

## Land Use Element

### Introduction

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You see these policies in action when you notice a difference in the location, type, and size of new buildings. Guided by the urban village strategy, the City’s Land Use Code (Seattle Municipal Code Title 23) includes a map showing the zones that define the types of buildings allowed. Detailed regulations tell developers what the buildings in each zone can look like. The zones themselves are grouped in the Land Use Code under general categories such as ~~((single-family))~~ neighborhood residential zones, which are composed mostly of houses, and commercial/mixed-use zones, which include businesses as well as housing. Multifamily zones include apartment buildings, town houses, and condos, while industrial zones create space for the port and manufacturing to thrive. Downtown has its own zone type for dense, highrise office and residential buildings.

This Land Use element is divided into three sections. The first section has policies that affect the city as a whole. These policies speak to how Seattle should change and grow in the years to come. The Future Land Use Map shows us the shape of this next-generation Seattle. The second section talks about each kind of land use area: ~~((single-family))~~ neighborhood residential, multifamily, commercial/mixed-use, industrial, and Downtown. The policies in this section explain what makes each of these land use areas different. The third section contains policies for places that play special roles—for example, historic districts.

The Land Use Appendix provides information about the amount of land being used for different purposes across the city. It also displays the density of housing, population, and jobs throughout the city.

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## **The Future Land Use Map and Locations of Zones**

### **Discussion**

The Future Land Use Map shows distinct land use designations or types that are located around the city. The City has decided the right uses for each area and how much use each area should receive. Five of these area types—(~~single-family~~) neighborhood residential areas, multifamily residential areas, commercial/mixed-use areas, Downtown areas, and industrial areas—are meant to suggest specific uses. One area might be good for building more homes or right for building shops and restaurants. Within each land use area, there may be different levels of zoning that provide more detail about what can be built. This ensures that the right types and density of buildings will be built in each place. In certain places, special zoning can be created through a separate process. Some of these special zones are created around large hospitals or universities or housing developments where the needs of many people need to be coordinated. These include major institution overlay districts and master planned communities. Four other types of areas on the Future Land Use Map show the urban village strategy in use. Urban centers, hub urban villages, residential urban villages, and manufacturing/industrial centers work together with the land use area designations. They show us the best spots to place new housing and jobs and the right places for manufacturing, warehousing, and port activity.

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### **Special Uses: Telecommunications Facilities**

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LU 4.3 Prohibit new major communication utilities, such as radio and television transmission towers, in (~~single-family~~) neighborhood and multifamily residential zones and in pedestrian-

oriented commercial/mixed-use zones and encourage existing major communication utilities to relocate to nonresidential areas.

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## **General Development Standards**

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LU 5.7 Employ development standards in residential zones that address the use of the ground level of new development sites to fit with existing patterns of landscaping, especially front yards in ~~((single-family))~~ neighborhood residential areas, and to encourage permeable surfaces and vegetation.

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## **Land Use Areas**

### Discussion

Historically, zones were created so that different types of uses could be developed only in distinct areas of the city. One reason for this was to keep the uses in one area from affecting the uses in another in a negative way. For example, industrial activities like manufacturing were separated from residential areas to protect residents from harm. Over time, the city evolved in a pattern similar to that basic idea. There are still areas in the city that have distinct uses, but over time commercial uses and residential uses began to blend more to give people better access to shops and services. These changing patterns helped give Seattle its unique neighborhoods. For instance, areas with commercial zoning that allows shops and small offices have become the heart of many neighborhoods.

Areas that already had business cores and multifamily housing and that are zoned for more housing and businesses have become the cores of the urban villages. ~~((Some single-family~~

~~areas~~) Areas in the city were developed at different times, giving them distinct characteristics that show their history. For instance, houses might have a similar architectural style or have a similar relationship to their surroundings.

Each of the land use areas plays a unique role in the city. Used in combination, they help Seattle grow in ways that meet the city's needs. They allow us to place new housing in the areas where the most jobs and services are or will be in the future. They also allow us to encourage housing in places that already have frequent and reliable transit service or that will have better access as improvements and investments are made in rail or bus service.

### ~~((Single-family))~~ **Neighborhood Residential Areas**

~~((Single-family))~~ Neighborhood Residential ~~((zones))~~ areas cover much of the city, including single-family zones. While they are thought of as residential neighborhoods, they include a variety of uses beyond housing. For instance, most of the public parkland is found in these zones, as are many of the public schools, cemeteries, and fire stations. In most of these areas, houses are usually not very tall and typically have yards and open space around them. That open space provides recreation opportunities for residents and land for much of the city's tree canopy. Much of the land in these areas has been built to the densities the current zoning rules allow. However, some different housing types, such as accessory dwelling units or backyard cottages, could increase the opportunity for adding new housing units in these areas. Over time, some ~~((single-family))~~ neighborhood residential areas could be incorporated into nearby urban villages, and there could be a new definition of what is allowable in these zones when they are inside urban villages.

## **GOAL**

LU G7 Provide opportunities for detached single-family residential structures and other compatible housing options that have low height, bulk, and scale in order to serve a broad array of households and incomes and to maintain an intensity of development that is appropriate for areas with limited access to services, infrastructure constraints, fragile environmental conditions, or that are otherwise not conducive to more intensive development.

## **POLICIES**

LU 7.1 Designate as ~~((single-family))~~ neighborhood residential areas those portions of the city that are predominantly developed with single-family detached houses and that are large enough to maintain a consistent residential character of low height, bulk, and scale over several blocks.

LU 7.2 Use a range of ~~((single-family))~~ neighborhood residential zones to

- maintain the current low-height and low-bulk character of designated ~~((single-family))~~ neighborhood residential areas;
- limit development in ~~((single-family))~~ neighborhood residential areas or that have environmental or infrastructure constraints;
- allow different densities that reflect historical development patterns; and
- respond to neighborhood plans calling for redevelopment or infill development that maintains the ~~((single-family))~~ neighborhood residential character of the area but also allows for a greater range of housing types.

LU 7.3 Consider allowing redevelopment or infill development of ~~((single-family))~~ neighborhood residential areas inside urban centers and villages, where new development would maintain the low height and bulk that characterize the single-family area, while allowing a wider

range of housing types such as detached accessory units, cottage developments or small duplexes or triplexes.

LU 7.4 Allow detached single-family dwellings as the principal use permitted outright in ~~((single-family))~~ neighborhood residential areas.

LU 7.5 Encourage accessory dwelling units, family-sized units, and other housing types that are attractive and affordable, and that are compatible with the development pattern and building scale in ~~((single-family))~~ neighborhood residential areas in order to make the opportunity in single-family areas more accessible to a broad range of households and incomes, including lower-income households.

LU 7.6 Limit the number and types of nonresidential uses allowed in ~~((single-family))~~ neighborhood residential areas and apply appropriate development standards in order to protect those areas from the negative impacts of incompatible uses.

LU 7.7 Prohibit parking lots or other activities that are part of permitted uses in neighboring higher-intensity zones from locating or expanding in ~~((single-family))~~ neighborhood residential areas.

LU 7.8 Use minimum lot size requirements to maintain the character of ~~((single-family))~~ neighborhood residential areas and to reflect the differences in environmental and development conditions and densities found in various single-family areas throughout the city.

LU 7.9 Allow exceptions to minimum lot size requirements to recognize building sites created under earlier regulations and historical platting patterns, to allow the consolidation of very small lots into larger lots, to adjust lot lines to permit more orderly development patterns, and to provide more housing opportunities by creating additional buildable sites that integrate well with surrounding lots and do not result in the demolition of existing housing.

LU 7.10 Reflect the character of existing low-density development through the regulation of scale, siting, structure orientation, and setbacks.

LU 7.11 Permit, through Council or administrative conditional use approval, variations from established standards for planned large developments in ~~((single-family))~~ neighborhood residential areas, to promote high-quality design that

- is compatible with the character of the area,
- enhances and preserves natural features and functions,
- encourages the construction of affordable housing,
- allows for development and design flexibility, and
- protects environmentally critical areas.

Such developments should not be considered as sole evidence of changed circumstances to justify future rezones of the site or adjacent properties.

LU 7.12 Emphasize measures that can increase housing choices for low-income individuals and families when considering changes to development standards in ~~((single-family))~~ neighborhood residential areas.

## **Multifamily Residential Areas**

### **Discussion**

The city's multifamily areas contain a variety of housing types. You might find duplexes or town houses, walk-up apartments or highrise towers. These structures may include units that are owned by the residents or may provide rental housing. Overall, these areas offer more choices for people with different living styles and a wider range of incomes than ~~((single-family))~~ neighborhood residential zones.

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LU 8.10 Designate lowrise multifamily zones in places where low-scale buildings can provide a gradual transition between ((~~single-family~~)) neighborhood residential zones and more intensive multifamily or commercial areas.

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