



City of Kirkland
Planning and Building
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MEMORANDUM

To: Planning Commission

From: Allison Zike, AICP, Deputy Planning Director
Adam Weinstein, AICP, Planning & Building Director

Date: October 16, 2024

Subject: Houghton Park & Ride Zoning Code Amendments Briefing

Recommendation

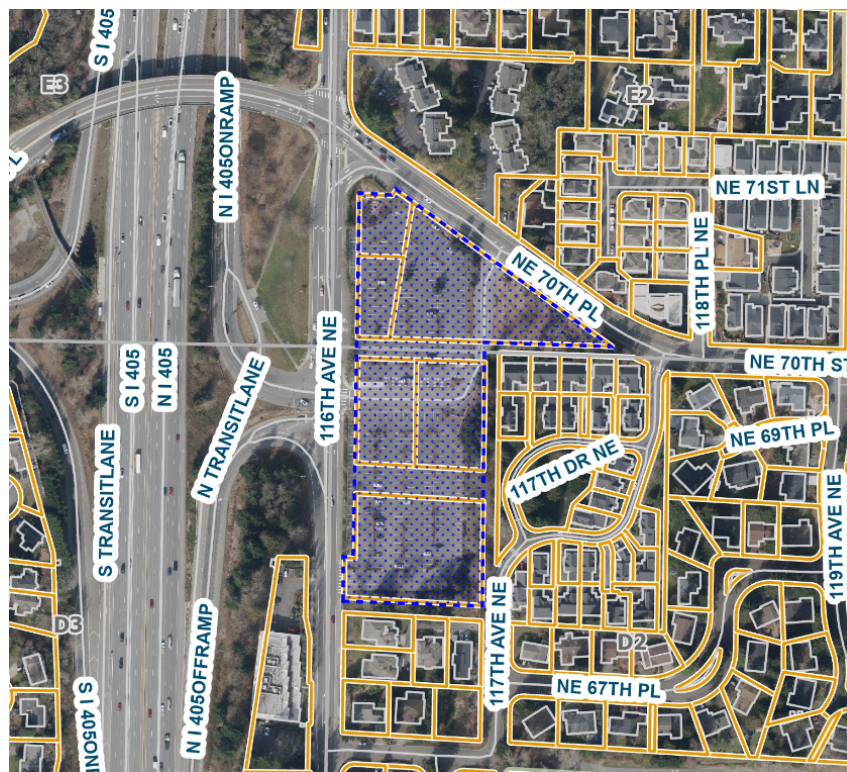
Receive a briefing and hold a study session to discuss the Houghton Park & Ride Zoning Code Amendments. Provide staff with direction to continue preparing the draft Houghton Park & Ride Zoning Code Amendments prior to a Planning Commission (PC) public hearing.

Background

The City purchased the Houghton Park & Ride property in 2023 with the express intent of it becoming an aquatic, recreation, and community center for the entire City had Kirkland Proposition 1 passed in the November 2023 general election. As the proposition failed to pass, the City is now considering other options for the property.

The City's policies and codes regulate allowed uses and intensities on any specific property by applying two distinct designations: a land use designation, and a zoning district. A land use designation is a policy-level designation, set forth on the City's official Land Use Map included in the Comprehensive Plan, and it reflects the predominant use appropriate for an area. A land use designation does not establish specific development standards for specific uses (e.g., maximum allowed height, bulk and mass limitations, parking standards). Those specific standards are established by the zoning district applied to a property. Zoning districts, and their respective development standards, are required to comply with the underlying land use designation, and it is typical for the City to amend the land use designation of a property (or properties) before it amends the specific zoning district or development standards for the property (though these processes can be completed concurrently).

The subject property is located in the Bridle Trails Neighborhood, and outlined in the figure below.



In December 2023, City Council adopted an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map that changed the land use designation of the Houghton Park & Ride property from Low Density Residential to Transit Oriented Development (TOD). This amendment was initiated by the City upon purchase of the property, in recognition that the highest and best use of the property in the future would be a higher intensity use that would provide benefit to the community. The amendment was supported by an existing adopted policy in the Bridle Trails Neighborhood Plan: Policy BT-8: At the Houghton Park and Ride, encourage future transit-oriented development (TOD) that includes pedestrian connections within the site and to adjacent streets.

The TOD land use designation has been applied throughout the City in areas that have good access to (or have opportunity for) quality transit service, and the zoning districts associated with the TOD land use allow a wide range of uses such as residential, commercial, retail, recreational, and civic uses. At the time the land use designation was changed, Planning Commission and Council discussed that the future zoning for this site should allow for more dense development than the current zone and should also specifically allow for recreational facilities. The change in land use designation was not accompanied by related zoning code amendments to update development standards for the property, but developing such standards for the property is a task on the 2024-2026 Planning Work Program¹.

¹ https://www.kirklandwa.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/1/planning-amp-building/work-programs/adopted_2024-2026-planningworkprogramfeb20-2024.pdf

Kraken Iceplex Proposal

In early 2024, at Council's direction after they concluded not to proceed with a ballot measure for a pool facility at the Park & Ride, City staff began exploratory conversations with the Seattle Kraken professional hockey team related to their proposal for a potential Iceplex facility at the Houghton Park & Ride. The Kraken proposal includes construction of a City community center on the second floor of the Iceplex that would be operated by the Parks and Community Services (PCS) Department. Just as importantly, the Kraken proposal assumes the entire facility will revert to City ownership and operation once the dept service the building is paid. Land use and zoning decisions should be made with the long-term ownership by the City as a key consideration. Additional details related to the Kraken's proposal, the City's evaluation of the potential community benefits, and a negotiation framework were discussed at the following Council meetings (meeting materials linked in footnotes):

- September 17, 2024 Council Meeting²
- August 7, 2024 Council Study Session³
- May 21, 2024 Council Study Session⁴

At their September 17, 2024 meeting, Council passed Resolution R-5645 (see Attachment 1) authorizing the City Manager to begin negotiations with the Seattle Kraken. The community benefits envisioned by the Council are included in the resolution.

Site Considerations for Code Amendments

Ahead of the PC's consideration of any further Land Use or Zoning amendments for the property, staff is providing the following initial considerations for future development of the subject property:

- The Houghton Park & Ride site is quite large relative to other vacant properties in the City, which makes it particularly well-suited for uses that require larger footprints;
- Residential uses near the south and a portion of the east property line are separated from the site by unopened rights-of-way, and other portions of the property frontage fronting NE 70th place are significantly separated from the neighbors, which will aid in mitigating potential bulk and mass impacts of future development;
- The elevation of the subject property is approximately 10 feet lower than adjacent residential uses to the east, which will also aid in mitigating potential bulk and mass impacts;
- The site has direct access to the highway; it is reasonable to assume that many vehicles accessing the site would come directly from I-405 rather than utilizing city surface streets;
- Currently, the site is not well-served by frequent transit. If more intense residential or employment were developed on the property, consideration would need to be given to improve transit to/from this location;

² https://www.kirklandwa.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/1/city-council/agenda-documents/2024/september-17-2024/9b_business.pdf

³ https://www.kirklandwa.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/1/city-council/agenda-documents/2024/august-7-2024/3a_study-session.pdf

⁴ https://www.kirklandwa.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/1/city-council/agenda-documents/2024/may-21-2024/3a_study-session.pdf

- Planning Commission and Council have previously discussed that while housing is a very important need in Kirkland, placing housing (especially affordable housing) directly adjacent to the highway should be avoided in lieu of placing other uses in those locations due to potential impacts of noise and emissions on residents; and
- While not within the boundaries of the NE 85th Street Station Area Plan, the property is within a 10-minute walk of the boundary and could contribute towards catalyzing redevelopment in the station area.

Potential Zoning Code Amendments

As Planning staff has continued to evaluate the subject property, additional consideration has been given to the appropriate zoning designation for the property. At this time, given the City's interest in a community facility within a potential Kraken Iceplex facility, the most appropriate zoning designation for the site could be the Park zone, which is the zoning applied to other similar sites including community recreational facilities.

In the future, the City could consider designating the northern portion of the property as a different zone once a WSDOT easement restriction over that specific area is released. This could enable future consideration of that portion of the property for other transit-oriented uses such as residential or commercial development.

Next Steps

At conclusion of this briefing with the PC, staff will proceed with steps to continue the public process for a potential rezone. This will include placing public notice signs on the subject property, mailing legally required public notices, and conducting engagement with nearby residents. Staff anticipates scheduling a public hearing to collect public testimony on the rezone in late 2024 or early 2025.

Attachments

Attachment 1 - Resolution R-5645: Establishing a Guiding Framework for Negotiations between the City of the Kirkland and the Seattle Kraken Professional Ice Hockey Team Related to a Kraken Iceplex and City Community Center at the Former Houghton Park and Ride Site