

Issues & Impacts

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A quarterly publication produced by Seattle King County REALTORS® to inform members about current issues and successes within the Government Affairs Department.



Councilmember Sawant's Rent Control Bill Dies

In July, SKCR helped squash rent control legislation sponsored by outgoing Seattle City Councilmember Kshama Sawant by a 6-2 margin.



Because Washington State prohibits any regulation of the amount of rent a landlord can charge, the ordinance would go into effect only if the state prohibition were repealed. If that happened, the ordinance would freeze rent increases between the time of the repeal and 18 months after. At that point, the ordinance would establish maximum annual rent increases that would apply to all rental housing. The ordinance also would establish a rent control commission made up of district rent control boards, who would hear petitions for exemption from the maximum annual rent increase.

SKCR worked with our partners in the rental housing community to defeat this legislation. We helped educate councilmembers about the failed experiences of cities that have instituted rental control (like New York and San Francisco) as well as the role rental housing plays in homeownership.

In addition, we helped organize media briefings so that the press had access to the property owner's perspective on rent control.

The final vote was Kshama Sawant and Tammy Morales voted yes; Deborah Juarez, Sara Nelson, Alex Pedersen, Dan Strauss, Andrew Lewis, and Lisa Herbold voted no. Teresa Mosqueda was absent.

Councilmember Lewis Slows Legislation



In late August, Councilmember Lewis introduced legislation that would impose significant limits on personal guarantees and security deposits associated with commercial lease agreements.

While the bill applied only to commercial property, SKCR viewed it as an opener to commercial rent control and a reduction in property rights. We coordinated with Commercial Brokers Association (CBA), Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA), and Commercial Real Estate Development Association (NAOIP) in opposition to the proposal.

At the last minute, Councilmember Lewis canceled a committee meeting at which the legislation would be heard. While we do not know the timing, we expect it to come back and will be ready to engage.

SKCR believes rent control in any form is poor public policy.

Tukwila Approves Annexation to PSRFA

Residents in the City of Tukwila voted during the August primary election to fully annex Tukwila's fire department into the Puget Sound Regional Fire Authority (PSRFA). The vote was 55.84% in favor, and 44.16% opposed.

Since January 1, 2023, Tukwila has contracted for fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) with the PSRFA. This voters' approval in August expanded on—and made permanent—a long term relationship that had already existed between Tukwila and Puget Sound Fire. One of the key differences is that the city of Tukwila will now have three voting governance board seats on the fire authority beginning in January 2024.

Puget Sound Fire serves the cities of Covington, Kent, Maple Valley, SeaTac, Tukwila, and fire districts #37 and #43. Kent City Councilmember Les Thomas—who serves as the Chairperson of the Fire Authority Governing Board—



said, “Over the past several years, Puget Sound Fire and the Tukwila Fire Department have partnered extensively, including training together in the South King County Fire Training Consortium, joint entry-level firefighter recruitment and testing, specialty teams and recruit firefighter academy training. Our firefighters have previously work seamlessly together on emergency scenes. This part-

nership will now continue, and the Governance Board sees this as an excellent opportunity to continue long-term effective fire and EMS services to the Tukwila community.”

Under state law, voter-approved regional fire authorities have their own taxing district (and their own property tax base). They are also entitled to collect a voter-approved “fire fee.” As such, property tax revenues previously used by cities to pay for fire services are freed-up for other purposes.

Seattle Finally Passes Drug Legislation

Following a failed attempt in June to align the city with state law (recently passed with bipartisan support) prohibiting illegal drug possession and use in public and enabling the city attorney to prosecute violations as gross misdemeanors, the Seattle City Council has passed an ordinance by a vote of 6-3 (Sara Nelson, Alex Pedersen, Lisa Herbold, Andrew Lewis, Dan Strauss and Council President Debora Juarez voting yes; Tammy Morales, Teresa Mosqueda and Kshama Sawant voting no).

The legislation considered in June failed 5-4, after Andrew Lewis changed his stated position and voted against the bill.

The revised bill establishes an oversight committee and encourages police to prioritize diversion and treatment over arrest.

According to Councilmember Sara Nelson, Seattle was the last jurisdiction in the state to align its drug possession laws with state law.

“New Construction Pipeline” Adds Housing

In South King County, a significant “pipeline” of new housing supply projects is coming to the market, and Seattle King County REALTORS® will continue to be very active in monitoring the progress, and working to ensure the supply reaches the market expeditiously:

Covington

Lakepointe MPD

We anticipate the first 1,500 certificates of occupancy will be issued next year, and we will be active supporters of bringing those additional housing units to market as quickly as possible.

Black Diamond

Lawson Hills MPD

Lawson Hills, Black Diamond’s second Master Planned Development—which SKCR has been supporting since 2009—has finally broken ground for infrastructure, and construction has begun on the fire station. Previously (in connection with the companion Ten Trails MPD) opponents filed unsuccessful appeals during the build-out. If that happens with Lawson Hills, we will seek to oppose meritless claims, and advocate for the hundreds of new homes to be built expeditiously.

Mountain View Preliminary Plat (Ten Trails MPD, Phase 1)

Clearing and grading at the Mountain View plat is nearing completion as construction of infrastructure begins under a Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance that was issued June 7. There are no sensitive areas, or sensitive area buffers, located within the project site which consists of 54.65 acres that will be divided into 261 lots, and constructed in phases.

Plans for the project include:

- 233 single-family residential lots that will range in size from 1,040 SF to 6,930 SF, with

an average lot size of 2,829 SF, providing for a variety of attached and detached units.

- 25 multi-family lots
- 3 commercial lots will comprise approximately 220,000 SF, with 180,000 SF of retail space and 40,000 SF of office space. A portion of the office space includes a location for a new city campus.
- Approximately 3.61 acres of open space will be provided in tracts within the proposed subdivision, which will consist of a neighborhood park, open space trails, and landscape uses.

Federal Way

Middle Housing in south Federal Way

We will continue to be available to assist Councilmember Jack Dovey and his colleagues identify opportunities to add “Gentle Density” and “Middle Housing” south of Downtown. In addition, the city plans additional development—a new public market, housing, etc.—on vacant land adjacent to the new Performing Arts and Events Center.

Maple Valley

The City has conceptual and legal approval for a New Downtown on one of the last large undeveloped parcels of land in the city. After 4 years of planning and deliberation, the Council adopted development and design guidelines, and the multi-year moratorium on development was lifted July 5. SKCR will continue to monitor this “New Downtown” project closely as it begins to come-out-of-the-ground in 2024. The City’s new “Downtown” will offer housing, retail, commercial, civic uses, and public open space connected by trails.

The Bridges: Annexation Moving Forward

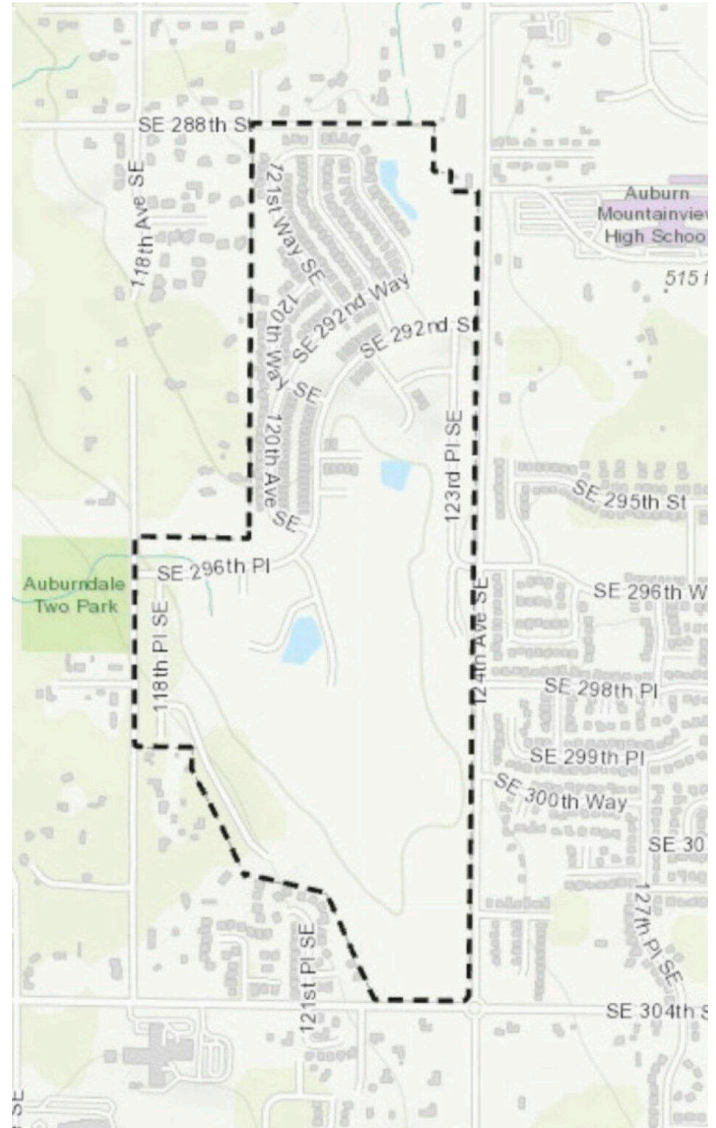
The Auburn City Council is moving forward with Resolution 5736 in order to trigger several procedures and actions designed to result in The Bridges being annexed into the city of Auburn on January 1, 2024. The Bridges is a partially built out enclave of 386 homes in the city of Kent, but it is totally surrounded by the City of Auburn.

For several years, the cities of Auburn and Kent have been discussing the possibility of making The Bridges part of the city of Auburn. The legal process to accomplish that result would require the city of Kent to “de-annex” the property, and for the city of Auburn to “annex” The Bridges into Auburn. Transferring the property from Kent to Auburn has been stymied due to several unresolved issues.

In January 2022, Auburn city staff identified a list of questions and issues that needed to be resolved. Over the next eight months, city staff from both Kent and Auburn worked to address the issues, including attending The Bridges National Night Out event, and encouraging residents to participate in a survey to help the cities understand how residents view annexation of The Bridges into Auburn. Approximately 1/3 of the households completed the survey, which disclosed that more than 2/3 of the residents either supported the annexation into Auburn, or were indifferent. Then, in November of 2022, the Bridges HOA voted unanimously in favor of The Bridges becoming part of the City of Auburn.

With that background as a basis to move forward, the city staffs began preparing an “Initiating Resolution” and an “Interlocal Agreement” for both cities to approve. The documents specify how assets (such as roads and utilities) will be transferred to Auburn, as well as plans for the management of open permits, code enforcement cases, custody of public records, etc.

In addition, an annexation application has been prepared for review by the King County Bound-



ary Review Board, which conducts a public process to allow airing of any concerns as required under state law. This annexation of The Bridges into Auburn will result in a taxing district and service shift from the Puget Sound Fire Authority (PSF) to the Valley Regional Fire Authority (VRFA). PSF will experience a loss in revenue while VRFA will experience an increase in demand. Even so, city officials indicate both fire authority agencies are supportive of the an-

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nexation. Additionally, the County Assessor will also need to adjust the tax rates in the affected area. It also ensures that King County Elections is equipped to modify voting districts to reflect the change (e.g. in 2024 residents of the Bridges should be voting for City of Auburn officials and initiatives instead of City of Kent officials and initiatives).

In anticipation of adding The Bridges area to the city, Auburn staff have worked on the development of comprehensive plan and zoning amendments so that there will be land use controls in place if annexation is to occur. Those comprehensive plan and zoning amendments are currently included in the Auburn 2023 Comprehensive Plan annual docket of amendments.

Prior to the end of the year, the City of Kent will also consider action on a resolution that concludes the annexation process. In the meantime:

- Auburn and Kent will jointly submit applications to the King County Boundary Review

Board (BRB), triggering a process that allows special taxing districts to be notified and to participate in the annexation process. The BRB will either invoke jurisdiction, or not. If the Board does not invoke jurisdiction, the process will take 45 days and conclude on November 13. If the Board does invoke jurisdiction, the process will take 120 days. Invoking jurisdiction would preclude the ability to have the annexation go into effect on January 1, 2024.

- Auburn staff will introduce comprehensive plan land use designation recommendations to the Planning Commission, which will hold a public hearing. The City Council will also likely consider the matter before the end of the year.
- The City of Kent is also expected to hold a public hearing and consider final action to complete annexation, enact the ILA, and transfer assets and records to Auburn.

Sign Code Updates

Woodinville

The City of Woodinville is contemplating amendments to its sign code that would affect real estate signage. A staff draft would sharply limit the use of open house A-Boards from the current allowance of six down to one.

It is early in the process, and we have time to drive a solution. To that end, if you represent buyers and sellers in Woodinville, we would welcome your help in reaching out to planning commissioners and the city council to convey to the city that real estate signage is critically important. Hearing from you, Woodinville constituents, will be important and compelling to the city.

Our goal is to guard against any changes that would constrain the use of on-premises for sale signs and off-premises open house A-boards. Please contact us for more information and/or to get involved.

Carnation

As reported in the last Issues and Impacts, SKCR has been working with the Carnation City Council as it considers amendments to the sign code that would address ongoing sign clutter on Tolt Avenue, through downtown Carnation.

Following outreach from SKCR and member Michael Wyman, the city has tabled the issue and will reassess whether to pursue sign code amendment in December.

Maple Valley Adopts Guidelines for Downtown

After 4 years of planning and deliberation, the Maple Valley City Council has voted to adopt Design Standards and Guidelines for a new “Downtown” on one of the last two remaining large parcels of land in the city. City officials say the new “Downtown Maple Valley will reflect the area’s heritage and deliver exceptional access to local businesses, residential neighborhoods, the Legacy Site, and regional attractions.”

On July 5th the city also lifted a multi-year moratorium on development that was in place while the city sought and received recommendations from a Downtown work group, received hundreds of public comments, and had the Planning Commission deliberate and make recommendations on development standards and guidelines. The moratorium also remained in place during 14

City Council meetings and 5 City Council study session meetings.

According to city officials, the standards and guidelines developed over the last four years will help to create a new Downtown Maple Valley “with its own sense of place, welcoming the entire community and providing a vibrant mixed-use destination that connects citizens and visitors of all ages.” According to the city, the new Downtown neighborhood will be “a walkable and bikeable Downtown mix of public space and mid-rise buildings, including businesses that promote the artistic, cultural and entrepreneurial spirit of the city’s residents. Additionally, Downtown will offer retail, commercial, housing, civic uses and public open space supported by unrivaled trail connectedness.”

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Seattle King County REALTORS® (SKCR) is working to ensure that public policies support homeownership and your business's bottom line.

Please contact Taylor Shanaman, Director of Governmental and Public Affairs, at tshanaman@nwrealtor.com with any local legislative issues that may need our attention.

The next issue will be released in January 2024.