



Why do we need to work to create a “Welcoming Wallingford?”

by Bryan Kirschner (Northwest Wallingford)

Fourteen years ago, when we were looking to buy a home in Seattle, we loved Wallingford’s mix of different forms of housing, including (but not limited to) single family detached homes. Here are some duplexes on Wallingford Avenue:



One benefit of different forms of housing is greater price diversity (and, by extension, more socio-economic, age, and lifestyle diversity). In the last American Housing Survey (2015) the median annual income of Seattle-area households in single-family detached houses was \$98,000 versus \$55,000 for households living in duplexes.

Lately we were dismayed to learn that a previous generation of the Wallingford Community Council went out of their way to downzone this part of Wallingford and outlaw new duplexes. This was reported by KUOW in September:

At the time the neighborhood was run down and polluted from the former Gas Works so developers were snapping up Wallingford’s old bungalows and turning them into duplexes for Teamsters and University of Washington students. Wallingford’s homeowners complained to the City of Seattle. Mike Ruby worked for the Building Department at the time. “Basically, they came saying ‘we’ve got this serious problem with developers coming in and disrupting our neighborhood.’”

Ruby told them, “if you want to make changes in your neighborhood, this is what you need to do.” They followed his instructions and new duplexes were outlawed. (See <http://kuow.org/post/wallingford-fought-developers-decades-it-was-hip> The full text is not transcribed on the website; you have to listen to the audio to hear it).

Sure enough, areas that allowed duplexes were downzoned to single family only in 1976 (current and historic maps shown below). At a time when our city, neighborhood, and neighbors are struggling with housing affordability, the least we can do is restore Wallingford’s heritage zoning. (And the **best we can do** is work together to make it even more progressive.)

We may have become a less welcoming neighborhood to people with less rather than more income and wealth back then. But we can act now to create a more Welcoming Wallingford today and for future generations.

Current zoning map: light yellow=single family



Old zoning map: “RD 5,000” allowed duplexes



Council Bill Number: 97827

Ordinance Number: 105937

AN ORDINANCE relating to and amending plats 22E and 23W, pages 76 and 77, of the Official Zoning Map of The City of Seattle (Ordinance 86300), to rezone certain property in the lower Wallingford Neighborhood (in Blocks 31, 32, 48, 54 through 58 inclusive, 65 and 66, Lake Union Addition, in Blocks 1 and 2 in Bagley’s Addition, and in Blocks 12, 13, 16 and 17, Washington Addition) from duplex residence high density (RD 5000) zone to single family residence high density (RS 5000) zone (Petition of Wallingford Community Council, C.F. 279734, Hearing Examiner No. X-74-204).

Status: Passed Date passed by Full Council: October 25, 1976