



Director
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February 2, 2016

Dear Councilmember Johnson,

We request that you introduce legislation that would remove requirements on abutting lots passed by Council last year as part of the omnibus legislation and codified in [Section 23.41.004](#) of the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC).

There are three reasons we're asking for a change here:

1. The change is a change in policy, adding a new requirement for design review where one didn't exist before. The omnibus is usually a technical clean up of the code, not a vehicle for substantive shifts in City policy;
2. The change is, as we pointed out when the legislation passed, not resulting in *more* design review but in *fewer* housing units. In one case, a builder is now considering building a project with only three units instead of six because an abutting lot was permitted first; and
3. There is a serious evaluation of design review currently underway, and any issues with abutting lots and development should be part of that consideration and legislation.

The second point above is perhaps the most nettlesome issue the City faces with design review; because it is onerous and costly there is a huge incentive to avoid it when possible. Added costs from extended design review increase costs that passed on to renters and buyers. That's bad for affordability. And as has been pointed out, when land is underdeveloped to avoid design review it is bad for the city as a whole, reducing supply and resulting in bigger, more expensive housing units.

We ask that you propose an amendment to the text of the Land Use Code striking the aforementioned subsection. If needed, this amendment could be part of legislation on design review that is part of the evaluation of that program. Either way, we'd like action in the first half of this year.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Roger Valdez
Director