

Director's Report and Recommendation

Crown Hill Neighborhood Design Guidelines

July 6, 2022

PROPOSAL SUMMARY

This proposal is a legislative action to amend Section 23.41.010.B of the Seattle Municipal Code, adopting neighborhood design guidelines for the Crown Hill Urban Village.

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide supplemental guidance to the overarching city-wide design guidelines. Neighborhood specific design guidelines are an important tool for the Design Review Boards in their review of proposed new development. The guidelines provide direction with the goal of fostering urban design excellence in new multifamily and commercial projects.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

The Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) worked with other City Departments (Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections, Seattle Department of Transportation, Department of Neighborhoods) and community stakeholders to complete a community planning initiative. This initiative resulted in development of a Community Action Plan for the Crown Hill Urban Village, which was expanded and rezoned in the spring of 2019 as part of the Mandatory Housing Affordability implementation.

This proposal submitted for City Council review and action includes new Neighborhood Design Guidelines for the Crown Hill Urban Village.

Through the planning process, residents, businesses, and property owners in the neighborhood, identified potential strategies, actions, and urban design recommendations to guide the future development of the neighborhood as a walkable, mixed-use, pedestrian environment. Design guidelines for Crown Hill are intended to promote new development that enhances pedestrian comfort and walkability, adds local destinations, creates a neighborhood commercial and community hub, balances open space with density, and contributes to public life. These proposed design guidelines carry forward ideas from the Crown Hill Action Plan completed in 2021.

Public Engagement

The Crown Hill Neighborhood Design Guidelines are a product of a multi-year planning process that also resulted in the Crown Hill Action Plan.

In developing these guidelines, the City continued its engagement with the community to ensure the proposed guidelines reflect the community's vision for new development. Many of the ideas and concepts were the result of earlier outreach efforts which included creation of stakeholder groups, convening of four community workshops, and four online surveys. In preparing the guidelines the City conducted an online survey to confirm previous design input, as well as solicit new ideas. During the SEPA process, notice emails announcing the availability of the draft guideline update and the opportunity to review and comment were sent to a Crown Hill contact list of over 200 hundred community stakeholders.

OPCD Proposal and Analysis

The Crown Hill neighborhood does not currently have neighborhood-specific guidelines. As the rezones to implement MHA increased development capacity in the neighborhood, the Crown Hill community articulated the desire to ensure that new development would contribute to the vibrancy and walkability of Crown Hill.

The proposed guidelines offer additional detail and direction for creating design excellence when developing new multifamily and mixed-use buildings. The guidelines also provide guidance for the relationship of new development to character areas and corridors, gateways, and community corners, and allow for flexible design solutions that will better achieve neighborhood objectives. In addition, the proposed guidelines' specific subareas are identified and guidance is provided about how buildings are to relate and contribute to the public realm in each subarea.

Comprehensive Plan and Neighborhood Plan Consistency

The Crown Hill Neighborhood Design Guidelines are consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan (2017) and the Crown Hill Urban Village Action Plan (2021). The Comprehensive Plan Neighborhood Plan Element, Crown Hill/Ballard goals and policies include the following:

CH/B-P2 Improve the attractiveness of the business areas in the Ballard Hub Urban Village and the Crown Hill Residential Urban Village to businesses, residents, and shoppers through creation of pleasant streetscapes and public spaces.

CH/B-P3 Strive to create a mix of locally owned, unique businesses and regional and national retailers.

CH/B-G3 A civic complex in the core of the Ballard Hub Urban Village that incorporates moderate-density housing as well as public open space and other public and private services.

CH/B-P9 Preserve the function of 15th Avenue NW as a principal arterial and a major truck street, but strive to overcome the street as a barrier that isolates the neighborhood areas to the east and west from each other and to improve its contribution to the visual character of Crown Hill and Ballard.

CH/B-P21 Define and promote Crown Hill/Ballard's identity by establishing a series of welcoming gateways, such as landscaped areas or artworks, at key entry points to the neighborhood.

RECOMMENDATION

OPCD recommends approval of the Crown Hill Neighborhood Design Guidelines. This action will provide the Design Review Program with clearer direction to implement the community's vision for the built and natural environments. The design guidelines reflect the community's values for design excellence for multi-family and commercial buildings. In making the proposed recommendations to adopt updated design guidelines, OPCD has considered comments from citizens, affected departments, and other agencies and interests. These comments, as well as all environmental documentation that was prepared relevant to the proposed amendments, are available upon request.