



March 24, 2026

RE: Centers and Corridors Legislation

Dear Councilmembers,

AIA Seattle is a membership organization with 2600+ members with a vision for the City of Seattle as a 15-minute city, a livable city with a variety of housing options near many types of amenities, retail cores, and transit that is accessible to everyone, where everything residents need can be reached within 15 minutes by walking, rolling, or public transit.

AIA Seattle fully supports the Centers and Corridors legislative intention expressed in the OPCD Director's report to increase the supply and diversity of housing in neighborhoods across the city as a means to improve housing affordability, address a root cause of homelessness, foster inclusive neighborhoods, and create communities where more people can access transit, shops, and services by walking or rolling. Increasing housing reduces regional sprawl and greenhouse gas emissions, and therefore is the ultimate climate support, which serves the health of our communities.

To meet intentions of the legislation, AIA Seattle recommends Council:

1. Increase potential places to create housing in neighborhoods across the city.
2. Align and simplify development standards to eliminate administrative friction.
3. Remove barriers to project feasibility that stall development.
4. Strengthen transparency to housing production and community impacts to support evaluation.

AIA Seattle supports the intentions of the Centers and Corridors legislation as a meaningful step toward a more livable 15-minute city. We appreciate your continued leadership and welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively on the Centers and Corridors legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick Walch".

Patrick Taylor Walch, AIA
Comp Plan Work Group Co-chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rachel Gilchrist".

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The legislation as presented requires adjustments to meet the intentions.

Recommended steps to support supply and diversity of housing in neighborhoods across the city:

Increase potential places to create housing in neighborhoods across the city

1. **Increase the number of possible Corridors.**
 - a. Restore Corridors previously identified by OPCD, transit-oriented streets where mid-rise apartments and other multifamily housing would be allowed broadly around frequent bus and other high-capacity transit routes, such as Sand Point Way NE, Ravenna Ave NE, Madrona Dr, 10th Ave E in Capitol Hill, 10th Ave W in Queen Anne, 31st Ave S in Leschi, and Mt Rainier Dr S.
2. **Expand Corridor upzoning by multiple full blocks.**
 - a. The draft legislation allows one half block or less for development, which limits the potential for new housing development, and puts all new housing on the arterial. This limitation will create disparate housing structures side by side with tall housing directly adjacent to single family homes.
 - b. Value OPCD statements about the option to expand corridors to two full blocks, which would improve opportunities for housing.
 - c. Implement Transit Oriented Development upzoning required by the state through HB 1491 as soon as feasible, rather than waiting for the December 2029 deadline.
3. **Consider the City of Seattle's [Racial and Social Equity Index](#) in comparison to the Center and Corridor areas removed from potential upzone and adjust for equitable impact.**

Affluent neighborhoods were disproportionately removed from upzoning opportunities, including areas in the city with the Lowest Equity Priority rating, where residents experience the fewest systemic disadvantages¹. Only three High Equity Priority areas were removed from upzoning².
4. **Increase number of possible sites for housing in Neighborhood Centers to relieve housing pressure throughout the City.**
 - a. Add Neighborhood Centers that were evaluated in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), but NOT selected.

¹ For example, Phinney, Wedgewood, Bryant Park, Magnolia, Queen Anne, Montlake, North Capitol Hill, Madrona, Admiral, Fauntleroy

² Lake City, Haller Lake, Cherry Hill / Central District

- b. Expand Center Boundaries where impacts were analyzed.
- c. Fund future studies to add more Neighborhood Centers NOT already studied in the EIS.

Align and simplify development standards to eliminate administrative friction

Expand the streamline approach of Midrise (MR) to all zones. Elimination of setbacks and maximum width and depth of the building reduce administrative friction by reducing the need for Design Review departures.

1. **Simplify Lowrise (LR) Zoning and learn from the success and impacts in the current Neighborhood Residential (NR) Zone, the only zone where housing is coming online.** Possible solutions to simplify zoning include:
 - a. Combine LR zones to eliminate fiddly, nuanced rules that complicate and stymie development.
 - i. Make all LR Zoning LR3.
 - b. If shifting to one LR zone is not immediately possible, shift proposed Lowrise zones into two types of zones, Neighborhood Residential and LR3.
 - i. Eliminate LR1 and fold it into Neighborhood Residential.
 - ii. Eliminate LR2 and fold it into LR3.
2. **Eliminate floor area ratio (FAR) or increase FAR to allow efficient delivery of stacked flats, and family-sized housing.**
 - a. Expand the elimination of FAR for residential already in place in Downtown Seattle.
 - b. Learn from the example of the City of Everett, who have eliminated FAR.

Remove barriers to project feasibility that stall development

1. **Revise the current Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) structure, which an independent report showed has significantly impacted development feasibility since 2019 ([mha5yearevaluationberk2025.pdf](#)).**
 - a. Look to the [example of Portland](#) and how they adjusted incentivized zoning to fund housing.
 - b. Revise MHA fees to consider market context. When MHA costs outpace project feasibility, the program raises neither funds nor housing.
2. **Align MHA frameworks to bring housing online for projects that produce a smaller number of units.**
 - a. Study the feasibility of shifting from MHA fees based on square footage to number of units as well as:
 - i. Assess the impact of MHA on development in different zones and of different housing typologies.
 - ii. Compare the impact of MHA fees on housing production to external factors, such as rising construction costs and interest rates.

- iii. Re-evaluate the MHA framework on a periodic basis to assess performance and make appropriate adjustments.
- b. **Consider a shift to a 25-unit threshold before MHA is applied:**
 - i. Increases opportunities for units in LR zones by excluding smaller middle housing types from fees that are prohibiting development.
 - ii. Reduces cost of small apartment construction by aligning thresholds with building code revisions for single stairs that were created to reduce cost and flexibility of small apartment construction.
- 3. **Reduce developmental constraints, such as restrictive setbacks and modulation requirements which reduce buildable area and therefore housing yield.**
 - a. For example, eliminate side setbacks to provide flexibility and encourage development.

Strengthen transparency to housing production and community impacts to support evaluation

- 1. **Track housing production relative to zoning capacity, affordable housing delivery, and geographic equity of housing growth.** The City should commit to providing publicly available information, to indicate impact of adjusting zoning and development standards to increase housing production and affordability to inform future policy adjustments.
- 2. **Strengthen strategies to evaluate and mitigate risk of displacement in newly upzoned areas.**
 - a. Revisit the Draft 2023 Comprehensive Plan proactive strategies to prevent displacement such as new tenant expansion proposals, land banking, community ownership tools, and expanded protections.
 - b. Establish a Displacement Risk Dashboard and an anti-displacement work group to monitor risks, coordinate delivery of programs, evaluate effectiveness, and target resources where they're most needed to support anti-displacement of neighbors and small businesses.