



CITY OF KIRKLAND
PLANNING AND BUILDING
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MEMORANDUM

To: Kurt Triplett, City Manager

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

Date: November 21, 2025

Subject: Houghton Village Development Plan Adoption

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council (Council) approves Ordinance O-4915 adopting the Houghton Village Development Plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- The City purchased the Houghton Village property in 2022 to help realize the Council's vision for potential public purposes, such as affordable housing, school space, non-profit program space, neighborhood shops, arts and cultural space, and/or City recreational program space.
- Beginning in 2023 and through 2024, the City conducted extensive engagement with the community at large to provide Council with community objectives and/or concerns for redevelopment of the Houghton Village property.
- The proposed Houghton Village Development Plan uses the final Council-directed Development Framework as a foundation, with added sections to govern future administration of the Plan. Adoption of the Plan will allow proposals consistent with the Plan to develop up to 5 stories on the Houghton Village property. The Plan is valid for 10 years unless extended by a future Council following another public hearing.
- Council held a public hearing on the Development Plan at the November 18, 2025 meeting.
- Adoption of the Plan will allow development applications to propose 5 stories of development if they are consistent with the Plan, but adoption of the Plan does not compel any future property owner to use the Plan. Under current regulations, even with adoption of the Plan, future applicants retain three options.
 - (i) Develop up to 3 stories without a development plan. Developing in compliance with the Development Plan is required only for development to exceed 3 stories.
 - (ii) Propose a major modification to the adopted Development Plan if their proposal is not within the flexibility thresholds allowed via a minor modification. A major modification must be approved by Council after community input, including a public hearing.

- (iii) Apply for a new development plan to reach 5 stories if their proposal is substantially different than the adopted Development Plan. A new development plan would require Council approval after a public hearing.

BACKGROUND:

The City purchased the Houghton Village property in 2022 to help realize the Council's vision for potential public purposes, such as affordable housing, school space, non-profit program space, arts and cultural space, neighborhood shops, and/or City recreational program space. Beginning in 2023 and through 2024, the City conducted extensive engagement with the community at large, including adjacent and nearby property owners, community organizations and neighborhood associations, and City boards and commissions, in order to provide Council with feedback regarding community objectives and/or concerns for redevelopment of the Houghton Village property.

In December 2023, Council authorized the City Manager to initiate a development plan process for the Houghton Village property to accomplish public benefits in alignment with Council's goals for purchasing the property. To complete that work, the City issued a Request for Qualifications in early 2024 and selected Seattle-based design firm Mithun, with subconsultants Transpo Group and EcoNorthwest, to design a development plan for Houghton Village. Council first reviewed the draft Development Plan at its January 7, 2025 meeting,¹ where Council provided staff with direction to finalize a Development Framework. The Development Framework includes site plans, building massing diagrams, potential programming layouts, design guidelines, zoning considerations, and recommendations from the market analysis.

Council reviewed the proposed final Development Framework, which is the foundation for the broader Development Plan, and a high-level overview of the draft Development Plan at its November 5, 2025 meeting.² Council held a public hearing for the Development Plan at its November 18, 2025 meeting.³

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

Development Plan Purpose

As discussed in previous memorandums, Policy EV-8 (renumbered from EV-10 in the 2044 Comprehensive Plan update) from the Everest Neighborhood Plan chapter of the Comprehensive Plan establishes that development at the Houghton Village site can be allowed up to 5 stories with approval of a Development Plan (previously referred to as a Master Plan) by Council after "opportunities for public participation." There is no definition of what public participation should be. The Council has interpreted it to mean broad community engagement, including the years of public outreach mentioned previously, encouraging public feedback through multiple City Council meetings, the comprehensive website that includes all relevant documents and presentations, and finally holding a public hearing on the draft plan.

¹ https://www.kirklandwa.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/1/city-council/agenda-documents/2025/january-7-2025/3a_study-session.pdf

² https://www.kirklandwa.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/1/city-council/agenda-documents/2025/november-5-2025/9d_business.pdf

³ https://www.kirklandwa.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/1/city-council/agenda-documents/2025/november-18-2025/6a_public-hearings.pdf

Allowing development up to 5 stories will more closely align the Houghton Village property with the maximum height allowed in most other neighborhood centers throughout the City. An adopted Development Plan could be utilized by the City if Council decides to pursue development of the Houghton Village property with a partner. In addition, a developer could utilize the Development Plan (and comply with the standards therein) if property ownership changes in the future. Adoption of the Development Plan will help to streamline any future applications to redevelop the site, and it will also clarify for the community the expectations for public benefits and the scale of future development. It should be noted that adoption of the Development Plan does not compel or guarantee future redevelopment of the site.

Additionally, adoption of the Development Plan does not compel any future property owner to use the subject Plan. Under current regulations, even after adoption of the Development Plan, future applicants retain three options.

- (i) Develop up to 3 stories without a development plan. Development in compliance with the development plan is only required for development to exceed 3 stories.
- (ii) Propose a major modification to the adopted Development Plan if their proposal is not within the flexibility thresholds allowed via a minor modification. A major modification must be approved by Council after a public hearing.
- (iii) Apply for a new development plan to reach 5 stories if their proposal is substantially different than the adopted Development Plan. A new development plan would require Council approval after community input, including a public hearing.

Council Public Hearing

Council held a public hearing on the proposed Houghton Village Development Plan on November 18, 2025. The public testimony reflected a range of opinions about the Development Plan, both from people that were generally supportive of the Plan and those who expressed concerns about the Plan concepts. The summarized comments below aim to be inclusive of the themes expressed:

- Strong support for more housing, especially affordable housing;
- Desire for more housing in walkable areas;
- Mixed opinions on parking and traffic, with some support for reducing or eliminating minimum parking requirements, and some concerns about more traffic and parking challenges with more intensive uses;
- Calls to focus on space for community-oriented uses;
- Mixed opinions about the 5-story height, with some people concerned about the compatibility of 5 stories with the surrounding neighborhood and some people supporting more height for more housing opportunities; and
- Some comments related to the City's ownership of, and market interest in, the property (this was not a subject of the November 18 hearing).

Development Plan Contents

The Development Plan contents were summarized in the November 18, 2025 Council memorandum,⁴ and the full Plan is included as Exhibit A to proposed Ordinance O-4915. Staff made one revision to the Plan following Council's November 18 discussion, when a majority of councilmembers requested that the minimum parking requirements in the Plan match those set forth in adopted State Senate Bill (SB) 5184. Notably, these requirements must be adopted

⁴ https://www.kirklandwa.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/1/city-council/agenda-documents/2025/november-18-2025/6a_public-hearings.pdf

citywide by January 2027. This revision effectively lowers the required parking for development consistent with the Plan at this time, with knowledge that these same lowered requirements will be adopted citywide by January 2027.

Future Zoning Code Change

Consistent with previously adopted development plans, reference to the adopted Houghton Village Development Plan and the related ordinance will need to be added to Kirkland Zoning Code (KZC). For this plan, the amendment will need to be to Chapter 35 KZC, in the HENC 1 standards for allowed height. The new zoning code language will be concise and substantially like the following statement: *“The allowed height of development is 5 stories, if an applicant is utilizing the approved Houghton Village Development Plan, adopted by Council Ordinance.”* Following the November 18 Council direction, a reference to the parking minimums adopted in the Development Plan will also be added to the HENC 1 zoning chapter, using language similar to that described for the height allowance.

Proposed Ordinance O-4915, in Section 2, directs the City Manager to transmit the Zoning Code changes necessary for these HENC 1 actions to Council for a Council public hearing no later than March 3, 2026. These Zoning Code amendments are tentatively scheduled for Council consideration in January 2026.

NEXT STEPS:

Following Council adoption of the Houghton Village Development Plan, the Plan will be available for utilization if a development applicant submits a proposal to the City for review. Staff expects to bring the Zoning Code amendments that reference the Plan to Council for a public hearing and consideration in January of 2026.

ATTACHMENTS:

Ordinance O-4915, Adoption of The Houghton Village Development Plan
Exhibit A – Houghton Village Development Plan