



A recent link in [Sightline](#) highlighted an article on [Writing Sustainable Neighborhood Code in CrossCut](#) (seattle/norwest-based public media), **illuminated not only an innovative community stakeholder “roundtable” initiative that is blazing a trail in implementing new sustainable neighborhood code and regulation reform, but a larger initiative to transform land use in Seattle. As such it’s worth watching.**

Highlights follow:

### **Highlights (see document links following these highlights):**

Neighborhood development reform measures linked to creating new jobs (2,400).

Reforms embraced community input through an informal six-month roundtable process “of interested parties to come up with ...[a range of] Code updates...[:] backyard cottages, revised approaches to multifamily development, parking requirements, street-level retail, and other arcane elements of urbanist lore.”

[Reforms] mesh with a March 2011 City Council resolution adopting guiding principles for strengthening and growing Seattle’s economy and creating employment opportunities.

Current recommendations are ... an early stage of the roundtable’s work, and [a first step]...towards further revisions to the Land Use Code.

Proposals evince some sense of today’s urbanism agenda — a move away from prescription and favoring implementation of tweaks, clarifications, and small expansions of certain non-traditional housing, business, and multi-modal transportation initiatives already under way.

Longer term issues [will be addressed] in ... pending revisions to Seattle’s Comprehensive Plan...mandated by the Growth Management Act and championed through a dynamic update process recently launched by the Department of Planning and Development and the Planning Commission.

The ... goal is broad and ambitious: to help Seattle residents live closer to where they work. The starting place is to simplify and update the city’s Land Use Code, what Sightline’s Eric de Place calls “making sustainability legal.”

This broader effort is ... a frank recognition of traditional land use dilemmas in the City and a move towards contemporary land use regulatory approaches focused less on incremental brush wars and more on holistic and sustainable tools implemented elsewhere. Examples of this new approach, ...are form-based codes, citywide transit-oriented development policies, and ongoing integration of transportation, land use, and underlying natural systems.

**Key elements of the current recommendations** now out for public review and comment are as follows:



## Sustainable Neighborhood Code? Watch Seattle!

- Encourage Home Entrepreneurship, ...embrac[ing]the assumption that the home-based business is an incubator for new ideas which create jobs.
- Change State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Implementation to Avoid Redundant Review and Provide Amended Review Thresholds. Which brings us back to the jobs theme at the press conference. As announced, this SEPA aspect of the proposal could result in 40 new construction projects with 100 to 250 units each year. The Seattle Building Trades Council estimates that 2,400 direct jobs in skilled construction trades could be created through such measures.
- Concentrate Street-Level Commercial Uses in “P-Zones,” [and don’t require them in other districts]
- [Allow] Mobile Food Vending/Temporary Uses more extensively.
- Enhance the Flexibility of Parking Requirements, ...recogniz[ing] recent debates over the cost of parking, ... [and] the premise that as Seattle’s transit service improves, demand for on-site parking will shrink.
- Allow Small Commercial Uses [as in small corner stores] in Multifamily Zones, ... acknowledg[ing] the trend towards re-establishing the small corner store amid the urban fabric. Historically, residential zoning has often been an impediment to locating such small commercial uses close to where people live.
- Expand Options for Accessory Dwelling Units.

### **Links to related documents follow:**

Mayor and Council Joint [Announcement](#) of Regulatory Reform under banner of local job creation.

Seattle Times [article](#) on the announcement.

Seattle’s Comp Plan [Dynamic Update Process](#) (all things Comp Plan)

The recommendation — [detail](#) and [summary](#) (director’s report).