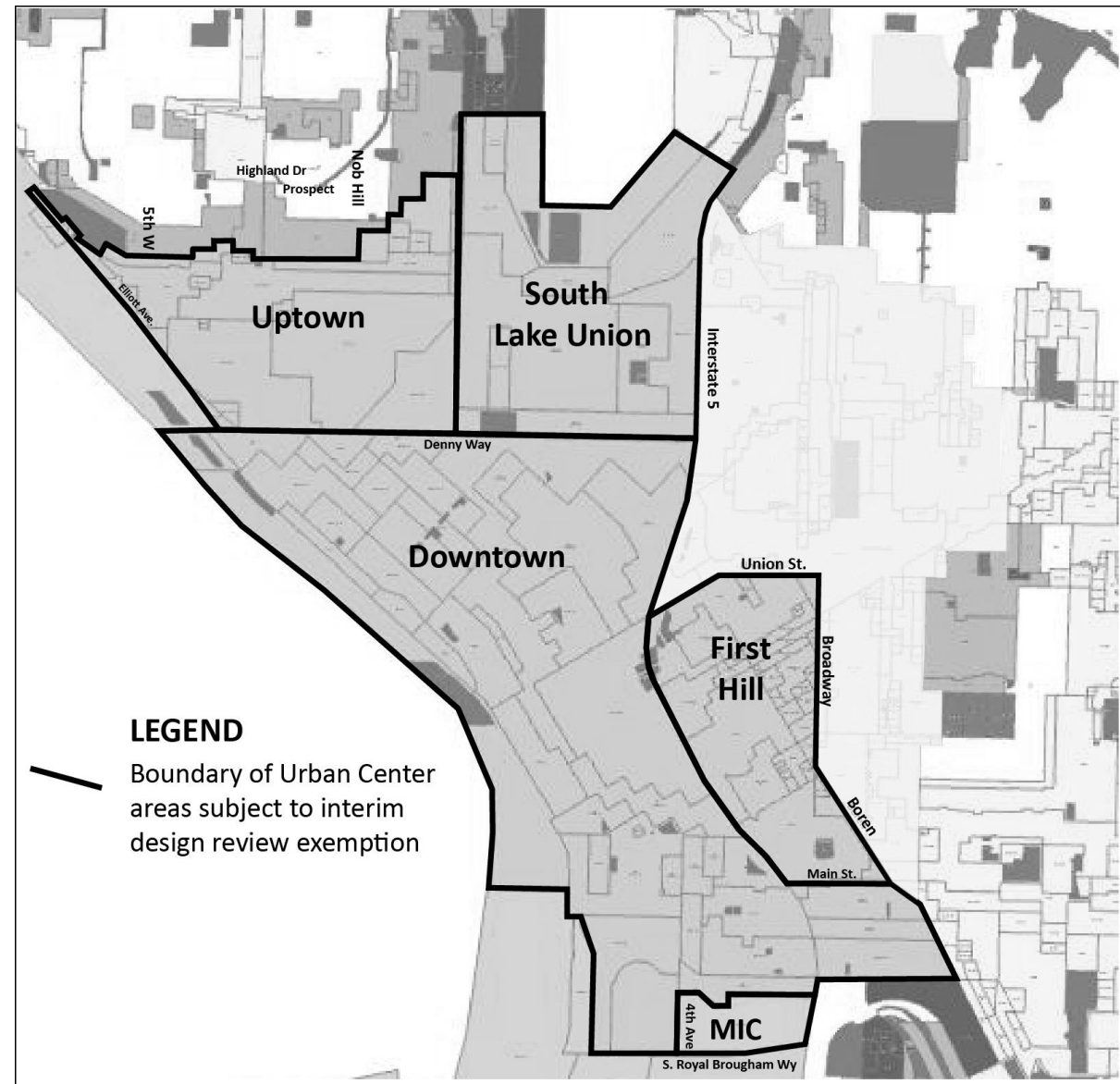
Proposal

- Exempt new development proposals from the Design Review process
- Interim legislation: in place for 3 years
- Downtown, Uptown, South Lake Union, First Hill, and a portion of Duwamish MIC adjacent to Downtown (map on next slide).



Geography

- Mostly along Urban Center boundaries
- First Hill is a subarea of First Hill/Capitol Hill U.C.
- “MIC” (Greater Duwamish Manuf./Industrial Center) subarea is north of Royal Brougham Way and east of 4th Ave. S.
- Excludes Pioneer Square, Chinatown/I.D., Pike Place Market Districts (no Chapter 23.41 Design Review)



Eligible uses and proposed flexibility

- Eligible: Residential, hotels, mixed-use projects*, Research/Development laboratory uses (*At least 50% floor area in residential and hotel uses)
- Designs may deviate from minimum development standards per SDCI administrative review
- Comparable to departures given by the Design Review process

Subjects of code and design flexibility

| | |
|---|--|
| Upper-level setbacks, modulation, façade openings, width | Common indoor recreational and amenity areas |
| Street/façade setbacks | Outdoor open space: area and other details |
| Floor-to-floor height at street level | Landscaping: area, dimension, locations |
| Rooftop screening and coverage limits (mech, energy, elevator enclosures) | Vehicle access to parking, loading, utility spaces |
| Street-level use type, depth, and % presence | Vehicle access route slopes, dimensions |
| Façade transparency, blank façades | Parking space size requirements |
| Overhead weather protection | Bicycle parking minimum quantities |

Early vesting point, like Design Review

- Vesting determines the codes that apply to the project
- Vesting date at “letter of eligibility” as long as permit application package filed within 90 days
- Approach is like the “early design guidance application” date for Design Review projects

Public Notice provisions

- Proposal includes public notice for all eligible projects:
 - Land Use Information Bulletin
 - Large white sign
 - Mailed notice
 - 14 day comment period

See code section [23.76.012](#)

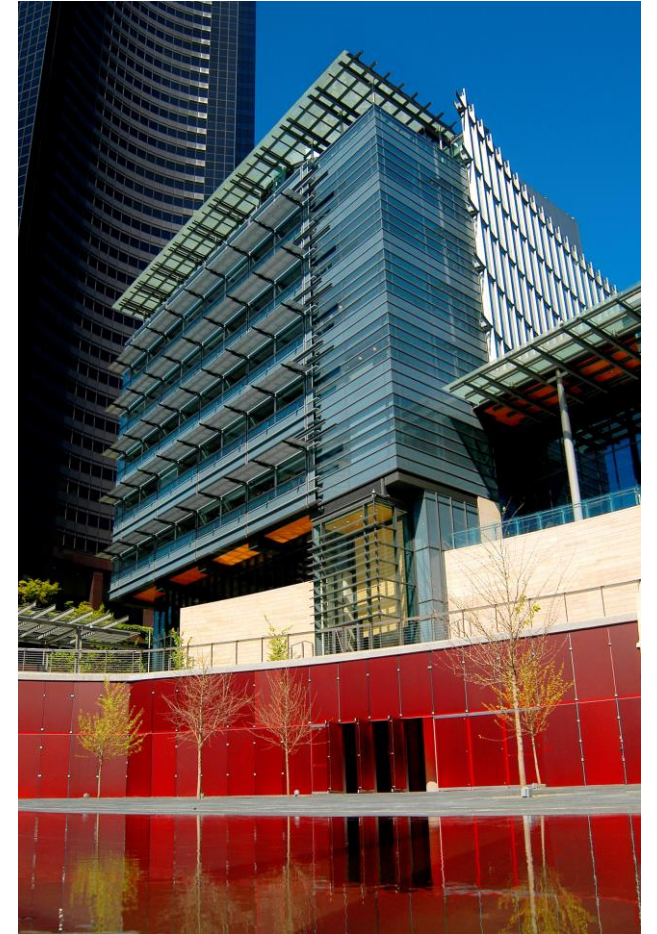


Questions?

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