



FLOATING HOMES ASSOCIATION

206 325 1132

2329 Fairview Avenue East Seattle WA 98102 USA

seattlefloatinghomes.org

September, 2009

Dear Floating Home Owners and Residents,

This is an early warning about the Department of Planning and Development's (DPD's) revision of Seattle's Shorelines Master Program (SMP). The SMP is the law that regulates our use of the shoreline.

During the past year, DPD has convened a "Citizen's Advisory Committee" to give them some public input on their rewrite. The Floating Homes Association had a representative on this committee, which issued its final report in June. DPD has now taken most of its public comments and is concentrating on writing the new code.

Through the initial Advisory Committee process, we have learned that while stopping short of eliminating existing houseboats, DPD intends to ban any new moorages and impose costly regulations on replacements or remodels.

If you have any intention of ever selling, replacing, remodeling, rebuilding or even repairing your houseboat, these new rules will affect you.

State guidelines for local SMP revisions discourage floating homes, but acknowledge situations of a historic nature, like us.

To justify many of their proposed changes, DPD invokes the goal of protecting endangered salmon migrating through the Ship Canal. This aligns with a regional effort to restore Chinook salmon runs in the Lake Washington basin at large. The Association supports this effort generally and has a history of promoting a better water environment.

There is not, however, much evidence that houseboat moorages have an impact on migrating salmon or that, having been here for roughly a hundred years, we are doing any particular harm. While DPD's proposed changes may have a slight influence on the ecology, the cost of these changes to our community promises to be very high.

The attached matrix lists some of the specific issues we have with DPD's current proposal. The community has yet to see the 'final' revision of the SMP. Once it is released it will go to the mayor and City Council for review.

The FHA is carefully following the SMP revision and you will likely hear from us when it is time to make our case to the Council.

Floating Homes Association

The Department of Planning and Development (DPD) Proposed Updates to the Shoreline Master Program (SMP) and What They Mean for You

For more information, please see www.seattlefloatinghomes.org/smp

DPD's Proposed Regulations	What this means for you	Important Details	Floating Homes Position
Floating homes will no longer be a water dependent use	Your home will lose its status as a preferred use of the shoreline.	Changing floating homes from a “water-dependent use” to an “allowed use” will be a potential erosion of legitimacy for the floating home community.	Remain Water Dependent.
New floating homes will be prohibited	You will be allowed to replace your home in case of damage or for a remodel, however, empty houseboat moorages on any dock will not be filled unless by an existing structure from elsewhere on the lake.	A prohibition on new floating homes de-legitimizes the floating home community in general and may be the first step in a plan to reclaim the shoreline.	Allow at current standards in current limited range.
Adding additional floor area to your home will be prohibited unless total float area is reduced to 1,200 sq ft or less	If your float is larger than 1,200 sq ft, and you want to add <i>any</i> additional floor area to your living space, including a 2 nd story, you will have to reduce the size of your current float or replace it with one that measures 1,200 sq ft or less.	Most houseboat floats cannot be reduced and will have to be replaced at a minimum cost of \$90,000. When you reduce your float size, you lose part of your personal property and this will affect the value of your houseboat. If a buyer cannot remodel or replace an older houseboat on a large float, it will affect the marketability and sale price of your property.	Leave the current regulations in place for non-conforming moorages.
Conforming and non-conforming houseboat moorage standards will be combined	Combining the standards will create more complexity and potential contradictions that may hamper the maintenance and remodeling of your home.	The variety of existing floating home sizes, heights, setbacks etc. is the result of numerous decisions by the City of Seattle over the years. In addition, floating homes and moorages are physically interdependent, and constrained by a web of DNR leases, private leases, cooperative or condominium legal requirements and state and local regulations.	Retain the two separate standards, but rename them as DPD finds the language confusing.
Depth of floats for replacement floating homes will be regulated by the city	City regulation of float depth and material may, depending on your float size and dimensions, significantly limit the height, size and weight of your replacement home.	It is in the best interest of the community that new regulations are based on solid scientific evidence. The data that have been available through DPD do not appear now to justify a complete and outright ban on what might be a useful and environmentally benign floating home component.	Engineering and necessity should determine flotation.
New basements will be prohibited	You will be prohibited from utilizing the potential living or storage space under your home.		Harmless amenity should be allowed.