

TRANSCRIPT FROM FEB. 8, 2019 MEETING OF THE SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL'S SELECT COMMITTEE ON CITYWIDE MANDATORY HOUSING AFFORDABILITY (MHA)

The Select Committee consists of all nine members of the City Council. As a part of the meeting, District 4 City Councilmember Rob Johnson presented Amendment 4-18, a proposal to intensify the zoning on the eastern edge of the Eastlake neighborhood (seven blocks of Boylston Avenue E. and the east side of one block of Franklin Avenue E.) from the current Low-rise 3 (LR-3) to Midrise (MR). The effect is to increase allowable height under the MR zone to a maximum of 80 feet, a doubling from the current LR-3 height limit of 40 feet. As seen in the transcript below, Councilmember Johnson states that he had attended Eastlake Community Council meetings at which he heard support for midrise zoning.

Based on this information, his fellow City Councilmembers accepted Johnson's proposal to fold Amendment 4-18 into the committee's "consent package," thus preventing a separate discussion or vote on Amendment 4-18 at the Feb. 8 meeting or at the Feb. 25 meeting at which the committee adopted the consent package, clearing it for possible final action at the full City Council meeting that is scheduled for March 18. In view of the false information that the City Councilmembers were given, it is hoped that they will insist on a separate vote on Amendment 4-18 and will reject it.

Following is a transcript of what Councilmember Johnson said about Amendment 4-18. Meeting video is on-line at <http://www.seattlechannel.org/selectcommitteemha/?videoid=x101877> and Johnson's comment is found at 2:24:16 (2 hours, 24 minutes, 16 seconds) into the meeting, and ends less than a minute later at 2:25:04:

City Councilmember Rob Johnson: "Any questions about this one? Folks, I'll just offer in several of the conversations I have been to in the Eastlake Community Council, I have heard a diversity of opinions on this topic, but I believe that this amendment is consistent with what I've heard which is a desire to see taller buildings closer to the freeway and smaller scale buildings as we move closer to the water. So this change to midrise allows for slightly taller buildings to be built on the eastern edge of the Eastlake neighborhood. So I wonder if there are any questions or thoughts about this."

Analysis: Councilmember Johnson is false in his claim to having heard support for his amendment at Eastlake Community Council (ECC) meetings. ECC has no record of Johnson ever having being present at any of its meetings at which such statements could have been made. In any case, Johnson's his amendment 4-18 does not create a "stepped down" profile under which heights actually decrease downhill toward the shoreline. In a February 23, 2019 letter (available by clicking [here](#)) to Johnson and the other eight City Councilmembers, the Eastlake Community Council states:

“Stepping down the height” is being practiced as spot zoning rather than good planning. In selling his midrise proposal to the City Council, Councilmember Johnson has not heeded public input. Both the written summary and the map summary of the March 6, 2017 City Council-sponsored workshop make it clear that the public harbored significant opposition to the midrise proposal on Boylston. Any public support for it was conditional on stepping down the allowable building heights from Boylston Ave. E. as blocks reached closer to Lake Union.

Unless Councilmember Johnson comes up with changed heights below Boylston Ave. E. that follow his stepped-down rationale, the City Council should remove the Boylston midrise from the consent agenda and not pass it as an amendment. Otherwise, Eastlake is left with a crazy quilt with Low-rise 2 zoning on the two blocks of Franklin Avenue East that directly abut to the south of the proposed new Franklin Ave. midrise zone. The rest of Franklin Ave. E. further to the south is Low-rise 3. Downhill across Eastlake Avenue on the west side of Yale Avenue East, the zoning map now in CB 119444 proposes a height increase to Low-rise 3, a little more than a block from Lake Union.