

# Design Review Exemption Legislation

September 4, 2024



# Purpose and Goals

- **Downtown Activation Plan goals:**
  - Revitalize Seattle's core to support more living, jobs, shopping, and cultural opportunities
  - Stimulate investments in new development
  - Efficient permitting, with flexibility retained for new building design



# A trend toward Design Review reform

- State law (ESHB 1293) mandated reforms to shorten the process
- Explore how codes can best support a straightforward permit process, with flexibility and design quality
- Financing and economy is challenging for new construction
- Code complexity adds additional challenges

Source: DSA, 2024



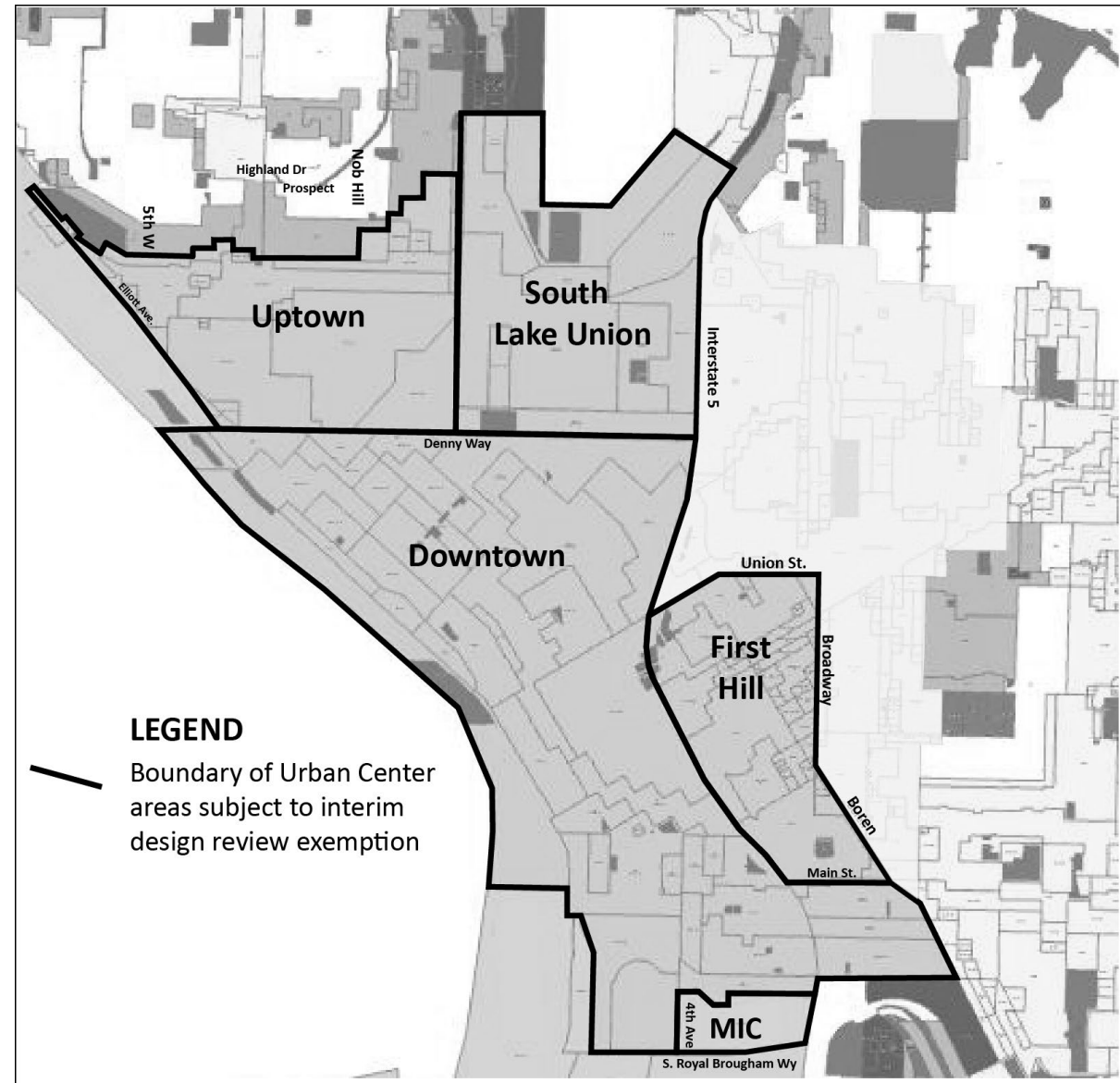
# Proposal

- Exempt new development proposals from the Design Review process
- Interim legislation: in place for 3 years
- Downtown, Uptown, South Lake Union, First Hill, and a portion of Duwamish MIC adjacent to Downtown (map on next slide).



# Geography

- Mostly along Urban Center boundaries
- First Hill is a subarea of First Hill/Capitol Hill U.C.
- “MIC” (Greater Duwamish Manuf./Industrial Center) subarea is north of Royal Brougham Way and east of 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. S.
- Excludes Pioneer Square, Chinatown/I.D., Pike Place Market Districts (no Chapter 23.41 Design Review)



# Eligible uses and proposed flexibility

- Eligible: Residential, hotels, mixed-use projects\*, Research/Development laboratory uses (\*At least 50% floor area in residential and hotel uses)
- Designs may deviate from minimum development standards per SDCI administrative review
- Comparable to departures given by the Design Review process

# Subjects of code and design flexibility

Upper-level setbacks, modulation, façade openings, width	Common indoor recreational and amenity areas
Street/façade setbacks	Outdoor open space: area and other details
Floor-to-floor height at street level	Landscaping: area, dimension, locations
Rooftop screening and coverage limits (mech, energy, elevator enclosures)	Vehicle access to parking, loading, utility spaces
Street-level use type, depth, and % presence	Vehicle access route slopes, dimensions
Façade transparency, blank façades	Parking space size requirements
Overhead weather protection	Bicycle parking minimum quantities

# Early vesting point, like Design Review

- Vesting determines the codes that apply to the project
- Vesting date at “letter of eligibility” as long as permit application package filed within 90 days
- Approach is like the “early design guidance application” date for Design Review projects



# Public Notice provisions

- Proposal includes public notice for all eligible projects:
  - Land Use Information Bulletin
  - Large white sign
  - Mailed notice
  - 14 day comment period

See code section [23.76.012](#)



# Questions?

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