



City of Kirkland
Planning and Building
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MEMORANDUM

To: Planning Commission

From: LeAndra Baker-Lewis, Senior Planner
Allison Zike, AICP, Deputy Planning & Building Director
Adam Weinstein, AICP, Planning & Building Director

Date: April 9, 2025

Subject: JBD 4 Zoning Code Amendments Briefing #2, File No. CAM20-00676 and
North Juanita Center Zoning Code Amendments Briefing #2, File No.
CAM24-00910

RECOMMENDATION

Planning Commission (PC) should receive a briefing and hold a study session to discuss options for development standards which will apply to the JBD 4 and North Juanita Center Kirkland Zoning Code (KZC) Amendments. The PC should provide staff with direction to finalize the draft zoning code amendments for the JBD 4 zone, and for the subject properties within the North Juanita Neighborhood Center (zoned BC 1) using a refined list of PC-preferred development standards discussed at the April 24, 2025 meeting.

The PC should focus on the following questions for discussion while reviewing the memorandum and attachments:

1. What are the PC-preferred options for development standards for the JBD zone and the North Juanita Center study area (zoned BC 1)? Note: Commissioners should be prepared to discuss their preferred option for *each* individual development standard.
2. Does the PC wish to have an additional briefing to review refined KZC amendments prior to a public hearing?
3. Does the PC have any questions or concerns about increasing the maximum height for the Fire Station 24 parcel within the BC 1 zone, adjacent to the North Juanita CAR study area?

BACKGROUND

The City is continuing to evaluate zoning amendments which respond to two Community-Initiated Amendment Requests (CARs) submitted by property owners within the Juanita neighborhood, Karl Pettersson and BRFII Kirkland LLC (Balboa Retail Partners). The zoning amendments will increase residential and commercial capacity within the two project study areas to allow mixed-

use development consistent with the Comprehensive Plan policies within the Juanita Neighborhood Plan¹. Policies J-16 and J-20 emphasize increased residential intensity and mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented development within the Juanita's neighborhood centers. The supportive policies support access to neighborhood-serving amenities, as well as improved active transportation opportunities and increased connectivity. They also highlight the importance of scale-sensitive design, community gathering spaces, and safe, efficient access for all.

PC Feedback from Briefing #1

At their meeting on March 13, 2025², the PC was briefed on the project timeline for these amendments, staff's recommended public engagement plan, and an overview of anticipated KZC amendments. The PC directed staff to prepare a range of options for each applicable development standard (e.g., height, lot coverage, etc.), applying to each study area, for the PC to consider at the April 24 briefing. The PC inquired on how vehicle circulation would be handled across both properties within the zone, particularly due to the already challenging intersection and traffic congestion. There was mixed feedback on parking minimums, with some Commissioners supporting reductions and others worried about insufficient parking and the effects on nearby uses and properties. Interest in hearing the developer's approach to parking was expressed. Enhancing pedestrian movement at both sites was noted, and the PC had a desire for each project to explore opportunities for through-block pedestrian connections and public access to nearby goods, services, and amenities. Commissioners want to better understand how the buildings within each study area will be compatible with the neighborhood and how the massing will be regulated to reduce visual impacts. It was noted that regulations should promote design(s) with thoughtful architectural and human scale, while not overly inhibiting future redevelopment. Concerns were raised about the proposed massing and density within the JBD 4 zone, some commissioners expressed worries about traffic congestion and vehicular access challenges, especially within the JBD 4 zone.

It was also mentioned that one or both projects could serve as a good opportunity for a pilot project, suggesting they could be used to explore new, innovative planning approaches toward achieving the vision and goals of Kirkland's 2044 Comprehensive Plan.

Community Outreach and Feedback to Date

Staff has completed their initial phase of community outreach as described in the March 13, 2025 meeting packet. Local stakeholder engagement has included:

- Presentation and Q&A with the Juanita Neighborhood Association;
- Presentation and Q&A with the Kirkland Alliance of Neighborhoods;
- Presentation and Q&A with the Finn Hill Neighborhood Alliance;
- Postcards sent to nearby residents and businesses of each location (2,577 total); and
- Discussions with Lake Washington School District and Juanita Elementary staff.

¹ www.kirklandwa.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/2/planning-amp-building/neighborhood-plan-updates/juanita-neighborhood-plan/final_12f_juanita-neighborhoodplan.pdf

² <https://kirklandwa.primegov.com/Public/CompiledDocument?meetingTemplateId=3169&compileOutputType=1>

Since initiating the zoning amendment phase of these CARs in 2025, themes of public feedback include:

- Apprehension surrounding traffic impacts on existing residents and neighborhoods due to new development;
- Questions about general infrastructure capacity with added development;
- Uncertainties of adverse environmental impacts to wetlands and streams within the JBD 4 zone;
- Concern for potential conflicts with school capacity;
- Identification of potential conflicts with Juanita Elementary drop-off/pick-up congestion at the North Juanita Center study area;
- Support for more housing variety in the neighborhood;
- Excitement surrounding additional retail options and community gathering opportunities; and
- Disappointment with the potential loss of large, established retailers in the City (Michael's and Goodwill).

This recent feedback is consistent with extensive community input captured through the 2044 Comprehensive Plan update process, conducted from 2023 through 2024. See the Juanita Public Comments³ and the Juanita Community Survey Results and Executive Summary⁴ documents for general feedback related to the Juanita Neighborhood in its entirety. Many public comments received through the Comprehensive Plan and Juanita Neighborhood Plan updates were in direct response to the JBD 4 and North Juanita Center proposals. While recent comments should continue to be considered by the PC, it should be noted that more recent comments have not necessarily raised any new themes based on those heard during the Comprehensive Plan process.

Staff Note on Capacity and Vehicular Traffic Concerns

As the PC reviews proposals that have generated public concern about traffic and infrastructure capacity, it's important to understand how the City evaluates transportation concurrency and manages these impacts.

Concurrency is a requirement of the State Growth Management Act (GMA), which establishes that new development can only proceed if the transportation system can support it as measured through level of service (LOS) standards. LOS standards must be met either through existing system capacity, or with funded improvements or programs that will be in place within six years. Kirkland's multimodal LOS standard includes two components:

³ www.kirklandwa.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/3/planning-amp-building/neighborhood-plan-updates/juanita-neighborhood-plan/all_publiccomments_juanita_august302023-may232024.pdf

⁴ www.kirklandwa.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/1/planning-amp-building/neighborhood-plan-updates/juanita-neighborhood-plan/juanita_survey_summary_01082024.pdf

1. Evaluating vehicle delay at key intersections (measured by LOS); and
2. Citywide multimodal Level of Service (MMLOS), which measures how many “person trips” (across all modes—driving, walking, biking, transit) the system can support.

Each development of the size and type requested by the Juanita property owners is tested for concurrency at the time of permit application (i.e., when there is a specific development proposal submitted to the City). During this City review, staff analyze whether existing and planned transportation projects in the City’s adopted 6-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) provide sufficient capacity to support the additional trips the new development would generate (beyond the trips currently occurring from existing development). If the added trips from a proposed project would push the system beyond adopted LOS standards, the developer must revise the project, contribute to necessary infrastructure improvements, or wait until the City provides additional capacity. This ensures growth is aligned or “concurrent” with transportation investments and protects against significant declines in travel conditions and unacceptable delays on our street networks.

This process is not static - concurrency is continuously monitored and adjusted as part of the City’s long-range planning practices, including updates to the Comprehensive Plan and Transportation Strategic Plan. Both long-range plans were updated in 2024 and consider the full requested land use capacity for JBD 4 and the North Juanita study areas within their modeling. Additionally, the City’s CIP is updated annually, which is when the priority for any given project can be adjusted (e.g., to respond to new information related to specific development timelines).

Through the long-range planning process, concurrency-related capital improvement projects have been identified for intersections adjacent to each study area for the trip growth anticipated over the 20-year planning horizon (including the subject requests). While these capital improvement projects are not solely triggered by the development of the Juanita sites, as properties citywide move forward with redevelopment and submit permit applications, City staff will evaluate the proposals against the transportation concurrency level of service standards in place as described above.

More detail on Kirkland’s concurrency process, including LOS details and how capacity is calculated and tested, is provided in the Attachment 1, Transportation Concurrency Overview memo prepared by Public Works staff and presented to the City Council at their September 3, 2024 meeting.

Interdepartmental Coordination

Staff is working closely with the City’s Public Works and Fire departments to ensure KZC amendments are consistent with citywide projects and objectives. Through conversations, it was determined that there is a desire to increase the allowed height for the BC 1 parcel directly to the west of the North Juanita Center study area (Goodwill site), at Fire Station 24. The Fire Department intends to increase training abilities at this station for our emergency responders and need to use taller, towered structures to do so effectively. The site already operates in tandem with the Goodwill site for access through the north portion of each property, currently allowing vehicular traffic from commercial uses to exit via an established Fire Access lane. With redevelopment, the sites will likely continue to share and co-regulate this space to allow Fire

Department vehicle access to the Fire Station 24 property from 100th Avenue NE. For these reasons, staff recommends increasing allowed height at Fire Station 24 from 35 feet to 50 feet.

Future Community Outreach and Public Engagement

The staff-recommended public engagement plan includes another upcoming phase of engagement comprising of social media announcements, e-mail blasts, follow-up in-person meetings with the most relevant neighborhood groups, and required public noticing indicated in KZC 160. As the PC deliberates on how the project timeline moves forward, it should be noted that an accelerated timeline would mean considerably less time and staff-ability to coordinate with neighborhood groups and attend meetings. As an alternative, the PC may consider directing staff to conduct a streamlined form of this second engagement phase, which could include advertisement of the draft zoning code amendments and the promotion of the public hearing via more flexible and quicker engagement channels (i.e., digital messaging and announcement to neighborhood association chairs for distribution instead of in-person staff presentations).

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

As requested, staff has prepared a range of options for development standards in the JBD 4 zone and the North Juanita Neighborhood Center study areas. The range of options for the JBD 4 zone is described in Attachment 2. Option ranges for the study area within the North Juanita Neighborhood Center, zoned currently as BC 1, are available in Attachment 3.

Considerations for Attachments 2 and 3

Attachments 2 and 3 are tables examining the range of staff-recommended options for each applicable type of development standard (e.g., height, lot coverage) in the JBD 4 and North Juanita study areas, respectively. There is a column titled "Request" which reflects each property owner's proposed standard, if applicable. The PC should review the standards proposed in this column and consider them as additional or alternative development standard possibilities. The staff-recommended development standard ranges are provided in Columns "Option A" through "Option C", and are generally listed from most-to-least restrictive (or least-to-most flexible). Where the property owner requests are determined incongruent with staff-recommended options or citywide goals, that analysis has been recorded in the "Notes" column of the tables. While many development standard options include a staff recommendation where a clear preferred approach has been identified by staff, some standards do not have staff recommendations. Standards without a staff recommendation are those where additional analysis is being conducted to finalize a preferred method or process for regulating the standard, recognizing that some or all of the options could be employed to accomplish the objective of the standard.

Staff is recommending adding new, independent use lines for larger-scale mixed-use developments including housing units and commercial uses for which these ranges would apply. This means that any increases to standards would not alter allowances for the existing, permitted uses in each zone (e.g., stand-alone offices, retail, etc.).

Development Standards Examined

Staff assessed a plethora of development standards to examine alternatives for implementing policies J-16, J-20, and others. The following standards were assessed, and ranges were provided that considered received community and PC input:

- *Uses, Ground Floor Requirements, and Pedestrian-Oriented Street Standards:* These standards govern how much commercial space is required at street level and how uses are oriented, influencing vibrancy and street activation. They also regulate how buildings interface with the public realm, such as fronting streets and facilitating pedestrian access. Ranges provided aim to designate pedestrian-oriented streets for the purposes of adding new requirements for public improvements (e.g., sidewalk widths, street furniture). A strict requirement may secure commercial activity but risks vacancy if market demand isn't present; flexibility could support viability. For both sites, these development standards combined will regulate which uses (residential or commercial) are allowed along the frontage of all intersecting arterials, and to what extent.
- *Density, Building Height:* Staff recommends removing minimum lot sizes and using other regulations, such as height, required yards, and others to set a maximum development intensity. Removing density limits (e.g., a maximum number of units per acre) and increasing height maximums aligns with Juanita Neighborhood Plan policy guidance to encourage mixed-use development, and will require attention to design standards to avoid unintended bulk impacts. Property owners for the North Juanita Center study area are requesting the City consider a minimum density for the study area of 70 units per acre. The minimum density requirement would be applicable not to any particular phase of development within the area, but would apply to the entire study area upon complete redevelopment.
- *Height Transitions between Uses, Vertical Definition from ROW (upper-story step backs), Horizontal Modulation and Façade Length:* Because the Comprehensive Plan encourages a variety of different uses and building heights in our neighborhood and urban centers, the buildings' sizes will vary widely across the city and within our commercial areas. To achieve a more harmonious relationship between uses, and to enable a welcoming pedestrian experience at these locations, design techniques should be required to achieve architectural and human scale. The regulations in the Zoning Code related to scale require that project architects address the issues of human and architectural scale while providing a wide range of options to do so.
- *Parking and Transportation:* Reduced parking minimums are requested for both JBD 4 and the study area within the BC 1 zone. If the PC wishes to explore parking pilot project as previously discussed, allowing property owners to set minimum standards for parking (while recognizing that future developers will aim to build parking that is aligned with market demand), staff recommends exploring the minimums proposed by each property owner.

Kirkland actively collaborates with King County Metro (Metro) and Sound transit, and the Transportation Strategic Plan outlines many of the ways each entity works together to promote high quality transit service. Both locations are served by all-day routes which provide connection opportunities to many other activity centers within Kirkland and

beyond. Additionally, Metro Flex⁵ operates in the Juanita service area, which includes Juanita, Finn Hill and parts of Totem Lake from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on weekdays to provide on-demand transit service at an affordable rate. Since Metro uses population and density to plan additional routes and increased frequency, increasing residential capacity in Juanita comes with the opportunity for enhanced transit service in the future.

- *Public Benefits:* Pedestrian access and public open space requirements are also examined in Attachments 2 and 3. To ensure the policy direction and vision of the Juanita Neighborhood Plan is implemented, the JBD 4 zone and the North Juanita Center study area should have development standards that ensure that increased connections for pedestrians, opportunities for community gathering space, and a variety of welcoming, accessible commercial spaces for neighborhood-serving retail are provided.
- *Land Use Buffer Requirements, Required yards (setbacks), Lot Coverage:* Staff did not have a wide range of options for these development standards, as the existing requirements are generally aligned with the property owner requests. Small increases to lot coverage maximums are recommended by staff for both sites.
- *Affordable Housing:* The City's adopted inclusionary zoning requirements will continue to apply to both projects and staff has recommended amendments to the Kirkland Zoning Code definition "Affordable Housing Unit" to require a deeper level of affordability for owner-occupied units to apply at these sites.
- *Signs:* Staff-recommended sign categories generally align with regulations for the city's neighborhood centers and mixed-use areas. Sign area is regulated differently for residential use and commercial use, and KZC 100 regulates developments containing uses with more than one sign category.
- *High Performing Building Standards:* Kirkland Zoning Code Chapter 115 regulates standards for High Performing Buildings. As the KZC has been updated for the City's neighborhood centers, requirements for High Performing Buildings are often adopted to reduce energy use in buildings and move towards decarbonizing the built environment (the most recent examples of adding requirements High Performing Building standards were with the capacity increases adopted in the NE 85th St. Station Area and the Bridle Trails Neighborhood Center). Benefits to occupants and the general community include healthy indoor air quality, pollution reduction, decreased water consumption, and a lower cost of living for residents.
- *Review Process:* Both sites should be subject to design regulations and design guidelines as described in Juanita Neighborhood Plan policies J-16 and J-20.
- *Other Applicable Standards:* The PC should note that existing standards related to Shoreline Management, Critical Areas protection, Tree Retention, and Landscaping will continue to apply to all projects, and are not proposed to be amended.

⁵ <https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/metro/travel-options/metro-flex>

NEXT STEPS:

At the April 24, 2025 PC study session, staff will present ranges for each development standard described above, describe the property owners request, if applicable, and ask the PC for direction on what standards and amendments should be included and not included in the draft code presented at the next meeting. By the end of the study session, the PC should be prepared to give direction on whether another briefing is warranted, or whether the next meeting on this topic should be a public hearing.

If the process directed is to move on to the public hearing, KZC amendments in legislative mark up format for the JBD 4 Zone and for the subject properties within the North Juanita Neighborhood Center will be presented to the Planning Commission at the public hearing, including the preferred development standards (or ranges) directed by the PC.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Concurrency Overview Memo to City Council, September 2024
2. Table of Development Standard Ranges for the JBD 4 zone
3. Table of Development Standard Ranges for the study area within the BC 1 zone