

CITY OF SEATTLE

ORDINANCE _____

COUNCIL BILL _____

..title

AN ORDINANCE relating to land use and zoning; temporarily suspending and allowing voluntary design review of proposed development in Titles 23 and 25 of the Seattle Municipal Code, consistent with Chapter 333, Laws of 2023; and relating to Design Review for affordable housing; extension of temporary regulations established by Ordinance 126854, for an additional six months, to allow continuance of an exemption of housing projects that meet Mandatory Housing Affordability requirements using on-site performance units from Design Review.

..body

WHEREAS, on October 18, 1993 the City Council adopted Ordinance 116909, establishing a

Design Review program; and

WHEREAS, the City Council intended for the Design Review program to encourage better

design and site planning to: help new development enhance the character of the City and

sensitively fit into neighborhoods; provide flexibility in the application of development

standards to meet the intent of the Land Use Code, City policy, neighborhood objectives,

and mitigate the impacts of new development on neighborhoods; and promote and

support communication and mutual understanding among applicants, neighborhood, the

City, and the community of the future development early on and throughout the

development review process; and

WHEREAS, Engrossed Substitute House Bill 1293 (Chapter 333, Laws of 2023) added new

requirements for local design review programs starting June 30, 2025; and

WHEREAS, the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) is working on

permanent legislation to amend the Design Review Program to comply with Engrossed

Substitute House Bill 1293 and to respond to the stakeholder and public engagement

recommendations, including reducing design review requirements and design review

1 permit review times to promote housing production and thereby reduce housing costs in a
2 time of great need in the City and region; and

3 WEHREAS, SDCI is also working on updates to the Seattle Design Guidelines and Design
4 Guidelines for Downtown Development to make project design and permitting simpler to
5 promote housing production and reduce housing costs; and

6 WHEREAS, this proposed interim ordinance makes the Design Review Program voluntary for
7 six months to give Seattle additional time to comply with Engrossed Substitute House
8 Bill 1293; and

9 WHEREAS, by making the Design Review Program voluntary, the proposed ordinance will
10 decrease permit review times to promote housing production and reduce housing costs at
11 a time of great need in the City and region; and

12 WHEREAS, in July 2023¹, the City adopted temporary affordable housing Design Review
13 regulations through Ordinance 126854, with an effective date of August 12, 2023, and an
14 expiration date of August 12, 2025, to exempt housing projects that meet Mandatory
15 Housing Affordability (MHA) requirements using on-site performance units from Design
16 Review, adopting a work plan; and

17 WHEREAS, this proposed ordinance will renew the temporary affordable housing Design
18 Review regulations; and

19 WHEREAS, the Design Review exemption for projects that meet MHA requirements using onsite
20 performance units resulted in a marked increase in the overall number of performance
21 units. In 2023, prior to the MHA onsite exemption, a total of 119 MHA performance units
22 were in service. From the adoption of the MHA onsite exemption through April of 2025,

¹ [CB 120581 - Signed Ordinance 126854](#)

an additional 211 onsite performance units have been proposed. This Design Review exemption pilot has shown its potential to more than double MHA onsite performance units; and

WHEREAS, this proposed interim ordinance, in concert with a forthcoming permanent ordinance, seeks to mitigate displacement in the long-term by increasing housing production and reducing housing costs; and

WHEREAS, SDCI evaluated the environmental impact of the proposed ordinance, prepared a threshold determination under the State Environmental Policy Act, and sought public comment on the ordinance; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF SEATTLE AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Section 23.41.004 of the Seattle Municipal Code, last amended by Ordinance 127100, is amended as follows:

23.41.004 Applicability

* * *

F. Interim suspension of required design review for all proposed development

1. Notwithstanding any contrary provision of this Title 23 and Title 25, including but not limited to Chapters 23.40, 23.41, 23.42, 23.45, 23.47A, 23.48, 23.49, 23.57, 23.58B, 23.58C, 23.60A, 23.61, 23.73, 23.76 and 25.05, 25.11, 25.16, 25.20 and 25.22, required design review is temporarily suspended for all proposed development.

2. Applicants of proposed development that is being reviewed pursuant to the full, administrative, or streamlined design review process as of the effective date of this ordinance may elect to continue review under the design review process or remove the proposed development from the design review process. Applicants of all other proposed development may

1 elect, at any time during the effective period of the ordinance, their proposed development be
2 reviewed pursuant to the full, administrative, or streamlined design review process.

3 2. The provisions of this subsection 23.41.004.F shall be in effect for six months
4 after the effective date of this ordinance.

5 Section 2. The interim development regulations set forth in Section 1 of this ordinance
6 shall be in effect for a period of six months from the effective date of this ordinance and shall
7 automatically expire after the six month period unless the same is extended as provided by
8 statute, or unless terminated sooner by the City Council.

9 Section 3. The City Council may renew these interim regulations for one or more six-
10 month periods in accordance with RCW 36.70A.390.

11 Section 4. The City Council makes the following legislative findings of fact and declares
12 as follows:

13 A. The Council incorporates by reference the findings of fact contained in Ordinance
14 126854.

15 B. In July 2023, the City Council passed, and the Mayor signed Ordinance 126854,
16 establishing affordable housing Design Review regulations to allow for temporary exemptions
17 for housing projects that meet Mandatory Housing Affordability requirements using on-site
18 performance units from Design Review, and allowing permit applicants for all housing subject to
19 Full Design Review the option of complying with Design Review pursuant to Administrative
20 Design review; amending Section 23.41.004 of the Seattle Municipal Code; and adopting a work
21 plan.

22 Section 5. The affordable housing Design Review regulations first set forth in Ordinance
23 126854 shall be extended for a period of six months from the date this ordinance becomes

effective, and shall automatically expire after the six-month period unless extended by action of the City Council, or unless terminated sooner by the City Council.

Section 6. This ordinance shall take effect as provided by Seattle Municipal Code Sections 1.04.020 and 1.04.070 or June 30, 2025, whichever is later.

Passed by the City Council the _____ day of _____, 2025,
and signed by me in open session in authentication of its passage this _____ day of _____, 2025.

President _____ of the City Council

Approved / returned unsigned / vetoed this ____ day of _____, 2025.

Bruce A. Harrell, Mayor

Filed by me this _____ day of _____, 2025.

Scheereen Dedman, City Clerk

(Seal)