



**PUBLIC HEARING HANDOUT**  
**Highlands Sub-Area Plan Moratorium**  
**May 16, 2005**

The City Council adopted two policies in the 2005 Business Plan that directly address priorities for the Highlands. Goal #2 states, "*Promote Neighborhood Revitalization.*" Strategy #3 states, "*Create opportunities for new investment in the Highlands and South Renton neighborhoods.*"

The City is beginning a new sub-area planning process for the Highlands that will result in land use actions and densities needed as an incentive for redevelopment in line with the Business Plan. However, in the short term, underutilized land in the area is coming under development pressure due to the rising cost of land in the vicinity. The current zoning does not allow the higher densities needed to simulate a larger redevelopment effort. While many properties are built out with older housing stock, some existing lots are large enough to subdivide at lower densities that perpetuate a land use pattern inconsistent with the adopted City goals and vision for the Center Village Land Use Designation.

The current R-10 zoning in Highlands Study Area allows single-family detached uses in areas that will be evaluated for higher density as part of the Highlands Sub-Area Plan. The Residential Multi-Family (RM-F) zoning allows stacked flats and lower density multi-family development. Recent project applications are vesting at a lower density than the zoning currently allows. The City currently has no tools available to discourage these low-density subdivisions and building permits

Piecemeal development of underutilized parcels will undermine implementation of the overall redevelopment effort. New low-density residences and/or small-scale multi-family buildings with a long remaining economic life will perpetuate existing patterns of development and conflict with the anticipated sub-area plan.

To complete work on the plan, the City needs time to develop policies and development standards and begin a public outreach program to gain property owner, business owner, and resident input into and support of the plan. The Planning Commission will be working on the plan through November 2005. Three public meetings are anticipated including a visioning session and two "open house" meetings, in addition to Planning Commission workshops. Council Committee of the Whole briefings are scheduled monthly during plan preparation. The plan will to be transmitted to the City Council in December 2005.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the moratorium be established for an initial six-month period, with a review in October, to determine progress toward new zoning standards. At that point, with property owner buy-in of the new land use and zoning concepts, it is anticipated that property owners will support the opportunity for higher density and more efficient land use and will be willing to wait for the new zoning.

The study area also includes R-8 single-family neighborhoods and commercially zoned areas that encourage mixed-used residential/commercial development at higher densities. The recommended moratorium would not include these areas and would not effect commercial businesses or mixed-use projects.