

Why does the City's vision for Fort Lawton include affordable housing and parks?

The City's current vision for Fort Lawton builds off the extensive planning process conducted in 2006-2008, which resulted in a detailed plan to create homeless and mixed income housing, as well as preserve existing natural areas, and create a new neighborhood park. Today, the need for new affordable housing and open space is greater than ever. A growing number of people are experiencing homelessness, or displacement outside of Seattle due to a lack of affordable housing options. The city's growing population has also created increased demand for open space and recreation, while the cost of acquiring new land for parks is rising. Fort Lawton provides a unique opportunity to address these two important needs in a holistic, complementary manner.

What is the SEPA process, and what is an EIS?

SEPA is the State Environmental Policy Act, a state law that directs agencies to consider environmental information before committing to a particular course of action on a project and encourages public involvement in agency decisions. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required by SEPA for certain actions that may significantly affect the quality of the natural and human environment. An EIS is an objective, impartial evaluation of the environmental consequences of a proposed project. For a more detailed description of what an EIS is, see this [video](#).

Why are there different alternatives being studied?

One of the key functions of an EIS is to examine reasonable alternatives that may meet the same objective at a lower environmental cost. The proposed alternatives for Fort Lawton were designed to reflect the City's objectives for providing affordable housing and open space and recreation. The proposed alternatives include:

- Alternative 1 – Mixed Income Affordable Housing and Public Park Uses: Development of a mix of affordable housing onsite, including homeless and affordable rental and ownership housing, with a portion of the site likely rezoned to Lowrise residential zoning. Public park uses would also be created, including active park facilities, preserved existing natural areas and conversion of an existing structure to a park maintenance facility.
- Alternative 2 – Market Rate Housing Onsite; Affordable and Homeless Housing Offsite: Development of market rate single family housing under current zoning onsite, and construction of homeless and affordable housing at an off-site location.
- Alternative 3 – Public Park Onsite; Affordable and Homeless Housing Offsite: Development of the entire site as a public park, and construction of homeless and affordable housing at an off-site location.
- Alternative 4 – No Action Alternative: No redevelopment of the site; existing structures onsite would be maintained.

Why is there a No Action alternative? What happens if the City does not proceed with a plan?

SEPA requires the evaluation of a “no action” alternative, whether or not it represents any environmental benefits over the proposal. Predicting what might happen in a “no action” scenario can be difficult. For this EIS, the “no action” alternative assumes that the existing buildings on-site would continue to be maintained in caretaker status.

If the City were not to proceed with a redevelopment plan, however, it is very likely that the Army would proceed with a public sale of the property rather than continue to maintain the buildings in their current condition. Alternative 2 was designed to represent this scenario, examining the potential development of the site by a private developer under existing zoning.

Have you considered a park alternative?

The City included one alternative that looks at using the entire property for park purposes (Alternative 3). In this scenario, affordable housing would be provided at an off-site location.

Why is there off-site housing included in Alternatives 2 and 3?

The inclusion of an off-site housing component was necessary to ensure that each action alternative met the City’s housing objectives. Some public comment received by the City has suggested that Fort Lawton is not a desirable location for affordable housing. The off-site housing component also provides an opportunity to examine whether an alternative location could be preferable to Fort Lawton, and able to meet the City’s range of housing objectives. The City selected the Talaris property as a candidate for an alternative location, given capacity to accommodate the range of housing in the proposal, and its similar location within a high opportunity neighborhood with excellent access to quality schools and open space.

Does the City have to select one of the alternatives?

The range of options provides a vehicle for evaluating and comparing the merits of different choices. The final action chosen by decision-makers need not be identical to any single alternative in the EIS, but must be within the range of alternatives discussed.

Have you considered a school alternative?

The City did not initially propose a school alternative, as the key objectives of this proposal relate to housing and park needs. However, in response to a large volume of requests to consider a school, and indication of interest in the property from Seattle Public Schools (SPS), the Office of Housing provided additional time for SPS to evaluate the site more closely, and determine whether it had a feasible path to include a school in the redevelopment. After closer investigation, SPS determined that it would be unable to meet federal Department of Education requirements for a property conveyance for educational use. In particular, SPS did not believe it would meet the criteria around financial ability and immediate need, based on its past experience applying for federal property, and its review of data on projected student population. A copy of the letter from SPS is available [here](#).

What types of housing are included in the City's vision? Will this be public housing?

The housing proposed at Fort Lawton includes affordable rental and ownership housing that would be developed, owned and managed by nonprofit housing organizations. This is different than public housing, which is directly owned and managed by the Seattle Housing Authority. The affordable rental housing includes both a supportive housing component that will serve formerly homeless seniors, with an emphasis on veterans, as well as a general rental housing component that will serve a range of low-income families and individuals. The affordable ownership housing will be owned by low-income homeowners, with a nonprofit organization stewarding the properties over the long-term to ensure ongoing affordability for future generations of buyers. All housing would remain affordable for the long-term, with oversight and monitoring provided by the Seattle Office of Housing.

What is permanent supportive housing?

Supportive housing is a proven solution to the complex challenge of homelessness. It combines affordable housing with services to help people live with stability, autonomy, and dignity. Seattle is a national leader in supportive housing, with experienced providers operating in neighborhoods across the city. Services are designed to meet the needs of residents, and often include case management, counseling, meal programs, and transportation assistance. Studies of supportive housing have demonstrated measurable success in improving housing stability, employment, and mental and physical health outcomes for homeless people with high barriers to housing. In addition, supportive housing has been shown to create savings in health care and other systems.

How will the different kinds of housing be arranged?

A draft [site plan](#) has been prepared to show the proposed location of the different housing components (Alternative 1). The draft incorporated the following design considerations:

- Step down housing density toward the adjacent residential neighborhood
- Preserve existing tree buffer on 36th Ave. W
- Utilize existing right of way (Texas Way) for vehicular access
- Utilize existing parking to the degree possible
- Provide interior courtyard/open space amenities for affordable housing residents

Why is there parking with the housing?

Many residents of affordable housing own cars, and it is anticipated that many low-income households who would choose to live at Fort Lawton would seek to have a dedicated parking spot.

Have you considered the lack of services and public transportation in Magnolia?

The City of Seattle encourages the production of affordable housing in neighborhoods throughout the City, as a part of its obligation and commitment to promote fair housing and maximize choice for low-income residents of Seattle. The Office of Housing has a range of criteria for prioritizing locations for affordable housing investment. This includes access to transit, but also includes access to quality education, parks and open space, particularly for housing that will serve families. While Fort Lawton

does not meet every priority criteria, it does serve an important purpose of creating options for low-income households to live in a neighborhood with few affordable housing choices today.

Where will residents buy groceries? How will low-income people access services and amenities?

While the nearest grocery store may be unaffordable, many residents of affordable housing will likely own vehicles and be able to access other grocery options in nearby neighborhoods like Ballard and Interbay. Grocery delivery services are also becoming more common and affordable. Residents of the senior supportive housing are much less likely to own personal vehicles, but would be provided with transportation assistance as necessary to access services, as well as being able to access some services on-site. In general, low-income residents who choose to live in Magnolia will do so based on their judgment of how well the housing and neighborhood meet their needs, similar to other residents of Magnolia who have chosen to live there.

How do the potential new park uses relate to existing uses in Discovery Park?

Except for a few acres adjacent to the VA Center and the Cemetery, which could be incorporated into Discovery Park, the envisioned park uses at Fort Lawton are not intended to be a part of Discovery Park. Rather, they would be considered a new facility, and could include a range of uses: active park facilities such as dog off leash area, play areas, playfields and other sports facilities, water-feature/spray park/pool, trails and walking paths, bicycle facilities and trails, restrooms, concessions, restoration and preservation of native vegetation.

Where is the funding for the redevelopment going to come from? How do we know there will be funding for future park uses?

Funding for new park development could come from Seattle Park District as part of the 6-year funding plan. The 6-year funding plan will be developed in 2019/20. The City Council and the Mayor will consider the recommendations of the Citizen oversight committee, upon conclusion of a public process and will recommend to the District Board an updated list of Seattle Park District funding projects, programs and services as part of the budget process. While the funding may not be immediately available, the approval of any public benefit conveyance for parks would come with restrictions on the use of the property that preclude any other uses besides public park uses. The City's acceptance of the property would thus come with an obligation and commitment toward realizing those uses. Seattle Parks and Recreation is committed to engaging in extensive outreach and public engagement for the future use of the Fort Lawton area when funding becomes available.

Is there going to be a public hearing?

A public hearing will be conducted following publication of a Draft EIS, which is anticipated to be released in late 2017.

Will there be a vote on the plan? What happens at City Council?

Following completion of the Final EIS, City staff will prepare a proposed redevelopment plan for consideration by the City Council. Council members will discuss and vote on whether to approve the plan.

What is the timeline for the process and opportunities for public comment?

Members of the public will be invited to comment on the Draft EIS document, which is expected in late 2017, as well as on the proposed redevelopment plan, which is expected by summer 2018. These opportunities will be advertised to anyone who signs up to receive communication on the Fort Lawton project.

How are public comments used?

Public comments are used to inform decision-makers on how community members view various aspects of the plan, and what changes to the plan are requested. The SEPA process in particular offers an opportunity to identify potential strategies to mitigate adverse environmental impacts, which could be incorporated in a final plan.

How do I stay engaged?

Anyone who wishes to receive updates about the project should email OH_Comments@seattle.gov and request to be added to the Fort Lawton listserv.