

URBAN DESIGN—HEIGHT, BULK AND SCALE

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

This section summarizes the height, bulk and scale impacts of the EIS alternatives. The affected environment discussion describes current Downtown zones and development patterns, as well as City policies and zoning regulations pertinent to height, bulk and scale issues.

Background on Downtown Zones and Development Patterns

The existing height, bulk and scale characteristics of development in the Downtown zones have emerged over the course of Downtown's development history as each new generation of buildings responded to changing functional and economic demands, development regulations, building technologies, and architectural design. To address height, bulk and scale issues associated with new development, Downtown policies promote a development pattern that balances retention of existing character with the need to accommodate additional growth and a higher density of development. This balance varies within Downtown in response to the special conditions and development objectives of different areas.

Height limits and density limits are the principal regulations that affect height, bulk and scale. The general concept guiding the application of these limits calls for containing the most intensive (tallest and bulkiest) development in an office core area that roughly extends from Yesler Way to Lenora Street between I-5 and Second Avenue, omitting the retail core. Permitted height and density generally tapers down along the edges of this core area, and the downward tapering continues outward to the perimeter of Downtown to provide a transition with the lower scale of development in the waterfront and neighborhoods adjacent to Downtown.

The following summarizes height, bulk and scale characteristics of these areas. See Appendix I for additional information about current characteristics and past development patterns.

Downtown Office Core 1 (DOC 1) Zone

The DOC 1 zone accommodates the greatest concentration of office use and highest employment density within Downtown and the region, while encouraging other uses to add diversity and extend activity beyond the workday. The DOC 1 zone currently has a maximum height limit of 450 feet and a maximum density limit of 14 FAR—allowing the tallest and most dense development within Downtown. Additional height, up to 20% above the 450-foot limit (to 540 feet), may be allowed for projects that meet special development standards. The height and density limits in DOC 1 reinforce a development pattern that concentrates the greatest mass of buildings in a corridor served by I-5 and the transit tunnel. The characteristic scale of development in the area has already been established by numerous large projects; many of these are built on full-block sites created by past alley vacations. While the first generation of skyscrapers Downtown, such as the Smith Tower, Hoge Building and Alaska Building, occurred just beyond the southern edge of DOC 1, the zone has since accommodated the greatest share of Downtown high-rise commercial development.

Downtown Office Core 2 (DOC 2) Zone

The DOC 2 zone is intended to accommodate the expansion of concentrated office development from DOC 1 into adjacent areas, while providing a transition in density between DOC 1 and less-intensive mixed-use areas. The DOC 2 zone is primarily for commercial office uses with a mix of other activities

encouraged to add diversity, particularly beyond the hours of the workday. By accommodating a relatively high density of office use, this zone helps to reduce pressure for major office development in the retail core and adjacent mixed-use and residential areas, while also providing a transition in scale and density between adjacent areas and the denser development of the DOC 1 zone.

The DOC 2 zone currently has two height districts: a maximum height limit of 300 feet north of the commercial core, primarily in the Denny Triangle and a small portion of Belltown, and a 240-foot height limit at the southern edge of the commercial core near Pioneer Square. Under special provisions, development is allowed to exceed these height limits by an additional 10%, and in a more limited area, 20%. The zone has a maximum density limit of 10 FAR for commercial uses. In the Denny Triangle, mixed-use and residential development can exceed the 300-foot height limit up to 30% (390 feet) through participation in the transfer of development credits (TDC) program.

DOC 2 300' zone (Denny Triangle). Much of the DOC 2 300' zone in the Denny Triangle is underdeveloped relative to what the zoning allows. A substantial area is occupied by surface parking lots, automobile dealership lots, and transportation facilities such as the Greyhound Bus Terminal and Convention Place Transit Station. These uses are at a scale of development essentially equivalent to vacant parcels. Other small-scale structures, including walk-up apartment buildings, lowrise motels, movie theaters and other small commercial buildings further contribute to the current low-intensity development pattern. The DOC 2 300' zone also extends one block deep along the Belltown neighborhood's southern edge abutting the retail core.

The emerging scale of development in the DOC 2 300' zone appears to be a combination of lower bulky structures like the convention center exhibition halls and Pacific Place retail galleria occupying sites of a block or more on the edge of the retail core, and towers built on smaller sites of a half-block or less. The new Federal Courthouse is a large full block development with a tower exceeding the 300' height limit, as well as a lower base structure and large plaza. Given the substantial number of underdeveloped parcels in the area and the potential for assembling large half- and full-block sites, it is reasonable to expect significant changes in the overall scale of development in the future.

In addition to the longer, rectangular blocks, the platting characteristics of the DOC 2 300' zone differ from those of the DOC 1 zone in that most of the north/south avenues are narrower. The longer, rectangular blocks, with the narrower avenue widths and greater distance between intersections, are likely to be perceived as a more enclosed street environment as the area becomes more intensely developed. A sense of this condition can be observed along 7th Avenue between Olive Way and Westlake Avenue, where recent high-rise projects line the street.

DOC 2 240' zone (southern edge of commercial core). The western portion of the DOC 2 240' zone includes several of Downtown's earliest large office towers, including the Hoge, Exchange and Dexter Horton Buildings, all of which exceed the current 10 FAR density limit that now applies in the zone. At 37 stories (487 feet), the Federal Office Building also exceeds the current 240-foot height limit. While much of the development in this western portion was built in the early decades of the Twentieth Century, this area also includes the zone's most recent project, the mixed-use Millennium Tower that was built to the maximum height and density limits allowed.

Relatively modest-scale City and County government buildings occupy most of the blocks in the area east of Third Avenue, although the two blocks along the hillside near I-5 are currently vacant. In general, existing development in the zone provides a transition between the high-rise, high-density commercial development in the DOC 1 zone to the north and older, lower-scale development in the Pioneer Square and International District Special Review Districts to the south.

Downtown Mixed Commercial (DMC) Zone

The DMC zone provides for a transition in the scale and intensity of development between the DOC 2 office core zone and adjacent neighborhoods north of Downtown, as well as the Denny Regrade/Belltown area to the west. The DMC zone also wraps around the western edge of the retail core (DRC) and DOC 1 zones to provide transition between the retail and office cores, the Pike Place Market and harborfront. The DMC zone is intended to: 1) permit office and commercial use, but at lower densities than in office areas; 2) support a mix of uses and accommodate a varied scale of development; 3) encourage housing and other uses generating activity without substantially contributing to peak hour traffic; and 4) promote development diversity and compatibility with adjacent areas, primarily through a range of height limits. The portions of the DMC zone included in this analysis have height limits of 125 feet, 160 feet and 240 feet. Generally, the mapping of these height districts establishes the transition in scale desired between the taller structures in the Downtown office core and the lower scale of development in adjacent neighborhoods.

The DMC zone extending north of Virginia Street and along the northern edge of the Denny Triangle separates the DOC 2 300' office core zone from Belltown and the South Lake Union/Cascade neighborhoods. This portion of the zone is platted with long rectangular blocks. This area today could be characterized as "underdeveloped," with many blocks occupied by surface parking lots, car dealerships, motels and other more automobile-oriented activities. However, several commercial and mixed-use projects are proposed in the area, many on full-block sites, which will introduce a much greater intensity and scale of development. Recent development in the area includes the City of Seattle's West Police Precinct, a congregate care facility, and the Metropolitan North Office Building; all built substantially below the maximum height and density allowed. Projects with permits received or pending include the Touchstone project at 1000 Stewart Street and a redevelopment of the Frederick Cadillac site at 2300 Fifth Avenue. Both of these projects are large floor-plate commercial structures occupying full-block sites and about 14 to 17 stories in height. A mixed-use, residential and commercial project comprised of three towers is also proposed for the Quinton Instruments site at 2200 Westlake and Denny Way.

The portion of the DMC zone west of the DOC 1 office core zone and the retail core is platted with long, rectangular blocks north of University Street, and smaller square blocks (240-foot lengths) to the south. Blocks between Western Avenue and Alaskan Way are essentially the size of half-blocks platted without alleys. The old Federal Office Building occupies a full block interrupting the continuity of Post Alley. This area has a much more established development character, with bulky, relatively low height brick warehouse structures from the late 19th/early 20th Century occupying blocks along Western Avenue, and a mix of commercial structures occupying smaller sites stretching the length of First Avenue between Pioneer Square and the Pike Place Market. This area also includes the greatest concentration of designated landmark structures Downtown outside the special review districts and retail core. More recent developments in the area include the high-rise residential towers of the Newmark and Harbor Steps projects, the Seattle Art Museum, and Cornerstone's Waterfront Center, a combination of new and renovated mixed-use projects. While the height of much of the existing development is well below the permitted 160-foot and 240-foot limits, the high-rise residential towers reach the maximum height current zoning allows.

Existing Policies on Height, Bulk & Scale of Downtown Development

Policies in the Comprehensive Plan address several conditions related to the desired scale of development Downtown, as affected by allowances for height and bulk. In general, the policies specify that permitted height and bulk should achieve the following:

- Accommodate desired densities of uses and communicate the intensity and character of development in different parts of Downtown.
- Protect the light, air and human-scale qualities of the street environment, particularly in areas of distinctive physical and/or historic character; and

- Provide transition to the edges of Downtown to complement the physical form, features and landmarks of the areas surrounding Downtown.

Policy objectives include the following:

- A general tapering of height limits is desired from an apex in the office core downward to the perimeter of Downtown to provide transitions to the waterfront and neighborhoods adjacent to Downtown.
- Development standards are meant to guide the form and arrangement of large buildings to reduce shadow and wind impacts at the street level, promote a human scale and maintain a strong physical relationship with the pedestrian environment. In areas where consistency of building form is important to maintaining an identifiable character and function, building bulk is to be regulated to integrate new and existing development.
- The bulk of tall buildings is to be limited in residential areas to provide for light, air and views at street level and reduce the perceived scale of buildings.
- Development standards are to vary by district to reduce the impacts of large-scale buildings consistent with the desired scale and development pattern in the area.

Additional policies specifically related to height and scale in affected zones are as follows:

- **DOC 1.** Allow the highest density of commercial development Downtown, with development standards regulating building design to reduce adverse impacts, including impacts on sidewalks and other public areas.
- **DOC 2.** Provide for scale and density transitions to adjacent areas.
- **DMC.** Promote development diversity and compatibility with adjacent areas through a range of height limits.

Existing Downtown Zoning Measures Addressing Height, Bulk and Scale

The DOC 1, DOC 2 and DMC zones employ a variety of measures to address issues of development scale. While the FAR density limits on commercial use and the height limits help define the overall building envelope for development in these zones, additional measures that control building bulk include:

- 1) **property line setback limits** and **minimum façade heights** address street level conditions;
- 2) **building coverage limits** and **maximum façade widths** that apply to the upper level of development; and
- 3) **view corridor setbacks** in some DOC 1 and DMC locations.

Since residential use is exempt from the FAR density limit, the height limit and these development standards provide the only restrictions on the permitted scale and bulk of residential structures. Consequently, mixed-use and residential projects can be bulkier and potentially taller than commercial-only projects subject to the FAR limit.

TDR Program. Development incentives that influence the overall development scale in Downtown areas include the transfer of development rights (TDR) program, floor area bonuses, and height incentives. The TDR program allows the sale of unused development rights from a site to maintain desired conditions on that site, such as the preservation of an existing landmark or low-income housing structure. Once purchased, these development rights can be transferred to allow denser redevelopment on another site. The use of TDR is available to preserve existing landmark structures and low-income housing structures, as well as within-block TDRs to maintain a varied building scale within the same Downtown block, and to create new public open space.

Floor area bonuses. Floor area bonuses are another type of incentive allowing a project to gain additional floor area for providing certain desired public features on a project site, such as a plaza or parcel park. Development is also allowed to exceed the mapped height limit in DOC 1 and DOC 2 by as much as 20% as an incentive to design more slender structures and to provide either open space or lower-scale development at the base of a project. In addition to the intrinsic public benefit of preserving landmark buildings or low-income housing structures, or providing new parks and plazas, use of these incentives also contributes to a diversity of scale and architectural variety in densely developed Downtown areas.

Development standards and alley vacations. To some extent, existing development standards addressing building bulk in dense highrise structures also encourage large site assembly and alley vacations. Measures that encourage setbacks of upper floors to enhance the street environment constrain achievable floor sizes on half-block sites. This is also true of required setbacks along view corridors. To some extent, the alley vacation may be regarded as a tradeoff for measures employed to ensure adequate access to light and air along the more important public street environment. Generally speaking, office core developments with tower portions pulled back from the street have resulted in more comfortable conditions at street level than projects where tower facades rise uninterrupted from the street level.

Height, Bulk and Scale Characteristics of Recent Downtown Development

Within the study area, 17 projects with a total of 21 structures have either been completed, are currently under construction, or permitted since 2000. These projects were developed under the height, bulk and scale provisions of the current zoning code, and provide a good overview of the type of development currently occurring in the study area, as well as an indication of how the zoning has influenced that development. A more detailed description of the height, bulk and scale characteristics of projects developed under current zoning is provided in Appendix I.

IMPACTS

This section examines the potential impacts associated with zoning changes that would affect the permitted size and height of buildings, as proposed under the various alternatives. Under current zoning conditions, redevelopment of sites to accommodate taller, larger buildings is already allowed. The purpose of this analysis is primarily to assess the extent to which there may be additional impacts under the proposed changes, beyond those impacts associated with existing baseline conditions (e.g. Alternative 4 – No Action).

The height and size of structures affect the Downtown environment, and the public's perception of that environment, in several ways. Some of these impacts are relatively objective—taller bulkier buildings are more visible, they cast shadows over a larger area, and can contribute to a new scale of development that is considerably different than the established pattern in the area. Other impacts are more subjective and qualitative. Some of these impacts are addressed in City policies, which often seek to strike a balance between allowing bigger buildings to accommodate growth and maintaining the positive characteristics that contribute to the existing "feel" of the Downtown environment. To help achieve this balance, these policies have led to regulations intended to maintain compatibility between new projects and established development in an area, and to ensure a compatible relationship between development conditions in adjacent areas. Much of the discussion below evaluates the consistency between these policies and conditions expected to result from proposed changes under the various alternatives.

Alternative 1 – High End Height and Density Increase

By allowing taller, larger structures, changes to height and density limits would affect the height, bulk and scale of future Downtown development within the study area. These impacts interrelate with land use and urban design topics addressed in other sections of this EIS. For the height, bulk and scale topics, the impact discussion below is organized per the following outline:

Height

- ◆ Number of projected new buildings by height range
- ◆ How heights of new buildings relate to the zoning in the alternatives

Bulk

- ◆ Development density
- ◆ Site size
- ◆ Height and density relationships in zoning—how allowable bulk relates to allowable height in determining how buildings are designed in different parts of Downtown
- ◆ The patterns of “massing” of bulk in areas of Downtown due to future development

Scale

- ◆ Transition in allowable height and density between Downtown and adjacent areas
- ◆ Compatibility between new and existing development
- ◆ Effect on development diversity
- ◆ Effect on residential character of Downtown areas

Table 29 at the end of this section summarizes the height, bulk and scale impacts of the alternatives.

HEIGHT

Most of the study area was not subject to height limits prior to adoption of the Downtown Plan in 1985. In 1989, the height limits established by the Downtown Plan were reduced in the DOC 1 and DOC 2 300' zones under the CAP Initiative. Consequently, several existing structures exceed even the greatest increases proposed. Today, 12 buildings in the DOC 1 zone reach or exceed the current height limit of 450 feet, and seven of these also exceed the increase to 540 feet now allowed for projects meeting certain conditions. Five structures—Columbia Center/Bank of America Tower, Two Union Square, Washington Mutual Tower, Key Tower, and 1001 4th Avenue—exceed 585 feet, which is the greatest height increase proposed for DOC 1 in the EIS alternatives. In the DOC 2 300' zone, four structures exceed the current 300-foot height limits, and two of these—the Westin Hotel North Tower and Qwest Plaza—exceed 400 feet, which is the greatest height increase proposed for this zone in the EIS alternatives.

The EIS alternatives vary in terms of the number of additional tall buildings anticipated under proposed changes. Alternative 1 would establish higher height limits over more areas than the other three alternatives. Existing height limits also reflect current provisions that allow height increases above the mapped height limits under certain conditions, such as the 10% and 20% increases above mapped height limits allowed in DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones, and the additional height permitted for residential and mixed-use development through the Transfer of Development Credit (TDC) program in the Denny Triangle.

Alternative 1 would require fewer buildings to accommodate projected growth than the other alternatives, but would likely result in the greatest number of taller buildings. Table 26 below summarizes the possible

breakdown of future project heights, per an analysis of potential redevelopment for this EIS. The height of projected development under each alternative was estimated by analyzing the size of available redevelopment sites, the amount of floor area permitted on these sites under proposed density limits, and the number of floors, using standard floor sizes, that would be needed to accommodate this floor area under proposed height limits. Out of an estimated total of 55 future new structures in Alternative 1, approximately 36 structures (65%) would be more than 250 feet in height. This compares to 31 structures (55%) in Alternative 2, 28 structures (47%) in Alternative 3, and 26 structures (41%) in Alternative 4.

Table 26
Numbers of Projected New Buildings by Height Range

Height Range	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
0 - 150 feet	5	6	9	11
151 - 200 feet	5	9	9	10
201 - 250 feet	9	10	14	16
251 - 300 feet	7	5	9	12
301 - 400 feet	28	24	17	13
401 - 500 feet	0	1	1	0
Greater than 500 feet	1	1	1	1
TOTAL	55	56	60	63

Source: SPO, 2002

In the DOC 1 and DOC 2 office core zones, the FAR limit and size of development sites constrain the amount of commercial floor area in a project. Unless larger sites are created through alley vacations, most commercial-only buildings could accommodate permitted floor area in structures below the maximum height limits. Only seven sites are large enough (over 40,000 square feet) to allow an amount of floor area that would likely require a commercial-only structure to exceed current height limits. Because the height limits in DMC zones are lower than in office core zones, commercial-only structures would more likely extend to the height limits.

Denny Triangle would accommodate most new tall buildings. The greatest concentration of new tall buildings would likely occur in the DOC 2 zone in the Denny Triangle. In an area of about 20 blocks, 19 buildings with heights between 300 and 400 feet are projected, in addition to five buildings in this height range that have recently been completed, are under construction or permitted, and four existing structures built prior to 1990. The character of the area would substantially change over time and be largely shaped by this concentration of large, tall buildings of uniform height.

New tall buildings dispersed in Commercial Core. In the DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones of the central office core, only seven future structures would be expected to exceed 250 feet in height. More broadly dispersed in the area and adjacent to existing structures of equal or greater height, these projected structures would be relatively inconspicuous additions to the skyline.

New tall buildings concentrated on Edges of Belltown; dispersed on edges of Denny Triangle and Commercial Core. Another concentration of tall, primarily residential buildings in the 250- to 400-foot height range is expected along the southern edge of Belltown and northern edge of the Commercial Core between 2nd and 4th Avenues. Taller buildings would also likely be dispersed at locations on the northern fringe of the Denny Triangle and on the western edge of the Commercial Core between Seneca and Columbia Streets.

BULK

A structure's bulk is related to the size of the site it occupies and its volume—which is a function of the structure's height and coverage of the site from ground level to the top. Height and density limits affect bulk by determining how much floor area a building can contain and how that floor area can be distributed vertically. The spacing between structures, the degree of vertical and horizontal modulation in structures, and the balance of solids and voids in an area are all factors that influence the perception of bulk and contribute to the sense of whether an environment is comfortable or not. Furthermore, the bulk of new structures in relation to existing buildings influences perceptions of how well new development fits in with its surroundings. While these perceptions may be subjective, they are influenced by specific impacts attributable to bulk, including shadows and view reduction.

Development Density

The physical bulk of Downtown development is partly a function of permitted density. In the Downtown zones within the study area, development density is regulated for most commercial uses by a floor area ratio (FAR), while the density of other uses such as housing is only restricted by the height limit, setback standards and requirements for common recreation area. The commercial FAR is calculated as the ratio of a building's gross commercial floor area divided by the total lot area. For example, a building with 200,000 square feet on a 20,000 square foot lot would have an FAR of 10 (10 square feet of building floor area to every one square foot of lot area). For the purposes of this analysis, a floor area ratio is also calculated for residential and mixed use structures to allow comparison of the bulk of these structures to commercial structures subject to an FAR limit. The floor area calculations for these projects include the total floor area of all above-grade uses that contribute to the visible bulk of a structure, including those uses that are not regulated by FAR in the Code. For projects that include multiple structures on a site, the FAR reflects the combined floor area of uses in all structures on the site.

Among the alternatives, Alternative 1 would likely result in the fewest and generally the bulkiest projects. With proposed height and density increases, Alternative 1 is predicted to result in 39 developments with a total of 55 structures, including several projects sites with multiple structures (see Table 27).

The Land Use Code allows residential uses and some other uses (such as street-level retail) to be omitted from density limit calculations. These "exempted" uses can add to building bulk in mixed-use and residential-only developments, and would be a factor in the bulkiness of future development in the study area. Approximately 75% of the mixed-use and 60% of the residential projects are predicted to legally exceed the Land Use Code's maximum commercial density limits. This would be equivalent to approximately 15 projects with actual densities above 17 FAR or more. In the DMC zones where commercial-only projects would be subject to a maximum density limit of 10 FAR, residential and mixed-use projects could achieve actual densities in the 16 to 25 FAR range, depending on the height limit of the zone. In the DOC 2 zone where the commercial density limit would be 14 FAR, residential and mixed-use projects could approach actual densities in the 17 to 25 FAR range.

The analysis of Alternative 1 suggests that most residential development would occur in large residential and mixed-use developments. If market conditions dictate that fewer large-scale developments actually get built, then either a greater number of smaller developments would need to occur, or less housing would be accommodated in the study area.

Table 27
Potential Project FARs Achieved By Alternatives

	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Commercial (office/hotel)*				
0 - 5 FAR			1	
5.1 - 7 FAR	3	4	4	8
7.1 - 10 FAR	5	4	6	9
10.1 - 14 FAR	3	5	4	8
14.1 - 17 FAR	4	5	5	
Mixed Use(commercial/residential)				
0 - 5 FAR	1	1	1	1
5.1 - 7 FAR				
7.1 - 10 FAR	1	1	1	1
10.1 - 14 FAR	1	1	3	2
14.1 - 17 FAR		4	4	4
17.1 - 20 FAR	6	2	1	1
20.1 - 25 FAR	3	3	2	2
Residential				
0 - 5 FAR	1	1	1	1
5.1 - 7 FAR	1	1	1	1
7.1 - 10 FAR				1
10.1 - 14 FAR	2		3	
14.1 - 17 FAR	2	3	4	6
17.1 - 20 FAR				1
20.1 - 25 FAR	6	5	3	2
TOTAL PROJECTS	39	40	44	48

* For commercial-only projects, parking is assumed to be located below grade and not counted in FAR, except in the DMC zone adjacent to the harborfront. Exempted retail space is not included in calculations.

Site Size

Table 28 below shows the range of site sizes accommodating projected development. Larger sites are expected to continue to be attractive for future development. All of the alternatives show development on the same number of the largest available sites—typically a full block in size and mostly located in the Denny Triangle. These sites accommodate a significant share of the projected growth and are generally occupied by the largest structures. Projects built on large sites will have the biggest impact on development scale in an area, especially in the Denny Triangle, where the scale of such projects will be dramatically different from what currently exists. Most projects, however, are on sites of about a half block in size located throughout the study area. The smallest sites are generally assumed to be occupied by residential projects. While residential sites may be small, they can accommodate relatively large

structures, primarily because residential use is not subject to a density limit, which allows structures to extend to the height limit at maximum site coverage.

Table 28
Size of Potential Project Sites

Lot Area (square feet)	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Less than 15,000	4	4	5	5
15,000 to 30,000	17	17	18	20
30,000 to 45,000	9	10	12	14
45,000 to 60,000	1	1	1	1
Greater than 60,000	8	8	8	8
TOTAL	39	40	44	48

Height and Density Relationship

The relationship between height limits and maximum allowable density in the Land Use Code influences the shape of buildings. The size of the project site affects the amount of floor area allowed, and so also influences building volume and design.

Height limit in DOC 2 zone may result in bulkier buildings. Some Downtown stakeholders have interpreted that the existing height limit in the DOC 2 300' zone is too constraining for accommodating permitted density. In other words, to develop a building with the maximum amount of floor area allowed, the arrangement of building bulk is often "forced" into a lower, bulkier building envelope rather than allowed to spread vertically into taller forms that would allow more flexible design and a better distribution of building bulk.

Proposed height and density increases may not remedy the bulk/design issue. In the DOC 2 300' zone, Alternative 1's proposed height and density changes would represent a 33% increase in the height limit (300 feet to 400 feet), and a 40% increase in permitted density, from 10 FAR to 14 FAR. If the current relationship between height and density (bulk) is interpreted to result in bulky structures on large sites, the proposed changes may not remedy the situation. As a comparison, the existing 450-foot height limit of DOC 1 has also been criticized as too constraining for development built to the zone's existing maximum density limit of 14 FAR.

Effect of rectangular blocks. The larger rectangular blocks present in the Denny Triangle DOC 2 zone create potential for a greater amount of allowable floor area per block than could be achieved on smaller square blocks. If the height limits create the need for large floor sizes to accommodate the permitted density, this could also increase the perceived bulkiness of development in the area.

Additional bulk from residential and other "exempt" uses. Perceptions of excessive bulk could become more pronounced as more mixed-use and larger residential development occurs. Since residential use is exempt from floor area calculations, the actual FAR achieved in a project could be considerably greater than the maximum FAR limit proposed for commercial uses. If all floor area above grade is counted, including exempted parking and retail uses, recent residential projects in DOC 2 and DMC 240 zones already approach densities of 20 FAR, even though the existing density limit for commercial use is 10 and 7 FAR respectively. Under proposed changes, mixed-use and residential projects could achieve total above-grade density in the 18 to 25 FAR range in DOC 2, while commercial density would be limited to 14 FAR.

Increased bulk in DMC zones. In the DMC zones, the increased commercial density (7 to 10 FAR) may be difficult to accommodate in areas with lower height limits in the range of 165 to 225 feet. These areas are located on the northern edge of the Denny Triangle and western edge of the Commercial Core along First and Western Avenues. Even with the increased height, development in these areas would likely appear bulky, which could be an issue for "edge" locations abutting less intensive zones.

Massing

In the discussion above, the term "bulk" is generally used to refer to the shape and volume of individual buildings. For the purposes of this discussion, "massing" refers to the overall urban form resulting from the accumulation of new projects in an area—or the combined bulk of several projects. Massing not only refers to the volume of a particular building, but also considers neighboring buildings and the space between them. Figure 17 shows future massing scenarios based on the projected distribution of new development. A more detailed view of potential conditions under Alternative 1 is provided on Figure 18.

Emphasis on redevelopment in the Denny Triangle. The greatest concentration of new development is expected in the DOC 2 zone of the Denny Triangle, where increased height and density limits will accommodate larger buildings than currently allowed. Given the number of available sites in the area, redevelopment of a large portion of the zone is anticipated, with structures built consistently to the height limits and with many projects accommodating a mix of uses in multiple structures on the same site.

Shape of blocks in Denny Triangle may influence perception of bulk. Given the platting characteristics and the amount of new development projected for the proposed DOC 2 400' and DMC 340' areas of the Denny Triangle, future development in portions of these zones may be perceived as excessively bulky, as new buildings would line the street on both sides, limiting views out and reducing access to light. This condition would be most pronounced in the eastern portion of the Denny Triangle, where the width of rights-of-way bordering the longer dimension of the rectangular blocks is only 66 feet, compared to widths of 84 feet or more for Avenues in the DOC 1 zone. The narrower street width would increase the sense of enclosure created by new development lining the street. Also, the spacing of cross streets only occurs every 360 feet, compared to every 240 feet throughout most of the DOC 1 zone. Because of the longer blocks, the massing of development would be less frequently interrupted by the open area of street rights-of-way. These conditions would affect access to daylight, shadowing and the perceived sense of enclosure within the public street environment. Also, existing bulk regulations such as upper-level development standards would tend to push the bulk of structures toward the middle of the block. This may limit opportunities for mid-block spacing between structures that might otherwise interrupt masses of building bulk and allow more daylight into the street environment.

New development in commercial core dispersed among existing structures. Development within the DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones of the Commercial Core would likely be dispersed among existing high-rise structures, filling in the limited number of remaining sites with structures likely to be similar in scale to adjacent structures built when the zoning allowed greater height and density.

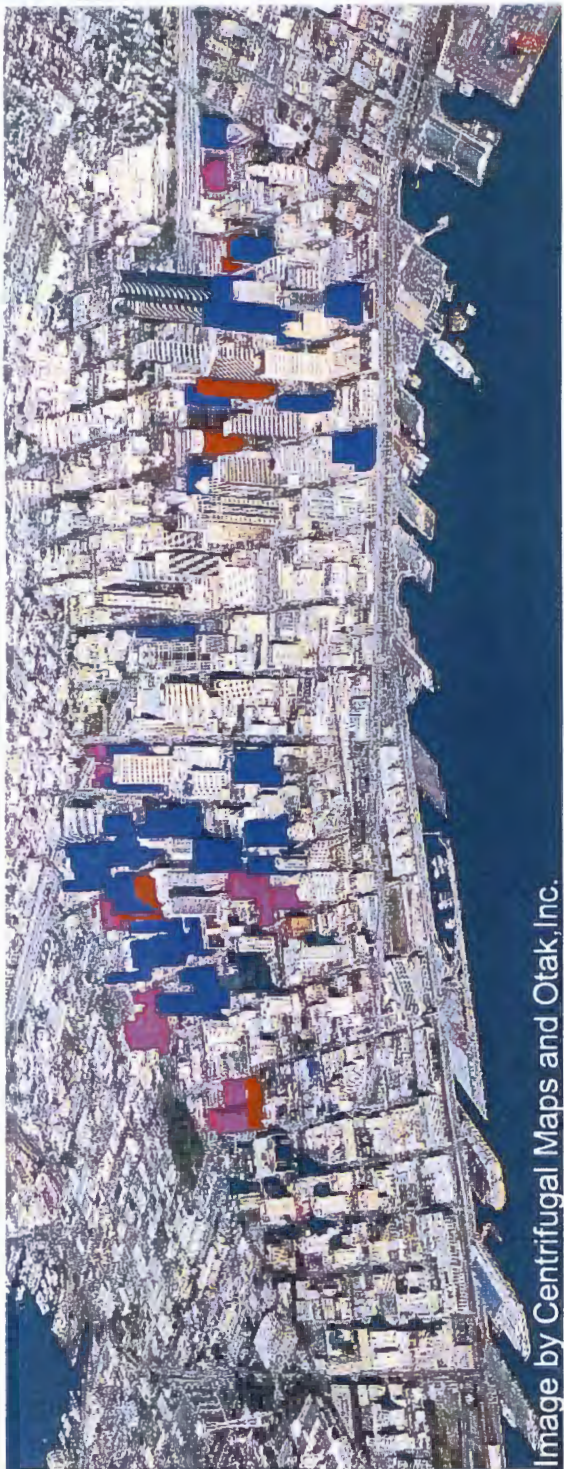
New development in DMC zone relatively dispersed except along edge of Belltown. In the DMC zones of the edges of the office core, future development would likely be dispersed, limiting the overall potential impacts associated with the greater bulk of individual new buildings. An exception may be the DMC zone on the edge of Belltown where a number of sites could be developed with residential structures. Since residential use is not subject to a density limit, these structures could be considerably bulky, a condition that would be much more strongly perceived if several such structures were concentrated in one area. In the DMC zone along the western edge of the Commercial Core, the relatively deep upper-level view corridor setbacks required along most east/west streets in the area help integrate the larger scale of development allowed with existing development.

Seattle Urban Design Impact Study

Figure 17

Potential Massing of Future Development
Under Four EIS Alternatives

Alternative 1. - High End Height and Density Increases



Alternative 3. - Residential Emphasis



Alternative 2. - Concentrated Office Core



Alternative 4. - No Action (Existing Zoning and Development Regulations)



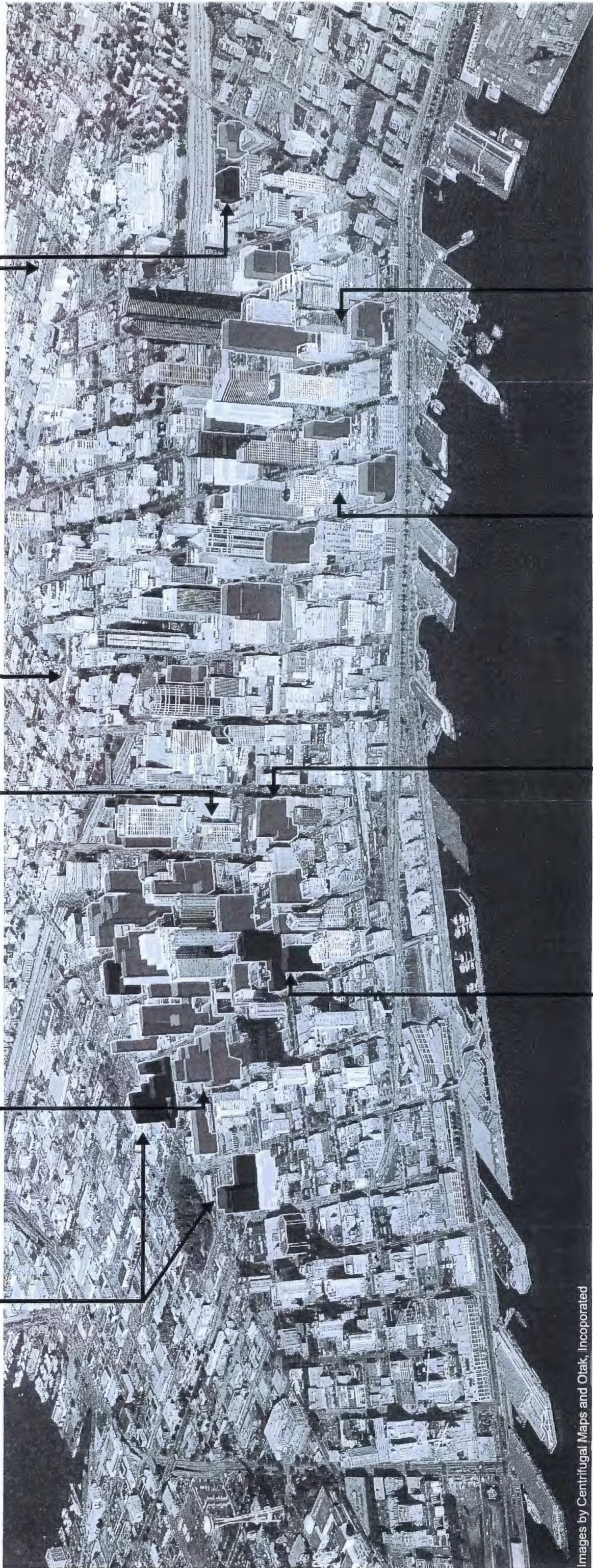
Figure 18

No additional projects predicted beyond currently known planned projects in area extending beyond office core to northern edge of Denny Triangle.

Greatest concentration of predicted development in Denny Triangle DOC-2 400 and DMC 340 zones with increased height and density limits.

Approximately five predicted projects in office core DOC-1 zone dispersed among taller, denser development built prior to 1989.

Limited number of new projects dispersed in DOC-2 312 zone along southern edge of office core adjacent to International Special Review District



Images by Centrifugal Maps and Otak, Incorporated

LEGEND

Development projects currently under construction or with approved permits.

Known planned development projects that may proceed; these projects could be modified to respond to potential zoning changes.

Other predicted developments on sites identified as potentially available and developed under zoning proposed in this alternative.

Concentration of taller, bulkier residential and mixed use developing in DMC 312 zone extending from Commercial Core to Belltown.

Approximately 30% taller, bulkier development on scattered sites in DMC 312 and DMC 208 zones between office core and Waterfront.

Potential Massing of Future Development Under Alternative 1

ALTERNATIVE 1
High End Height and Density Increases

SCALE

The term “scale” is used to describe the characteristics of new development in relation to the surrounding development context. The discussion covers both the existing built context—what actually exists on the ground today—and the potential built context that could be created by future development.

Transition

Alternative 1 would introduce several changes to the scale relationship established in the 1985 Downtown Plan. To implement policies calling for transitions in the scale and intensity of development between the high-density office core and adjacent, less-intensive neighborhoods, a variety of zones with a range of height and density limits were established. The DMC zones and DOC 2 240' zones in particular were created to promote desired transition areas. Sensitive transition areas considered in this analysis are identified in Figure 19.

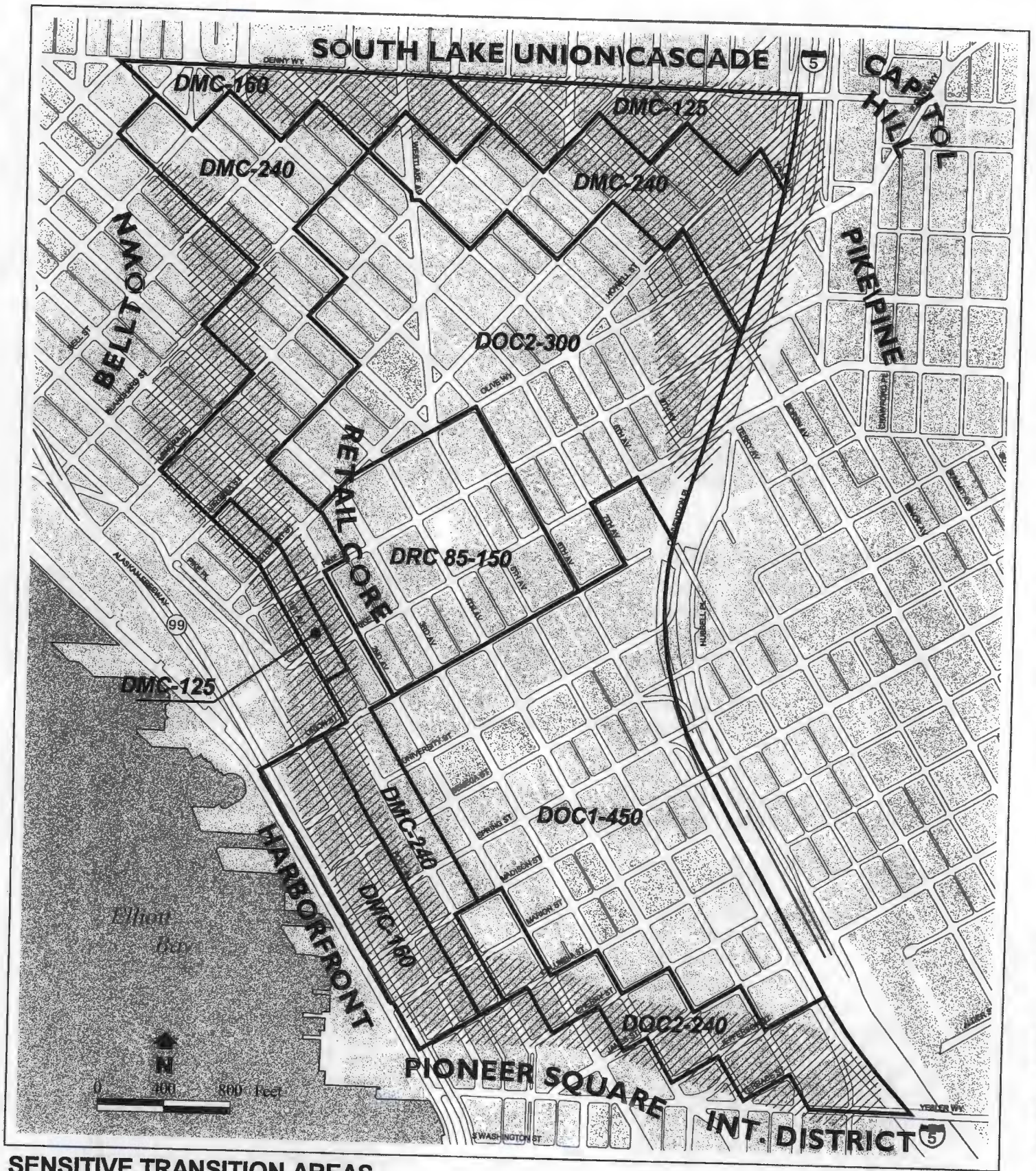
Alternative 1 would result in the most abrupt changes in height, bulk and scale along edges of identified sensitive transition areas. Table 29 at the end of this section summarizes the transition impacts of the alternatives. A more detailed description of the nature of these impacts is provided for each location in Appendix I.

Development Compatibility

Development compatibility considers the relationship between new projects and existing development in an area. While current Downtown zoning allows new projects to be larger than much of what currently exists, consideration is also given to maintaining compatibility with existing development characteristics of an area. The zoning assigned to an area does not necessarily assume that the ideal condition is one where every site is developed to the maximum limits allowed. Specific measures, such as landmark preservation, variable-scale TDR, incentives for small lot development, and guidelines for street and alley vacations—to name a few—recognize the importance of integrating new projects into the existing development context.

General. In general, current zoning allows a larger scale of development than what currently exists in many areas, and the difference in this relationship under any of the alternatives is marginal.

- **Denny Triangle.** Under Alternative 1, as in the other alternatives, most new development would be concentrated in the DOC 2 300' and DMC 240' zones of the Denny Triangle. This area today is generally characterized by low-intensity development including surface parking lots and small-scale structures, with some larger, more recent projects clustered on the southern and western edges of the DOC 2 zone and in the DMC zone along the I-5 edge. Most existing structures that now appear to be relatively large, such as the Camlin Hotel and Paramount Theater, will appear more modest in scale as newer, larger projects occupy adjacent sites. Under projected growth, the area would experience considerable redevelopment over the next 20 years, introducing a whole new scale and intensity.
- **DOC 1.** Future projects in the DOC 1 zone will be dispersed on sites throughout the office core, and will be compatible in scale—and in many cases smaller—than existing high-rises.
- **DMC.** In the DMC zones along the western edge of the Commercial Core and southern edge of Belltown, many recent projects built under current zoning exceed the scale of the older buildings establishing the area's existing scale and character. Under Alternative 1, even larger buildings would be possible in the future with the proposed increases in height and density limits.



SENSITIVE TRANSITION AREAS

FIGURE 19



Areas separating more intensive downtown zones from less intensive neighborhoods

Strategic Planning Office
City of Seattle
May 20, 2002

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Landmark structures. In this analysis, impacts on historic resources include consideration of the physical relationship between future development and adjacent landmark structures, and whether those conditions negatively affect the qualities of the landmark structure. To provide a relative comparison of potential impacts between alternatives in terms of the compatibility between new development and existing designated Seattle landmark structures, three locations including both landmark structures and sites considered likely to be redeveloped were selected for analysis. The following locations were selected because they are geographically dispersed within the study area, provide examples for each of the different zones affected by the changes, are adjacent to identified potential redevelopment sites, and more than one landmark structure is visible, including one meeting SEPA criteria for view-protected landmarks:

- DOC 1 location: Rainier Club (810 4th Avenue) and Leamington/Pacific Hotel and Apartments (317 Marion Street).
- DOC 2 location: Paramount Theater (901 Pine Street) and Camlin Hotel (1619 9th Avenue).
- DMC location: Terminal Sales Building (1932 1st Avenue) and Moore Theater and Hotel Building (1932 2nd Avenue).

Figures 20 through 22 illustrate potential development on sites adjacent to these structures. For all three cases under all alternatives, including development that can occur under current zoning, new projects on adjacent sites are substantially greater in scale than the existing landmark structures.

Pacific Hotel and Rainier Club (DOC 1 Zone). In this DOC 1 location, the neighboring Bank of California Center, 5th Avenue Plaza, Columbia Center and new IDX Tower already establish a pronounced contrast in scale with the two landmarks. Looking south down 4th Avenue at Marion Street, the existing urban environment is already comprised of interesting contrasts of scale, building age, and architectural style. While the Rainier Club and the Pacific Hotel, and to some extent the YMCA Building, are similar in terms of scale, materials (all brick structures), age, and architectural style, they contrast dramatically with the modern skyscrapers around them. Additional development filling in available sites nearby will intensify this condition. However, in this setting, it is the dramatic contrast in scale and architectural character contributes to the visual prominence of these landmarks.

Under all the alternatives, additional development would further contribute to the architectural variety and diversity of scale in the area. Combined, the landmark structures will continue to provide an enclave of pedestrian-oriented building scale among the skyscrapers. The historic low-density structures, with the generous setback of the Rainier Club, provide a feeling of openness and welcome sunlight. Conditions under Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 would be the same. The potential development depicted in Figure 20 under these alternatives is an office building of approximately 22 stories on a half-block site one block south of the Pacific Hotel. In Alternative 4, the new structure is slightly lower in height, at approximately 18 stories. With heights in the range of 230 to 290 feet, these structures are considerably below the maximum height limit allowed by zoning, which is up to 540 feet under existing conditions and 585 feet under the other alternatives. With the nearest projected development located a block away from landmark structures, the additional impact on the landmarks is minimal given the number of other taller buildings in the vicinity. However, it should be noted that both landmarks are located on blocks with other sites that, over the longer term, could be redeveloped. For either landmark, having a significantly larger structure located on the same block could create a more incongruous scale relationship, where the new development could appear to overwhelm the abutting smaller landmark structure.

Under all alternatives, street level standards that apply to 4th Avenue under its Class I Pedestrian Street designation should promote a compatible street level relationship between new and existing buildings. It should be noted, however, that as a private club and a residential building, the private nature of street level uses in the landmark structures already limits street level activity along this stretch of 4th Avenue.

Paramount Theater and Camlin Hotel (DOC 2 Zone). Located in the Denny Triangle, the Camlin Hotel and Paramount Theater today are moderate-scale structures, visually prominent in their existing setting amidst the open expanses of surface parking lots and the two-block Convention Place Transit Station site. The two landmark structures are of the same vintage and materials (brick) and compatible architectural style. The multi-block Convention Center complex is to the southwest. Though massive in scale, the portion of this project that extends closest to the landmark structures is of compatible height. Other development nearby ranges widely in scale, from one-story retail buildings to the 33-story 1600 Qwest Plaza Tower one block east of the Camlin. The view of existing conditions shown on Figure 21 looks across an existing car dealership lot, which, in the Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan, is identified as a desired location for public open space.

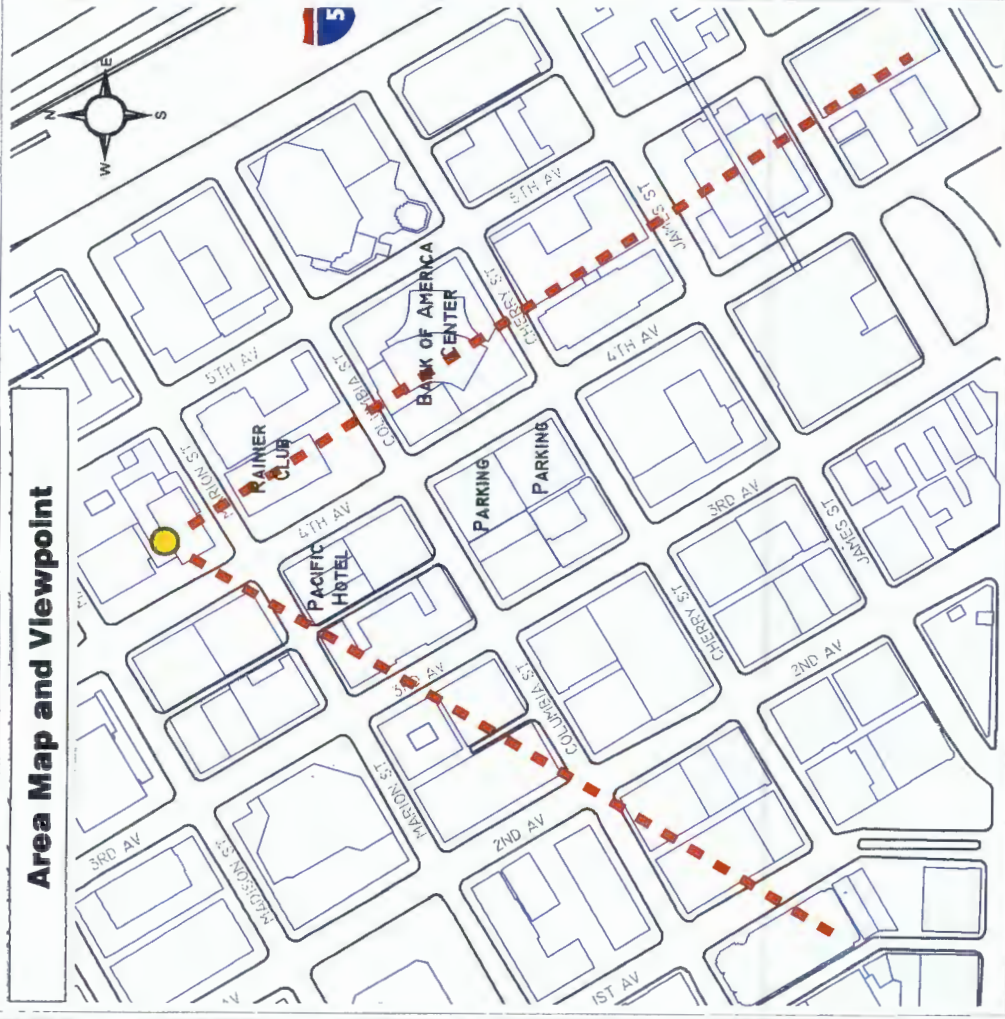
A substantial amount of new development is expected in this DOC 2 area over the next 20 years. Given the location of potential development sites, including the air rights above the transit station blocks, these two buildings, now considered on the fringe of Downtown, will likely be surrounded by highrise buildings expanding northeastward from the core. An alley vacation on the Camlin Hotel block and the superblock site of the Convention Place Transit Station could place substantially larger structures adjacent to the landmarks if these sites are developed to the maximum limits the zoning would allow. Given the similarities among the alternatives in the treatment of DOC 2 zoning at this location, and the close proximity of new structures to the Camlin, all alternatives will potentially have similar urban design impacts. The most extreme condition would occur under a scenario where the remainder of the Camlin block is assembled through an alley vacation and developed with a multi-structure mixed-use project. By combining both the maximum allowed commercial floor area and a substantial amount of exempted residential floor area, such a project could achieve densities in the 16 to 22 FAR range, depending on the alternative, creating the potential for large, bulky towers flanking the sides and rear of the structure, which could visually overwhelm it. This condition would be most extreme under Alternatives 1 and 2 because of the higher densities allowed.

At a more detailed level, the mid-block location and design of the Camlin results in exposed blank facades along the side property lines. Under the development practices of the day, structures of similar height and scale would have been anticipated to eventually abut these facades, forming a more or less continuous street wall. With the added flexibility the alley vacation allows, future towers could pull back from this front façade line, creating a less cohesive street wall where the new and old structures adjoin.

The site of the Paramount Theater occupies most of what remains of a block sliced on one corner by Interstate 5 right-of-way. With development above I-5 unlikely, and only a relatively small portion of the remaining block available for redevelopment, major scale conflicts between the Paramount Theater and other potential development on the same block are not anticipated.

In terms of potential scale conflicts between these landmarks and new development, differences among the alternatives are likely to be marginal. However, the high floor area densities achievable in mixed-use or residential developments increase the potential for incompatible scale relationships, especially on larger sites created by alley vacations. Measures that might mitigate these impacts, such as spacing between towers and upper level setbacks, could not likely be achieved without a reduction in development density. On the other hand, larger sites, like the Convention Place Transit Station site, provide added flexibility for siting new development that could help promote a more compatible relationship with the landmarks on neighboring blocks, provided these sites are not built to the maximum achievable density.

Area Map and Viewpoint



Existing Conditions - photograph

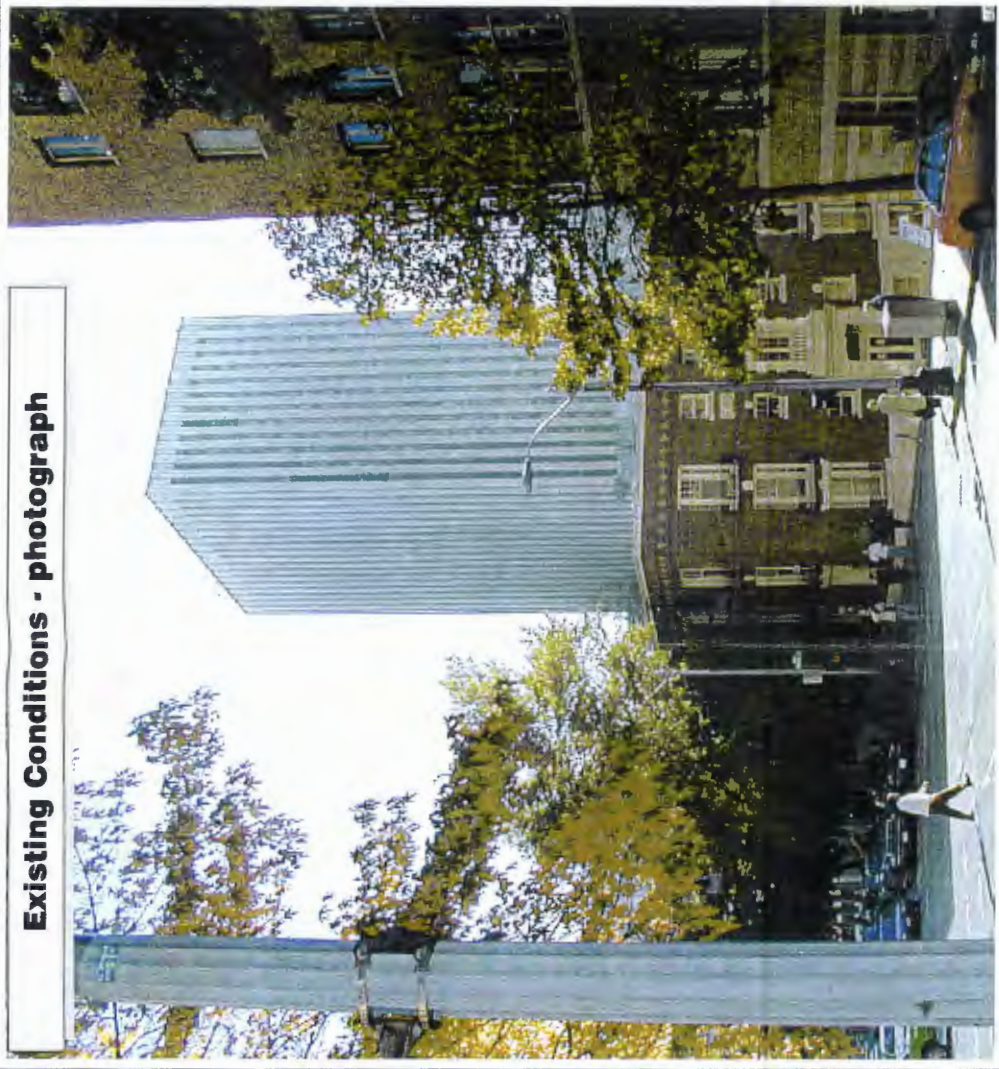


Figure 20

Seattle Urban Design Impact Study

DOC-1 Zone

View South from 4th Ave. and Marion St.
(Pacific Hotel in center)



10936/gis/rapidsite/rsimport1.apr/CAM 1

Alternative 1 - future conditions
(simulation)



Alternative 4 - future conditions
(simulation)



Area Map and Viewpoint



Existing Conditions - photograph



Figure 21

Seattle Urban Design Impact Study

DOC-2 Zone

View South from Terry Ave.
and Howell St.
(Camlin Hotel in center)

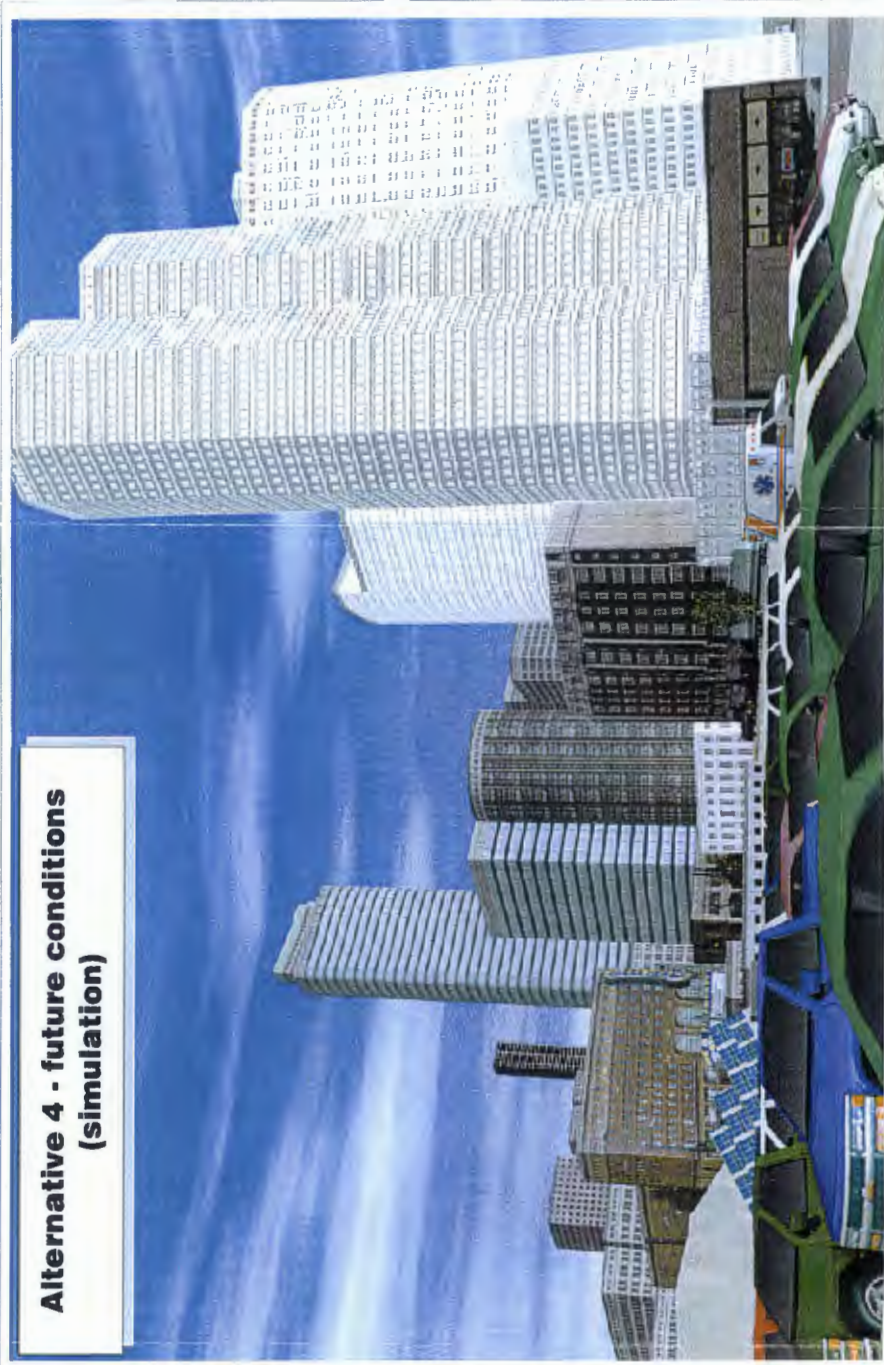


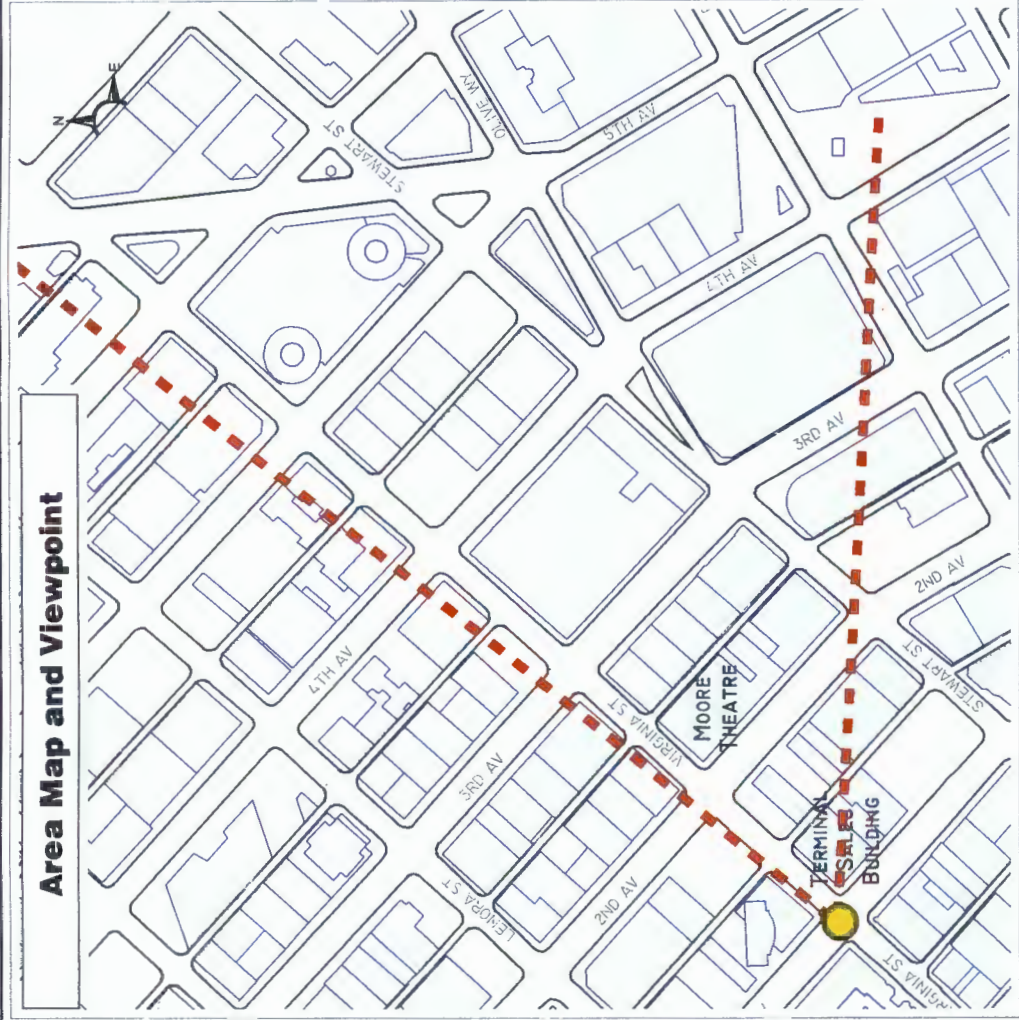
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Alternative 1 - future conditions (simulation)



Alternative 4 - future conditions (simulation)





Existing Conditions - photograph



Figure 22

Seattle Urban Design Impact Study

DMC Zone

View Northeast from 1st Ave.
and Virginia St.
(Terminal Sales building
in foreground)

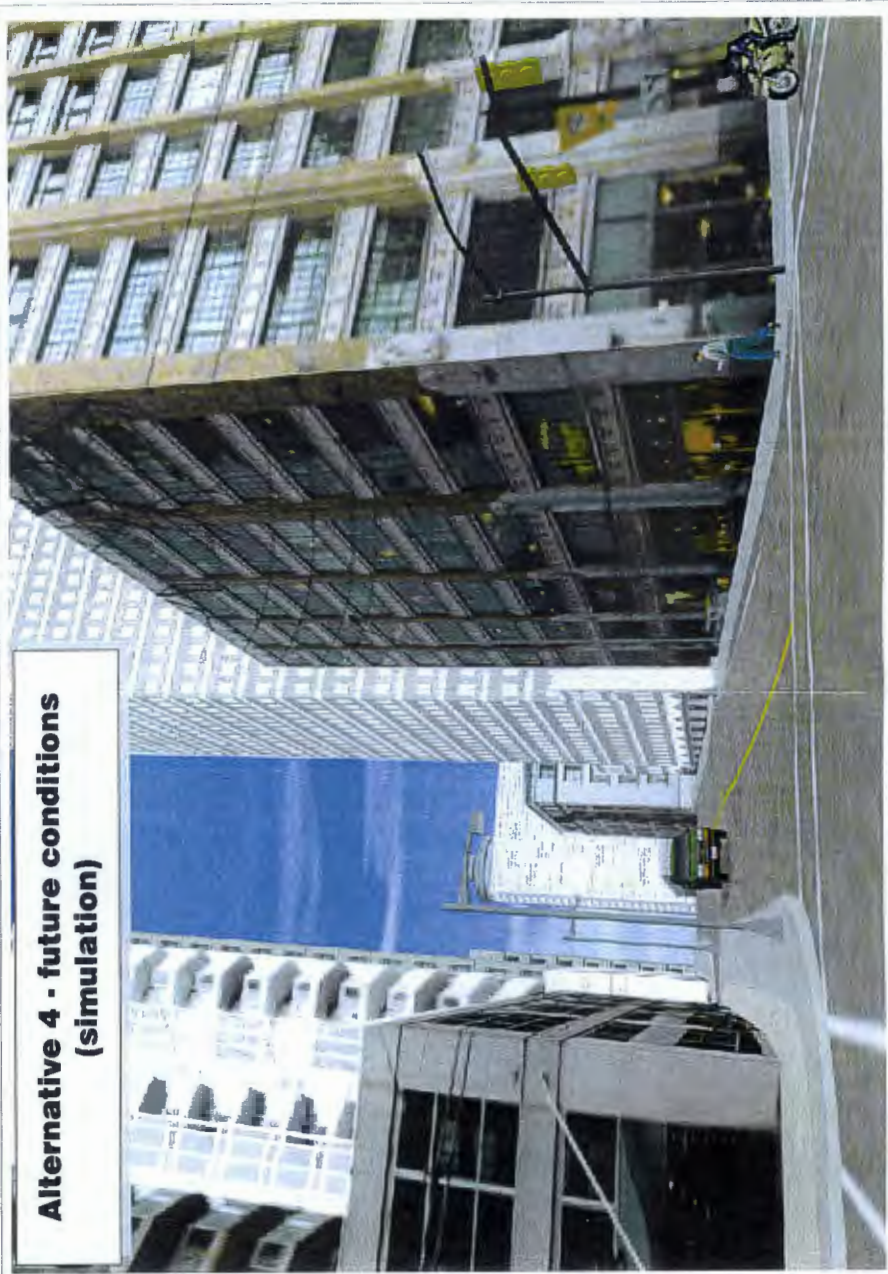


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Alternative 1 - future conditions (simulation)



Alternative 4 - future conditions (simulation)



Terminal Sales Building (DMC 240) and Moore Theater and Hotel. Under existing conditions depicted in Figure 22, both of these landmark structures are visible in the view looking east down Virginia Street. Also, because of the location of the Terminal Sales Building in relation to the shift in the street grid at Stewart Street, it is visible from 1st Avenue for several blocks to the south. In the context of existing development, these landmarks are relatively large structures. The Pike Place Market area, with its lower scale of development, occupies blocks to the south and west. Development on the Market Place North block to the northwest is of a larger scale, and further north and to the east, taller buildings, like One Pacific Tower, Bell Center and the Josephinum, are scattered among development that is more typically in the two to five-story range. Scattered surface parking lots also contribute to the area's lower scale and open character.

Under all the alternatives, several sites in the vicinity of the two landmark structures are shown as likely to be redeveloped. Alternative 1 would allow taller structures than the other alternatives, and if developed as residential or mixed-use projects as shown, these structures could be quite bulky, given the limited bulk restrictions on residential use. The Terminal Sales Building would become visually less prominent as these larger structures join One Pacific Tower on adjacent sites. Additional large-scale structures would also advance closer to the landmarks as development occurs on sites in the DOC 2 zone further east. Currently, visible structures in this zone include the Westin Hotel and Westin Building located along 5th and 6th Avenues, with all the alternatives depicting new development advancing eastward as far as 4th Avenue.

Development diversity

Development diversity addresses the degree to which there is variation in the scale and character of development within an area. The combination of new and old structures, varied uses, and a mix of development scale and building types generally contribute to a more interesting urban environment; these conditions are supported by numerous Downtown development policies.

Under Alternative 1, as in all alternatives, the Denny Triangle DOC 2 zone would undergo substantial redevelopment to accommodate projected growth. This could result in a more homogeneous character with new projects of generally uniform height and density. However, because a range of building types would be needed to accommodate different uses, the mix of residential, commercial, and mixed-use structures could add interest and variety.

In other Downtown areas, new development would likely be more dispersed within the existing built environment, contributing to overall development diversity. Furthermore, because fewer sites would be required to accommodate projected growth under this alternative, more existing structures and uses would be expected to remain on sites shown as likely to be redeveloped under the other alternatives.

Residential Character

Development scale is often a component helping to define the residential character of an area. The scale of residential buildings reflects their function; they generally have smaller floor sizes and are less bulky to allow natural light into internal living spaces. The presence and contact with living spaces at street level increases the sense of an area as a residential environment, and this ground-level orientation is often encouraged through regulations and guidelines. Design requirements for projects accommodating housing also often result in more open areas and generally less building coverage, increased spacing between structures and landscaping, all of which enhance the residential quality of an area. Details like windows and balconies also contribute to the residential scale of development.

As under existing conditions, Alternative 1 does not designate residential zones within the study area. The Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan does specify locations where development of "residential enclaves" is desired. A substantial amount of housing would have to be built in the Belltown and Denny

Triangle portions of the study area—almost 6,500 dwelling units—if projected residential growth is to be accommodated. There are no provisions in Alternative 1 that specifically promote a desired residential character in the Denny Triangle. Because residential floor area, including above-grade accessory parking, is exempt from density limits, residential buildings could potentially become among the bulkiest structures in these areas. Also, achieving a beneficial residential character could be hampered by the probable mixing of residential and non-residential projects, and separation of housing from the street by multi-level base structures occupied by parking or other non-residential uses.

Alternative 2 – Concentrated Office Core

HEIGHT

Generally, the height characteristics of projected future development in Alternative 2 would be similar to Alternative 1. Most future tall buildings would be concentrated in the Denny Triangle DOC 2 zone, while other tall structures would be dispersed among existing skyscrapers in the DOC 1 zone. The height of development in DMC zones on the periphery of the office core zones in the Denny Triangle, Belltown and western edge of the Commercial Core neighborhoods would be the same as under existing conditions.

Approximately 31 new structures are predicted to be over 250 feet in height, 5 fewer than Alternative 1 (refer to Table 26). Approximately 11 of these would be residential structures and 8 would be mixed-use structures. Four of the residential structures and three mixed-use structures would likely extend above 250 feet by using the Transfer of Development Credit (TDC) height incentive. Of the 12 commercial-only structures over 250 feet tall, only six are developed to the maximum height allowed.

In the zones with height limits of 240 feet or less, all types of development—commercial, residential, and mixed use—would typically reach the height limit. Altogether, eight new structures are projected to exceed current height limits by using the TDC program.

BULK

Development Density

Under Alternative 2, the analysis indicates approximately 56 new structures would be built on 40 new project sites. The increased density limits for commercial use and height limits for all uses in DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones would result in development with bulk characteristics similar to Alternative 1 in these zones. Overall, there would be slightly fewer of the bulkiest residential and mixed-use projects under Alternative 2, partially because density and height limits would remain unchanged in DMC zones. Approximately 10 residential and mixed-use projects would exceed 17 FAR.

In part because Alternative 2 does not include height increases in the DMC zone in the Denny Triangle beyond what the TDC program now allows, the densities of residential and mixed-use projects range more widely than in Alternative 1. Only 46% of the projected mixed-use projects and 44% of the residential projects are predicted to have densities above 17 FAR. In the DMC zones where commercial-only projects would be subject to a maximum density limit of 7 FAR, residential and mixed-use projects are shown achieving actual densities in the 11 to 23 FAR range, depending on the height limit of the zone and the use of TDC. In the DOC 2 zone where the commercial density limit would be 13 FAR, the range of densities for residential and mixed-use projects would be similar to Alternative 1 (refer to Table 27).

Site Size

The size of sites accommodating projected development is essentially the same as under Alternative 1.

Height and Density Relationship

The height/density relationship in Alternative 2 would be similar to Alternative 1, except the proposed density increase in the Denny Triangle DOC 2 zone would be limited to 3 FAR rather than 4 FAR, resulting perhaps in slightly less bulky structures, given the height limits are the same under the two alternatives. Also, Alternative 2 maintains existing height and density limits in DMC zones, so any impacts of additional height and density identified in Alternative 1 would not apply in these areas.

Massing

Given the number, scale, and distribution of projected projects, massing conditions in this alternative would likely be similar to Alternative 1. Figure 23 below illustrates the potential massing of future development under Alternative 2.

Because it is assumed that growth will initially be attracted to available sites in the core zones, both Alternatives 1 and 2 show most of the 20 years of projected growth occurring in bigger projects in the DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones. During this 20-year timeframe, only limited development would occur in the DMC zones, where these alternatives differ in terms of permitted height and commercial density limits. Over the longer term, as more development pushes beyond the core, these differences would become more apparent, with the resulting scale of development in Alternative 2 generally lower than Alternative 1 around the perimeter of the core.

SCALE

Transition

Alternative 2 would for the most part retain the current height, bulk and scale relationship established by existing zoning along the edges of “sensitive transition areas” identified in the study area (refer to Figure 19). Table 29 at the end of this section summarizes the transition impacts of the alternatives. A more detailed description of the nature of these impacts is provided for each location in Appendix I.

Compatibility

General. Compatibility conditions in the office core zones of the Commercial Core and Denny Triangle would be similar to what is described under Alternative 1. No height and density changes would occur in areas zoned DMC, meaning less impact from future development than Alternative 1. However, future development would likely exceed the scale of existing development in those zones.

Landmark structures.

- **Rainier Club and Pacific Hotel landmarks (DOC 1).** Same impacts as Alternative 1
- **Camlin Hotel and Paramount Theater (DOC 2).** Similar to Alternative 1.
- **Terminal Sales Building (DMC 240).** No height and density increases in the DMC zones, meaning slightly less impact from future development than Alternative 1.

Development Diversity

Conditions would be similar to those described under Alternative 1.

Residential Character

Conditions would be similar to those described under Alternative 1.

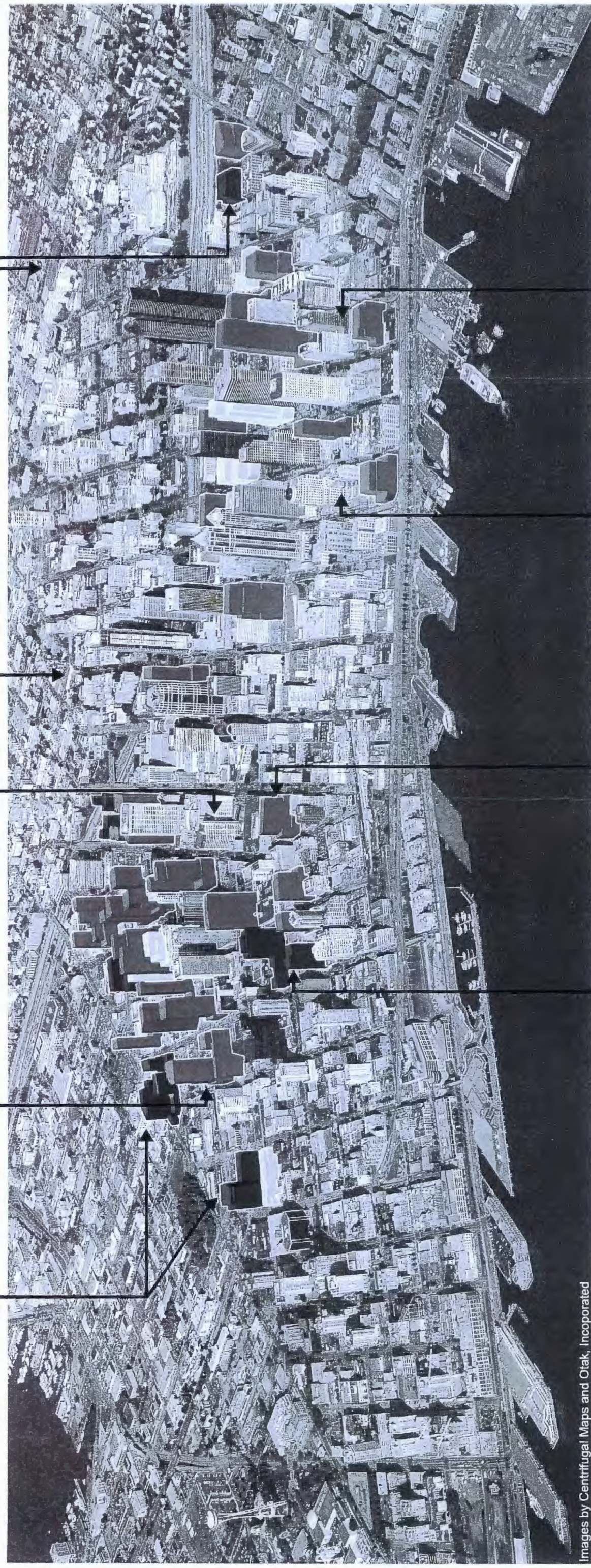
Figure 23

No additional projects predicted beyond currently known planned projects in area extending beyond office core to northern edge of Denny Triangle.

Greatest concentration of predicted development in Denny Triangle DOC-2 400 zone with increased height and density limits and adjacent DMC 240 zone retaining existing height and density limits.

Approximately six predicted projects in office core DOC-1 585 zone dispersed among development built prior to 1989.

Limited number of new projects dispersed in DOC-2 312 zone along southern edge of office core adjacent to International Special Review District



Images by Centrifugal Maps and Otak, Incorporated

LEGEND

- Development projects currently under construction or with approved permits.
- Known planned development projects that may proceed; these projects could be modified to respond to potential zoning changes.
- Other predicted developments on sites identified as potentially available and developed under zoning proposed in this alternative.

Bulky residential and mixed use development expected under existing height and density limits in the portion of DMC 240 zone extending from Commercial Core to Belltown.

No change to the scale of development under existing DMC 160 and DMC 240 zones between office core and Waterfront.

Potential Massing of Future Development Under Alternative 2

ALTERNATIVE 2
Concentrated Office
Core

Alternative 3 – Residential Emphasis

HEIGHT

Development projected under Alternative 3 includes 28 structures exceeding heights of 250 feet, 8 fewer than under Alternative 1. Approximately 9 of these would be residential structures and 7 would be mixed-use structures. Eight of the structures would gain added height through use of the TDC height incentive. Approximately 12 of the structures over 250 feet in height would be commercial-only structures and 8 of these would reach the maximum height limit allowed in their zone.

Alternative 3 would likely result in variation in the height of tall buildings in the Denny Triangle DOC 2 zone because the height limits would step down from 400 feet to 300 feet along the eastern and western flanks of the zone. The characteristics of tall buildings in other parts of Downtown would be similar to Alternatives 2 and 4, except that residential towers would be more slender in those areas proposed for rezone to DMR/C, where additional bulk controls would apply.

BULK

Development Density

Projected development under Alternative 3 would be distributed among 60 structures in approximately 44 projects. The lower density limits for commercial use in several areas, lower height limits in DMC and some DOC 2 areas, and additional bulk controls in areas reclassified DMR for residential use would require more projects than Alternative 1 and 2 to accommodate projected growth. The distribution of growth to more projects and the additional bulk limits on development in DMR areas would contribute to less bulky development overall. However, approximately 7 projects are predicted to have densities exceeding 17 FAR. Approximately 4 of these would be mixed-use projects (31% of the projected mixed-use projects) and three would be residential projects (30% of the residential projects). The overall distribution of project densities is displayed on Table 27.

Site Size

Under Alternative 3, slightly more sites in the half-block size range are required to accommodate projected growth at the lower densities proposed in some areas.

Height and Density Relationship

The height/density relationship impacts of Alternative 3 would be similar to those of Alternative 1, except the additional bulk effects identified in the DMC zones would be avoided.

Massing

In the treatment of the office core zones, Alternative 3 is primarily distinguished from Alternatives 1 and 2 by the retention of current height and density limits in the eastern and western edges of the DOC 2 300 zone in the Denny Triangle and Belltown. Figure 24 illustrates potential massing conditions under Alternative 3. Height and density increases would be limited to the "spine" of the zone extending along 6th, 7th and 8th Avenues from Union Street to Blanchard Street. Retaining current height and density limits for the portions of the DOC 2 zone along the edges of this "spine" would accommodate some transition in development intensity and a physical "stepping down" in development scale with adjacent residential and mixed-use zones in Belltown, the Denny Triangle and Pike/Pine. Furthermore, the wider street rights-of-way and angled crossings of Westlake Avenue, Olive Way and Stewart Street in the portion of the DOC 2 zone proposed for increased height and density would provide more spacing between large-scale developments and greater access to light and air than would occur in other portions of the zone.

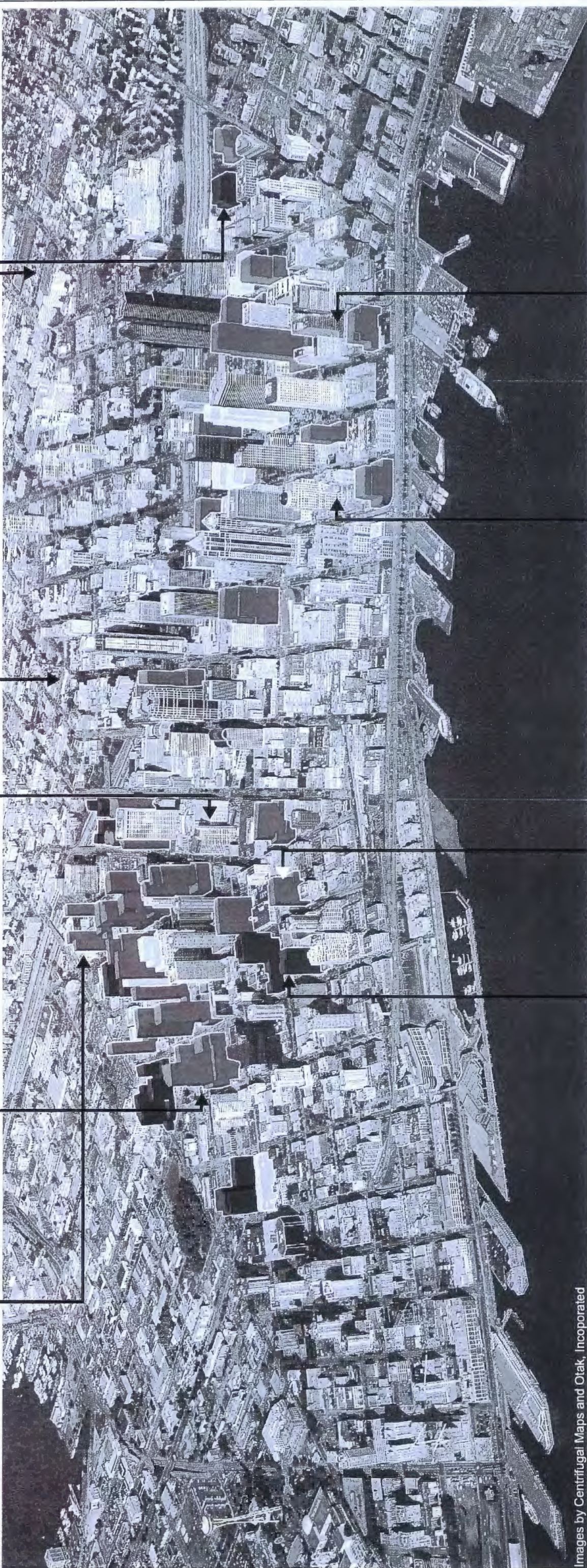
Limited number of predicted projects extending beyond office core to DMC zones along northern edge of Denny Triangle.

Less bulky residential and mixed use development in DMC areas reclassified to more residential-oriented zone.

Greatest concentration of predicted development in portion of DOC-2 zone with increased height and density limits and in adjacent DOC-2 300 and DMC 240 zones retaining existing height and density limits.

Approximately six predicted projects in office core DOC-1 585 zone dispersed among taller, denser development built prior to 1989.

Limited number of new projects dispersed in DOC-2 312 zone along southern edge of office core adjacent to International Special Review District



Images by Centrifugal Maps and Otak, Incorporated

LEGEND

Development projects currently under construction or with approved permits.

Known planned development projects that may proceed; these projects could be modified to respond to potential zoning changes.

Other predicted developments on sites identified as potentially available and developed under zoning proposed in this alternative.

Less bulky residential and mixed use development in DMC areas reclassified to more residential-oriented zones.

No change to the scale of development under DMC 160 and DMC 240 zones between office core and Waterfront.

Potential Massing of Future Development Under Alternative 3

Figure 24

ALTERNATIVE 3
Residential Emphasis

Retaining current height and density limits in DMC zones along the western edge of the Commercial Core and northeast and northwest corners of the Denny Triangle would result in the same development as under existing conditions. However, given the assumption that the lower density limits overall in this alternative will push more projects into these areas, changes over the next 20 years would be more apparent than under Alternatives 1 and 2. In DMC areas proposed for reclassification to a more residential-oriented zone, the additional controls on bulk would likely result in residential towers that are more slender than the commercial or residential development permitted in these areas under the other three alternatives.

SCALE

Transition

Alternative 3 would for the most part retain the current height, bulk and scale relationship established by existing zoning along the edges of “sensitive transition areas” identified in the study area (refer to Figure 19). Table 29 at the end of this section summarizes the transition impacts of the alternatives. A more detailed description of the nature of these impacts is provided for each location in Appendix I.

Compatibility

General. Compatibility conditions in the office core zones (DOC 1 and DOC 2) of the Commercial Core and Denny Triangle would be similar to the effects of Alternative 1. In the DMC zones, there would be no change from existing conditions. In areas proposed for reclassification to a more residential-oriented zone, additional bulk standards and lower commercial density limits could promote a more compatible relationship with existing development relative to the other alternatives.

Landmark structures:

- **Rainier Club and Pacific Hotel landmarks (DOC 1).** Impacts would be the same as Alternative 1.
- **Camlin Hotel and Paramount Theater (DOC 2).** Impacts would be slightly less than Alternative 1 because of the lower height and density limits that would apply in this portion of the zone. However, because of its size and because accommodating a major transit facility below grade would likely limit the amount of parking that could be provided, the Convention Place Transit Station site is not likely to be developed to the maximum density allowed under any alternative. Consequently, development on this site would likely be similar under all alternatives.
- **Terminal Sales Building (DMC 240).** Slightly reduced impacts relative to the other alternatives due to additional bulk limits that would apply in the DMC zone north of Virginia Street. However, future development would likely be larger in scale than existing development, and conditions in the remainder of the DMC zone south of Virginia Street would be the same as under Alternative 2. Maintaining current height and density limits in the Belltown portion of the DOC 2 zone to the east would mean slightly less impact from future development than under Alternatives 1 and 2.

Development Diversity

Conditions would be similar to those described under Alternative 1. However, with the increased number of projects and more development in peripheral zones, this alternative has a broader range in the scale of new development than Alternatives 1 and 2. On the other hand, redevelopment on more sites could mean the loss of more existing development and uses that contribute to development diversity and character.

Residential Character

Alternative 3 would establish a more residential-oriented zone in the north central portion of the Denny Triangle and would extend this type of zoning south from Belltown by one to two blocks. Over time, with the reduction in permitted commercial density in these areas, a greater concentration of residential

development would be expected, creating a stronger residential character relative to what currently exists or would likely occur under the other alternatives. The additional bulk standards that apply in these zones would help promote a more residential scale of development. In the Denny Triangle, Green Street improvements would further complement the residential character.

Alternative 4 – No Action

HEIGHT

Future projected development assumed under existing zoning in Alternative 4 includes as many as 26 structures exceeding heights of 250 feet—10 fewer than Alternative 1. Approximately 9 commercial-only structures would be over 250 feet, compared to 15 structures in Alternative 1; another 9 structures would be residential and 8 would be mixed-use. Eleven structures are assumed to gain height through TDC. Alternative 4 would likely result in the most structures less than 200 feet in height; slightly more than double the number in Alternative 1. This partly reflects the greater number of structures that would be needed to accommodate projected employment growth, resulting in several commercial structures locating in zones with lower height and density limits on the periphery of the office core, such as at the northern and northeastern edges of the Denny Triangle.

BULK

Development Density

Under Alternative 4, the projected growth would be distributed among 63 structures in approximately 48 projects—the greatest number of any alternative. Similar to Alternative 3, the greater number of projects needed to accommodate the same amount of growth would result in more projects with less bulky individual structures. The greater amount of commercial-only projects accommodated in the DMC zones would result in a lower-scale development than would be expected with higher commercial density limits or with more mixed-use development with greater amounts of exempt floor area. However, some of these projects are on relatively small sites, and could appear bulky because they would have several stories covering most of the site area. Approximately 7 mixed-use and residential projects are predicted to have densities exceeding 17 FAR, which amounts to 27% of the total projected mixed-use projects and 33% of the residential projects (refer to Table 27).

Site Size

Alternative 4 requires more sites, generally in the half-block size range, than the other alternatives to accommodate projected growth at densities permitted under current zoning.

Height and Density Relationship

The existing height/density relationship conditions caused by current zoning would remain unchanged by Alternative 4. Amendments in the recent past that allow additional height in DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones to promote more slender office towers should allow for better outcomes than some recent bulky development. However, the lack of density limits and only minimal bulk constraints on residential use could result in bulky residential and mixed-use projects, with those projects participating in the TDC program also gaining additional height.

Massing

As with the other alternatives, the DOC 2 zone of the Denny Triangle would be expected to accommodate the greatest concentration of new development, with structures built consistently to the height limit and with many projects including multiple structures on a site. The accumulation of these projects over time

on the long, rectangular blocks of the Denny Triangle would likely create the appearance of an uninterrupted mass of development extending northward from the current cluster of large buildings in the office core. In a more scattered pattern, lower-scale development would extend to the northern reaches of this part of Downtown.

Development within the DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones of the Commercial Core would likely be more dispersed among existing high-rise structures. The limited number of remaining sites would be filled in with structures similar to or smaller than the scale of adjacent structures built under earlier zoning that allowed greater height and density. Bulkier towers are expected to extend northward from the retail core to form a cluster on the edges of Belltown, and scattered development is also expected on the few remaining sites along the western edge of the Commercial Core between the office core and the Harborfront. Figure 25 below illustrates potential massing conditions under Alternative 4.

SCALE

Transition

Alternative 4 reflects the existing transition relationship established under current zoning. The overall pattern of building heights stepping down from the core and the desired gradation in the intensity of development reflected in the zoning implementing current Downtown policies would be maintained. Alternatives 2, 3 and 4 would result in lower development height and density than Alternative 1 along most edges separating Downtown from abutting neighborhoods. A more detailed description of the nature of these impacts is provided for each location in Appendix I.

Compatibility

Alternative 4 reflects development under existing zoning. Overall compatibility of uses would be similar to Alternative 1, except in the DMC zone, where no height and density changes would occur.

Development Diversity

Overall development diversity conditions would be similar to Alternative 1. However, with the increased number of projects and more development in peripheral zones, Alternative 4 has the broadest range among the alternatives in the scale of development.

Residential Character

Overall residential character conditions would be similar to those described under Alternative 1.

Impact Summary Table

Table 29 summarizes the findings of the Height, Bulk and Scale impacts section, for the convenience of the reader.

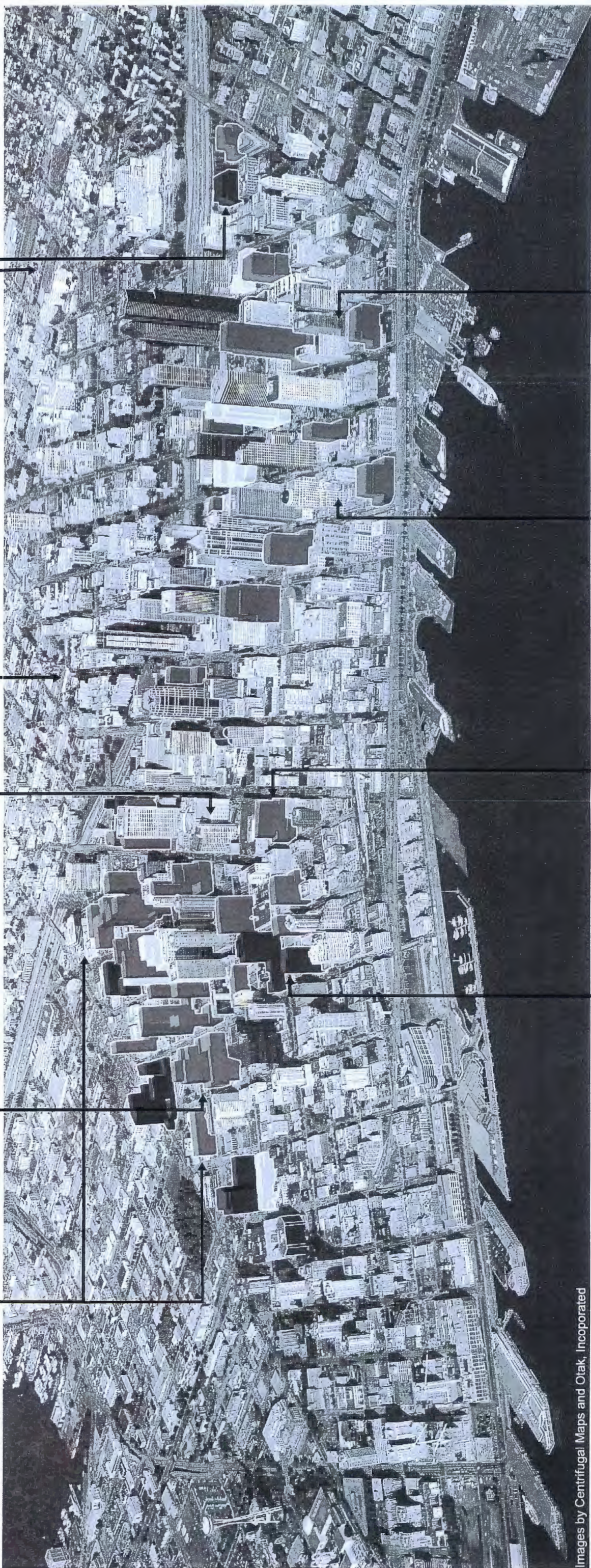
Figure 25

Greatest concentration of predicted development in Denny Triangle DOC-2 300 and DMC 240 zones. Several residential and mixed use projects in these zones shown with 30% height increase currently allowed through transfer of development credits (TDC), making some of these projects similar in height to those shown in other alternatives with greater height limits.

More development predicted to extend beyond office core to DMC 125 and DMC 160 zones along northern and eastern edges of Denny Triangle.

Approximately seven predicted projects in office core DOC-1 zone would be lower than in other Alternatives and dispersed among taller, denser development built prior to 1989.

Limited number of new projects dispersed in DOC-2 312 zone along southern edge of office core adjacent to International Special Review District



Images by Centrifugal Maps and Otak, Incorporated

LEGEND

Development projects currently under construction or with approved permits.

Known planned development projects that may proceed; these projects could be modified to respond to potential zoning changes.

Other predicted developments on sites identified as potentially available and developed under zoning proposed in this alternative.

Bulky residential and mixed use development expected under existing height and density limits in DMC 240 zone extending from Commercial Core to Belltown.

Scattered development on available sites in DMC 160 and DMC 240 zones between office core and Waterfront.

Potential Massing of Future Development Under Alternative 4

ALTERNATIVE 4
No Action
(Existing zoning & development regulations)

Table 29
Summary of Height, Bulk and Scale Impacts

	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	Alt. 3	Alt. 4
Height New buildings by height range	Approx. 36 structures greater than 250 feet in height (65% of new structures).	Approx. 31 structures greater than 250 feet (55% of new structures).	Approx. 28 structures greater than 250 feet (47% of new structures).	Approx. 26 structures greater than 250 feet (41% of new structures).
Differences in zones	Greatest concentration of new development would occur in the DOC 2 zone of the Denny Triangle. New development in peripheral DMC zones would be taller than possible today.	Similar to Alt. 1. New development in DMC zones not as tall as Alt. 1, same as allowed by existing zoning.	Similar to Alt. 1. However, height/density changes in more limited area of DOC 2. Residential towers would be more slender in areas rezoned DMR/C.	Similar to Alt. 1. However, no height/density changes would occur. More development at existing height limits expected to occur in peripheral areas.
Bulk Development density	Would likely result in the fewest and bulkiest projects: 39 developments with 55 structures. Additional bulk from exempted residential uses and a few "other" uses would contribute to actual building bulk legally exceeding maximum density limits.	Nearly the same as Alt. 1: 40 devs with 56 structures, but slightly fewer of the bulkiest types. Similar to Alt. 1, but fewer developments would achieve the higher end of densities.	Bulk would be spread across more projects: 44 devs and 60 structures. Fewer developments than Alt. 1 or 2 would reach higher densities, due to lower height limits and more bulk controls.	Bulk would be spread across more projects: 48 devs and 63 structures. Similar to Alt. 3.
Massing patterns	Greatest massing of bulk would occur in the Denny Triangle. Rectangular shape of blocks would contribute to perceived bulkiness of development in the Denny Triangle. Bulk would tend to locate toward the middle of blocks. New development in peripheral areas more dispersed, except for potential concentration	Similar to Alt. 1, but lower scale at periphery. Similar to Alt. 1. Similar to Alt. 1 but lower scale of development at periphery.	Retention of existing height/density at east and west edges of Denny Triangle DOC 2 zone would provide some "stepping down" in massing of bulk. Similar to Alt. 1. Similar to existing zoning, but more bulk controls in some areas may result in	Similar to Alt. 1, but less-bulky development spread over more sites in Denny Triangle. Similar to Alt. 1, but with less-bulky development spread over more sites. Similar to Alt. 3, but no additional bulk controls would allow some

	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	Alt. 3	Alt. 4
Massing patterns (continued)	in edge of Belltown.		residential towers that are more slender.	bulkier new development.
Height and density relationships	Alt. 1 changes may not resolve an existing issue that results in bulkier building designs. It may be difficult to fit all of the maximum commercial density within proposed DMC height limits between 165 and 225 feet (near Denny Way, and 1st Ave/Western Ave vicinity).	Similar to Alt. 1. Without these changes, this impact would not occur.	Similar to Alt. 1. Without these changes, this impact would not occur.	Existing issue of height/density relationship would remain. Not applicable.
Scale Transitions	Greatest differences among the alternatives in zoning height/density with adjacent areas (Pike/Pine, Denny Way, Belltown, Pioneer Sq./ Int. Dist., harborfront, retail core).	Fewer changes in transitions than Alt. 1, due to no changes in zoning near Belltown, Denny Way, or 1 st Ave/ Western Ave vicinity.	Lower commercial density limit and additional bulk limits for towers would make transitions more gradual in the Denny Way, Belltown and 1 st Ave/ Western Ave vicinities.	Transitions provided by the existing zoning pattern would be maintained.
Compatibility with existing development	Intensity of new development in Denny Triangle would generate greatest differences in compatibility with existing development.	Less impact than Alt. 1 in the peripheral DMC zones. Similar impacts to Alt. 1 in Commercial Core.	Alt. 3 changes would promote greater compatibility in residential-oriented zones. Similar to Alt. 1 for the DOC office core zones.	Similar to Alt. 1, except for DMC zones where no zoning changes would occur.
Effect on development diversity	Amount of redevelopment in Denny Triangle could potentially result in a more homogeneous character.	Similar to Alt. 1.	Similar to Alt. 1, but broader potential range of scale in new structures.	Similar to Alt. 1, but the broadest potential range of scale in new structures.
Effect on residential character	Overall additional bulk of development and mixing of residential and non-residential projects could discourage achievement of a beneficial residential character.	Similar to Alt. 1.	Residential-oriented zoning in some areas creates some greater potential for achieving beneficial residential character.	Similar to Alt. 1.