

## APPENDIX B

### LAND USE—HEIGHT, BULK, SCALE AND COMPATIBILITY

#### *AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT*

#### **HEIGHT, BULK AND SCALE**

“Height, bulk and scale” relates to the size of buildings and their relationship to surrounding properties. The City’s environmental policies recognize that physical characteristics of buildings affect the character of neighborhoods. The policies also recognize an interest in addressing building height, bulk and scale to maintain smooth transitions from one zone to another. Refer to the Land Use Zoning and Development Patterns section in DEIS Chapter 3 for additional discussion of land use and compatibility impacts.

#### **Pioneer Square**

Pioneer Square’s dominant pattern consists of buildings built abutting all property lines including alleys. This contributes to a continuity of street-level uses adjacent to public sidewalks and creates street corridors that are well-defined by the buildings on both sides of the street. This is most evident along 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue S., portions of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue north of Yesler Way, and in the vicinity of S. Jackson Street and S. King Street, where the height of the buildings averages roughly 70-90 feet. Near Occidental Park and eastward to approximately 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, the predominant building scale is somewhat lower, in the range of 10 to 50 feet. However, several taller buildings such as the Frye Hotel, Smith Tower and King Street Station’s clock tower create a variety of heights. The intermittent presence of vacant properties or parking lots provides some visual relief in portions of this area, but also creates gaps in the continuity of streetfront uses.

A distinctive aspect of Pioneer Square architecture is floor-to-floor heights that are larger than 10 feet. Heights of street-level spaces range up to roughly 15 feet in some areas. The appearance of fewer, taller floors, distinctive architectural treatments and diverse window shapes combine to moderate the appearance of buildings. Distinctive historic architecture and building materials also lend a grace and visual interest to a viewer’s perception of the urban environment.

The northernmost portion of Pioneer Square is adjacent to the Downtown core, which includes larger-scale buildings nearby. In addition, the sloping streets of James, Cherry and Columbia Streets results in an east-west street environment that includes few ground-level uses and adjacent buildings that are higher in elevation. These factors contribute to a transitional environment in building height, bulk and scale between Pioneer Square and Downtown.

#### **Chinatown/I.D.**

In Chinatown, both sides of S. King Street west of I-5 feature historic buildings ranging from 3 to 6 stories, approximately 30 to 70 feet in height. Other buildings in the immediate vicinity of S. Jackson and S. King Streets contribute to a pattern of continuous street-level uses and buildings with similar height, bulk and scale. The primary exception is the old Uwajimaya grocery site near 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. and S. King Street which includes a large parking lot and low-scale building. Most of the buildings in this area include Asian-influenced and/or historic architectural design features, many with brick facades, distinctive parapets and signage that help define the area’s visual character.

In the vicinity south of S. Weller Street, typical buildings are smaller than those along S. King Street. The development pattern south of S. Weller Street includes numerous parking lots and buildings that widely vary in age, size and architectural design quality. The Uwajimaya mixed-use development is the

largest structure in this area, filling much of a city block to a height to 85 feet. A few relatively new residential and mixed-use buildings are also present, generally in the range of 5 to 7 stories. However, one-to-two story buildings and parking lots are the most common building pattern in this area.

Japantown has a somewhat different development pattern than Chinatown. A portion of Japantown is in the National Register Historic District. Several low- to moderate-scaled buildings along Main Street and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S are historic-contributing to the district. In addition, this immediate vicinity includes two senior apartment towers up to approximately 150 feet in height. A variety of other residential buildings on the hill south of Yesler Way are generally in the range of 70 feet. In addition, an office building and the Downtowner Apartments, both at approximately 100 feet in height, are present between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenues near S. Jackson Street. Throughout this area, parking lots and one-story buildings are interspersed, contributing to a varied character in land use, building height, bulk and scale, but also adding to a sense of “missing teeth,” breaking the continuity of the district.

### **Little Saigon**

Little Saigon is located east of Interstate 5. The pattern of building height, bulk and scale in Little Saigon is lower than in most other areas in the Downtown Urban Center. Most buildings in this vicinity are 10 to 30 feet tall. Several feature parking lots located between the building and the sidewalk. These are generally single-purpose retail buildings or multi-tenant strip shopping centers. However, several other buildings are built to the property line. Vacant lots are also present on S. Jackson and S. King Streets, and a few single-family residences remain. The tallest buildings in this area are the Pacific Rim Center at approximately 65 feet, an office building on S. Weller Street at approximately 60 feet, and a retail center near 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. and S. Jackson Street, at approximately 40 to 50 feet. Along Rainier Avenue S., the commercial buildings are generally one or two stories. East of Rainier Avenue S., a few commercial-oriented buildings sit behind and above the Rainier Avenue-abutting buildings. Further east, the pattern immediately transitions to low-density single-family residences. Southeast of Rainier Avenue S./S. Dearborn Street, newer multistory apartment residences are located behind and slightly above the low-density commercial uses along Rainier Avenue S.

### **South-of-Dearborn**

This longtime industrial area is composed of low-scale buildings including one-to-two story warehouses, up to four-story commercial buildings, and the former INS Building which is roughly 50 feet in height. Many buildings extend to property lines, with parking lots interspersed. These characteristics contribute to an environment that is well-defined at the sidewalk edge in some places, but also relatively open to light and air. At the eastern and southern perimeters, I-5 and the I-90 ramps provide a visual boundary that separates the area from Beacon Hill to the east and from the rest of the Duwamish industrial area to the south. The Charles Street Yard, home to several City operations, is located in the eastern portion of this vicinity adjacent to I-5.

### **Stadium Area**

Building heights in the Stadium area cover a range that reflects a diverse mixture of low- and moderate-scale building types, from 1-2 story structures to buildings up to 80 feet in height, some of which are located within Pioneer Square zoning. Building patterns generally reflect the transitional nature of this vicinity. Along 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue S., typical buildings are typically lower to the south, with an increasing presence of buildings in the 50-80 foot range further to the north, in proximity to Pioneer Square neighborhood boundaries. In the middle of this transitional area along 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue S., the new Silver Cloud Hotel (in Pioneer Square zoning) reaches a height of approximately 85 feet. Along 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. just north of Royal Brougham Way, the building heights range up to 40-60 feet. North of Airport Way S., the typical scale on the east side of 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. ranges up to approximately 150 feet. In addition, this

vicinity includes the Qwest Field and Safeco Field complexes that are over 260 feet in height, tall and massive structures that reflect a larger scale of development and define street corridor spaces along 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue S., Occidental Avenue S., 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue S., and S. Royal Brougham Way. Safeco Field's massing includes concourse areas that are scaled at approximately 65 feet along 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue S., reflecting the approximate proportions of other buildings in this corridor. A multi-story parking garage and large plaza associated with Safeco Field contribute to the streetscape character of Occidental Avenue S. one block south of Edgar Martinez Way (S. Atlantic Street). A proposed commercial building extending the full length of the Home Plate Parking property (south of S. Atlantic Street, west of 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue S.) also is expected to contribute to a larger building scale and denser presence of building bulk in this vicinity. However, at present, large segments of the 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue S. streetfront remain in groups of relatively low-scaled structures conforming to the long north-south rectangular blocks in this vicinity. This includes the low-scaled warehouse structures currently present on the WOSCA property.

One interesting height-related juxtaposition in this vicinity is the extension of Pioneer Square zoning—PSM 85'/120'—on the east side of 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue S. as far south as Royal Brougham Way. This existing zoning affords the potential for 120-foot buildings if three-quarters of the building space is in residential use. Given the availability of some vacant parcels in this vicinity, there is a possibility that future development under existing zoning would result in buildings to that 120-foot height.

## **COMPATIBILITY AMONG EXISTING USES**

### **Land Use Patterns and Height Transitions**

#### **Pioneer Square**

This neighborhood is completely within a City-defined historic preservation district, and most of it also is located within a National Register Historic District. Only the Pioneer Square-zoned portion on the east side of 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue S. south of Railroad Way is outside of the National Register Historic District. Land use and zoning regulations protect historic character by ensuring compatible uses and visual relationships between buildings in the National Register Historic District and City-defined historic preservation district of Pioneer Square. Special Review District regulations and standards address many detailed elements, such as how alterations, new construction, renovations of existing structures, signage changes, building relationships to the streetscape and street level uses may occur in a manner compatible with the historic district.

Actual building patterns exhibit a mix and distribution of buildings that are mostly compatible in terms of land use and heights within Pioneer Square. This is likely due to the preservation of historic buildings, a low amount of infill development, and effectiveness of existing zoning regulations. Taller buildings include the Smith Tower, which at 467 feet towers over other buildings in its vicinity, the King Street Station clock tower at 247 feet, and Qwest Field at 263 feet immediately adjacent to the Pioneer-Square zoned area.

Zoning regulations that affect height compatibility include: the zoned height limits, and a variable height limit in the PSM 100' zone, which indicates, "no structure shall exceed by more than 15 feet the height of the tallest structure on the block or the adjacent block front(s), to a maximum of 100 feet." On the whole, these rules promote similarity of new buildings to existing building heights. However, despite its intentions, the variable height limit does not preclude the possibility of variations up to 75 feet in height between buildings. Also, the variable height limits can change over time. For example, if a building on a neighboring block becomes taller through renovation or new construction, the height limit affecting a nearby block face would increase, though it could not exceed 100 feet.

### **Chinatown/I.D.**

This neighborhood is within a City-defined historic preservation district (extending east to 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.), a subset of which is a National Register Historic District, located approximately between Main Street and S. Weller Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. and I-5. As with Pioneer Square, compatibility among uses and structures is an important purpose of the land use and zoning regulations. The Special Review District regulations are comparable to Pioneer Square's, but adapted in ways that address particular aspects of the neighborhood's visual character and use patterns. Similar to Pioneer Square, the zoned height limits accommodate more building height for residential uses in peripheral areas of the neighborhood, up to 150 feet in the IDR zone. The central part of the Chinatown neighborhood is currently limited to a maximum building height of 85 feet for structures with a majority of space in residential use, and 75 feet for structures with a majority of space in non-residential uses.

These rules promote compatibility of land use and building heights. However, a few interesting implications of the current zoning patterns are noted.

- The boundary between the IDR 150' and IDM 75'/85' zones that is one-half block north of and parallel to S. Jackson Street creates a condition where maximum-height 150-foot buildings would be notably different in scale to the existing low-scale buildings along S. Jackson Street that are part of the National Register Historic District. Relatively steep up-sloping topography further contributes to this potential difference in height.
- SEPA view protection policies may be a constraining factor on the full use of the IDR 150-foot height limit along S. Main Street (east of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue), if a building would substantially block views from the Kobe Terrace Park and Danny Woo Gardens property.
- The Chinatown/I.D. zone regulations do not regulate the scale in a manner comparative to adjacent buildings. They may allow buildings of 85 feet or 120 feet next to buildings of 10-20 feet.

Helicopter flight paths to and from Harborview Hospital are another potential influence on building height in the Japantown hill vicinity. Sufficient airspace for inbound and outbound helicopter movements is preferred by emergency service providers for emergency helicopter flightpaths to Harborview Hospital. (This airspace is not specifically mandated by federal rules.) This creates a three-dimensional area within which buildings should not intrude. This is a potential influence on height limit choices for the portion of the Japantown hill near Yesler Way and I-5.

### **Little Saigon**

Existing land use regulations, the height limit of 65 feet, and past market forces have contributed to an existing pattern of automobile-oriented uses and low-rise building forms. The area is predominantly commercial in nature but has residential uses in some peripheral locations. Zoning accommodates a wide variety of commercial uses, some industrial uses east of 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. The presence of numerous under-developed and vacant parcels serves to buffer uses from each other. Topographical breaks provide natural transitions that aid in maintaining overall compatible conditions.

### **South-of-Dearborn**

Existing land use and building patterns, along with a consistently-scaled zoned height limit of 85 feet, have contributed to good compatibility between uses. The area is undergoing change, with the introduction of retail and housing in recent years. Pacific Food Importers is an existing retail use, and a multi-block BMW dealership is proposed. The William Booth Center provides transitional housing, located at S. Charles Street/Maynard Avenue S., across the street from the General Industrial 2 zone.

## **Stadium Area**

The range of land uses, daily activity patterns and the street environment in the stadium area influence overall compatibility. Events at Qwest Field and Safeco Field on many days create influxes of pedestrian and vehicular traffic ranging as high as 50,000-60,000 people. This can impact small and medium-sized commercial, warehouse and light industrial uses that operate in the vicinity due to parking demand, pedestrian and vehicle traffic, and street closures. Large events can increase the difficulty of Port truck and rail traffic movements on all streets in the local street network, which access the heavily used Seattle International Gateway rail yard near this vicinity. Physically, local blocks include warehouse load/unload spaces that must remain open for efficient business activity. Trucks at times are parked perpendicular to and partially blocking streets. No sidewalks are present along these block faces, which, along with increased event-related pedestrian volumes, may encourage pedestrians to walk in the street. Food vending along certain street edges such as Occidental Avenue S. near Qwest Field also occurs during events. Major streets including 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue S. and S. Atlantic Street are key commute corridors, adding to the potential for pedestrian-vehicle conflicts.

Existing zoning in the area provides some transition in zoned height limits, including 85-foot maximum heights south of S. Atlantic Street and 65-foot maximum heights north of S. Atlantic Street. These limits contrast with the 120-foot height limit present in the nearby Pioneer Square zoning on the east side of 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue S., and with the much taller presence of the athletic stadia.

## **Light and Glare Compatibility**

Exposure of residential uses to excessive light or glare is an unfavorable condition. The level of exposure and proximity of the light source to the receivers are important factors. Glare issues can arise if reflections from glassy or shiny portions of new buildings adversely affect residents or passing motorists.

Sources of light/glare in the study area vicinity include: the athletic facilities, major highway and street arteries, port operations, and local commercial and business operations. Existing conditions are not known to create significant light/glare issues presently, except headlights from SR99 traffic passing near upper floors of Pioneer Square buildings may create unwanted light/glare for building occupants. Port facilities and athletic stadium facilities lighting contribute to illumination in the vicinity.

## **Shadows on Open Spaces**

The City's SEPA regulations pertaining to shadow impacts are narrowly defined for Downtown. The policy background statement in SMC 25.05.675 Q recognizes that:

- access to sunlight is an amenity of public spaces;
- the Downtown land use code provides some protections against shadow impacts (through height, bulk and setback controls); but
- it is not practical to prevent shadowing at all public open spaces Downtown.

The SEPA policy defines five open spaces in Downtown where shadow impacts may be mitigated, including Freeway Park, Westlake Park/plaza, Victor Steinbrueck Park, Convention Center Park, and Kobe Terrace Park/Danny Woo Gardens (located in the Chinatown/I.D. neighborhood). Potential mitigation measures can include limiting the height and bulk of a proposed building, redesigning its profile or altering other building details, or adjusting its location on a property.

In the existing condition at Kobe Terrace/Danny Woo Gardens, there is one existing senior apartment building that reaches to approximately 150 feet in height located just southwest of the garden area. At

certain times of day and certain times of year, this building likely casts shadows on portions of the garden. The garden is located on a slope that otherwise has good southern exposure toward sunlight. Another apartment building adjacent to the north has no probable shadowing effect on the garden. Other buildings nearby to the south include a new 7-story apartment building has no influence on sunlight access at the garden due to up-sloping topography.

In other portions of the study area, existing tree canopies and the characteristics of many existing buildings create conditions at street level that are often shaded. Other areas have fewer trees and lower buildings such that shadowing is not a significant factor affecting the streetscape.

Please see other discussion of compatibility-related topics in the Environmental Health section in Chapter 3.

## ***IMPACTS***

The height and shape of buildings are two of the most direct influences on the character of an urban environment and on perceptions of compatible land use patterns. For this reason, Livable South Downtown planning emphasizes careful consideration of the height and bulk dimensions of future development. The preferred approach is to accommodate taller residentially buildings in targeted areas around the edges of core neighborhoods, and allow infill of other buildings with contextually-appropriate heights and density limits in the historic cores.

The following discussion summarizes conclusions made about the potential for significant adverse impacts with future development under the EIS alternatives. More details on the analysis leading to these conclusions are provided in Appendix B to this Draft EIS. Also, see the Land Use—Zoning, Land Use and Development Patterns section, Economic and Business Impacts section, Environmental Health and Historic and Cultural Preservation sections in Chapter 3 and Appendix A, C, F and H for other impact discussion.

### **HEIGHT, BULK AND SCALE**

#### **Pioneer Square**

##### **Alternative 1, Pioneer Square**

The Alternative 1 zoning strategy in the core of Pioneer Square is to accommodate taller buildings, to 130 feet for residential uses, only on properties that are “vacant” (e.g., most of which are in parking lot use) or contain structures that are designated by the City as not contributing to the historic significance of the district (see Figure B-1). Given the existing zoning in areas west of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Extension that accommodates buildings up to 100 feet, the basic difference between existing maximum height limits and future maximum height limits would be 30 feet. A variable height limit also means current actual height limits are lower on some properties, in the range of 70 to 95 feet.

The Alternative 1 zoning strategy would be applicable to properties distributed intermittently within the Pioneer Square core. A number of non-historically-contributing properties are relatively close to one another. This is most apparent in the Occidental Park vicinity where four non-historic contributing properties are located within two blocks, and north of Yesler Way where up to five properties could be developed with new buildings to 130 feet. Sizes of these properties vary from less than one-quarter block to a half-block, suggesting that future buildings could be at different sizes. A February 2007 City Council adoption of a streetcar maintenance base-related provision in the Land Use Code means that at least one property immediately east of Occidental Park is already eligible for a potential building containing a mixed use streetcar facility up to 130 feet in height.

Interpreting the relative significance of adverse impacts from this proposed increase in height limit is complicated by the mixed nature of the neighborhood’s actual building heights and the mixed policy indications provided by zoning and land use policies. Factors include:

- The variety and heterogeneous nature of building height patterns across the neighborhood, which suggests that there is not one simple standard that defines compatibility of building heights within the current building pattern.
- The presence of a number of historic buildings that reach substantially above the current height limits.































































