



Northgate Area Rezone Proposal

Background Information

Seattle's Urban Centers. Over the next 20 years, the City of Seattle is expected to grow by more than 51,000 households and 92,000 jobs. The City's growth strategy is to guide the majority of this growth into six designated "Urban Centers", which are compact areas developed intensively for a mix of land uses. Northgate is one of the City's designated Urban Centers.

Northgate Goals & Revitalization Efforts. A Neighborhood Plan was adopted for the Northgate Urban Center in 1993 and is incorporated in the City's *Comprehensive Plan*. The overall objective of the Comprehensive Plan's Northgate policies is to transform an auto-oriented landscape into a thriving multi-family residential and mixed-use Urban Center that concentrates pedestrian-friendly and transit-oriented development in the urban core to protect and complement surrounding neighborhoods.

Northgate's growth has lagged that of other Urban Centers' for more than a decade. Since 1995, development of new residential units reached only six percent of the Northgate housing growth target and from 1995 to 1998, only 16 percent of employment targets had been achieved. However, this trend is changing with a number of significant public and private projects, which have been initiated or accomplished over the past few years. These have included the Northgate Branch Library, Community Center and Park Campus, Maple Leaf Community Garden, Fifth Avenue NE Street Improvements, Open Space and Pedestrian Connections Plan, and Public Arts Plan, and design of the Thornton Creek Water Quality Channel. Development projects in the planning or construction stages include Northgate Mall Redevelopment, Thornton Place, King County Metro's Transit Oriented Development, and redevelopment of three large properties along or adjacent to Northgate Way – Mullally, Wallace and Kauri. The Seattle Parks Department is also in the early stages of planning and design of a park on the current Metro park-and-ride lot at 112th Street to accomplish a long-standing goal of the Northgate community,. These initiatives, along with positive economic and market conditions, have created a rare opportunity to shape growth in Northgate comprehensively, rather than to react to individual projects.

Building on the Northgate CTIP. In 2006, the Seattle Department of Transportation prepared the *Northgate Coordinated Transportation Investment Plan* (CTIP), to help plan for anticipated growth. The CTIP includes a long-range (2030) area-wide transportation analysis and identifies a list of priority transportation and pedestrian improvements that will accomplish four major objectives: move people safely and efficiently; reduce drive-alone travel; support housing and economic development; and protect neighborhoods. The final CTIP report was published in September 2006.

Focus on Northgate Way. Following a design workshop in late 2006, the City began early discussions with the Northgate community regarding the option of legislatively upzoning properties along or adjacent to a portion of Northgate Way (generally from Meridian Avenue to Roosevelt Way) to help encourage and focus additional residential and mixed-use development in this important corridor. In April, the Northgate Stakeholders Group transmitted an advice memo to the Mayor and City Council expressing support for considering legislative rezoning actions that could further Northgate revitalization by increasing density and heights (up to 125 feet) in the Urban Center. The Stakeholders also reaffirmed the importance of implementing the CTIP improvements and using incentives to achieve public benefits for affordable housing and open space.

Environmental Impact Statement. The City's Department of Planning & Development (DPD) is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), consistent with the requirements of the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), to examine the potential impacts of legislatively rezoning a portion of Northgate Way (generally from Meridian Ave to Roosevelt Way). If approved, the rezone would increase the permitted intensity and height of development on parcels currently zoned LR-3, LR-4, MR-60, NC3-40 and NC3-85. No single family zones will be considered in this proposal. The rezone area includes three large "opportunity sites" in Northgate (Mullally, Wallace and Kauri) as well as other private properties. Properties would be rezoned to Neighborhood Commercial or Midrise 60 at different heights and intensities (65 feet, 85 feet or 125 feet) and with varying mixes of commercial and residential land uses.

The City intends to use the EIS, and its discussion of impacts, to help develop a preferred rezoning alternative; a formal proposal has not been developed at this time. In general, the goal is to construct and examine alternatives that can increase development intensity within the carrying capacity of important environmental resources, the urban environment and the transportation system. Mitigation measures will help to identify public benefits and incentives, as well as other requirements for addressing significant environmental impacts.

Major issues that will be considered in the EIS will likely include: water quality, drainage and critical areas; land use, bulk and scale, housing, parks and recreation; views, shadows, and light and glare; transportation and parking; and air quality. The EIS will build on the analysis in the CTIP EIS.

The SEPA process will provide several opportunities for public input. This will include a 30-day scoping comment period (April 16th -May 16th) and public scoping meeting (May 3rd) to help identify the issues and alternatives that should be considered in the EIS and an opportunity to comment on the Draft EIS. All comments received on the Draft EIS will be responded to in the Final EIS. The Draft EIS is expected to be published the summer of 2007, and the Final EIS December, 2007.

For further information please contact:

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