

First Things First: Address These Concerns Before an Upzone for the U District

Contact the PLUZ Committee and COUNCIL and Say: *Delay this massive upzone - put First Things First!*

Ask the PLUZ Committee to FIRST:

- Put in place measures to guarantee no net loss of affordable housing and an effective anti-displacement strategy for the U District
 - Require displacement risk analysis for new developments.
 - Require developers to replace 1 for 1 at comparable price any existing low cost housing they remove
 - Implement a right of first notice law requiring owners who put their low income apartments up for sale to first consider offers from nonprofits interested in preserving them
 - Adopt legislation that helps preserve small U District businesses and character
- Implement impact fees like many nearby and other large cities have so growth pays for growth for our transportation network, utilities, parks and public schools
- Adopt a comprehensive traffic and parking mitigation plan
- Require public amenities such as open space; don't leave it up to developers to decide
 - increase, improve and maintain parks and open space in the neighborhood accompanied by a real commitment of city funds to make this plan a reality
- Require a comprehensive historic preservation plan with real teeth needed to preserve dozens of identified historic structures now at risk of being lost to redevelopment must be implemented.
- Adopt strong regulations protecting our declining older growth tree canopy in our community and city-wide.
- Provide effective social services to address the ever-growing homeless population in the University District.
- Prioritize energy considerations in zoning and the design of buildings to truly mitigate climate change.
 - Read: <http://www.seattlefairgrowth.org/blog/public-comment-at-city-of-seattle-hearing-re-proposed-upzone-of-the-university-district>, author (Linda Nash) is source of below points.
 - Highrises are a high-carbon option.
 - Their long shadows also limit the potential for solar energy on adjacent sites.

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- To make matters worse, tall buildings exacerbate the effects of very high temperature days (which we are now experiencing in the summer) by raising surrounding air temperatures and decreasing air flow between buildings.
- There are significant obstacles to making tall buildings energy and carbon efficient: they require more elevators and air-conditioning; they have more exposure to wind and sun and have higher rates of heat gain and loss; they have a small roof-top area that limits the potential to use solar and other renewables.
- “LEED” certification merely serves to make wasteful construction slightly less unsustainable.
- Seattle’s [own data](#) shows that high-rise multi-family building currently consume 45% more energy per square foot than mid-rise multi-family and 64% more than low-rise multi-family.
- Modern, tower-dominated downtowns emerged in an era of cheap and abundant fossil fuels, and they do not obviously serve the needs of the twenty-first century. Buildings last for many decades and will shape the city’s design and energy needs far into the future.

Ask: Why so high? Why so wide?

- Why the upzones when we're drowning in growth as it is and have more than enough excess zoned capacity (as stated in EIS regarding “no action” alternative)?
- Why do there need to be 320’ buildings *anywhere* in the U District?
 - The 320' height allowance seems totally arbitrary, and calculated more toward maximizing Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and bonus floor space than any reasonable linkage to constructability.
 - Allowing 320’ heights along NE 45th and at the entrance to the U District from the freeway will:
 - Create canyons that will block views of the remainder of the U District for travelers on the freeway as well as those exiting at NE 45th & NE 50th.
 - Allow skyscrapers to tower over the MR-1 affordable apartment buildings (LR-3 under current zoning) to the south of NE 45th and west of Roosevelt.
 - Abruptly contrast with the 40' zoning heights just across the freeway in Wallingford.
 - Why is there a need for 240’ buildings between 47th & 50th?
 - Ditto the arbitrary height allowance as stated for the 320' rezone. Where is the justification for this *four-fold* increase in existing height limits?

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- No transitional “buffer” of heights/bulk when 240’ structures would tower over the lower-rise lots along 9th Ave NE and the lots north of 50th, including the YMCA’s proposed modestly-sized project. This drastic contrast in zoning heights on either side of NE 50th violates the planning principle of prescribing more gradual step ups and step-downs.
- Why does the proposed ordinance increase height limits along the Ave, especially North of 45th, after city planners assured businesses this wouldn't happen?
 - The spot-zoning along 15th to allow 240’ high structures across from the campus is absurd from the perspective of responsible urban planning, which favors gradual rather than dramatic height transitions.
- Why didn’t the city propose a SM-U 160 zone, for example, rather than 320' or 240? That was one of the heights studied in the EIS.
 - SM zones in other city neighborhoods include 120’, 130’ 160, etc. Why only consider 240’ and 320’ here in the U District? The UW, for example, has said that it “only” wants to build a 240’ tower over the new light rail station; and it hasn't announced any plans to lease or purchase 240' or higher properties elsewhere in the U District. So – the UW shouldn’t object to lowering the SM-U 320 zone to 240, it would seem.
 - The City should be asked to list what, if any, projects for over 240' in height are being proposed or discussed with planners. Where are such projects?
- What assumptions are being made by Office of Planning Construction and Development (OPCD) about where high-rises will be built, how tall they will be, and how they will be used?
- Why so high when highrises have much greater carbon footprint over their lifetime than low and midrise? Low and mid-rise as currently zoned (AS IS) are shown in the EIS (the "no action alternative") as providing more than enough density, and in fact, we're drowning in density.
 - Why not plan for increased density in a more equitable way, that does more to preserve some of the historic character and affordable housing in them; and that really tried to address greenhouse gas emissions (rather than falling back on the platitude of “transit-oriented development”)
- Why such a massive increase in density when already emergency services struggle to get through congested streets?
- Why so dense, when we already struggle with homelessness and rising displacement of people who lose their affordable rentals to developers.
- Why so much given to developers to provide community amenities like open space, when the City should be requiring these.

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- Why does the city tell us that towers in the "Core" will provide affordable housing, but don't encourage understanding that the housing will most likely be in other parts of Seattle, not in the CORE.
- Why would the Phase 1 upzone, "shaping how we grow" - massive increases of density in towers in the "Core" - preserve *anything* we value about our district?
 - *Shaping* growth with towers in the Core will not preserve the U District's character or the small businesses that serve it.
 - Promises of Towers and a massive upzone are already raising property values.
 - U District property will be increasingly valuable so that no older property will be safe from redevelopment. (Recently advertised in the U District was a 4-plex property with an asking price \$5.2 Million.)
- Planning is moving forward for the Phase 2 U District upzone - the HALA "upzones" and re-designations and changing standards of multifamily and single family zones in Urban Centers and Villages (UVs to be expanded) will significantly increase density, redevelop old neighborhood homes, and is changing density and character *outside* the Core.