SUPPLEMENT PAGE A - FOR ZONING CODE VARIANCE

Applicants should be aware that their application will be judged on the basis of four criteria. PDS or the Hearing Examiner must find that all four criteria have been met in order to grant approval.

Variances will not be approved that have the effect of granting a special privilege not shared by other properties in the same vicinity.

This form provides the applicant with an opportunity to address each of the four criteria. You may attach additional sheets.

POINT 1. Describe the special circumstances that apply to your property and/or your intended use (such as shape, topography, location or surroundings) which generally do not apply to other properties or uses in the vicinity.

This is a request for a variance to the amended ordinance No. 09-079 *30.34A.040 Building height and setback,* that applied to the application when first filed. The comment letter by Snohomish County states: 'While SCC 30.34A.040 (2010) is silent on the matter of zoning in incorporated areas, Snohomish County finds that it is appropriate to treat the Town of Woodway areas with R-14,500 or UR zoning as equivalent to the lower density zones listed in (2)(a)'.
The site itself is situated at the very south west corner of the Snohomish County Comprehensive Plan area. As a future Urban Center, the Point Wells site is not as firmly connected to neighboring zones as other higher density zones in the county. As an Urban Center the Point Wells site and especially the Urban Plaza as its front address will have to offer seamless connections and various amenities for the surrounding zones to become an integral party of the county plan. Amongst these are: A connection to Richmond Beach Drive, retail offerings for the project area and surrounding neighborhoods, a transit hub with buses and access to a rail guided commuter platform.
The physical location between railroad and the steep wooded hillside to Woodway forms a unique set of surroundings that has to be reconciled in the design.

POINT 2. Why is this variance necessary to preserve and/or enjoy a substantial property right that others in the vicinity have, but because of special circumstances is denied to your property?

The unique set of site features, described in Point 1, create challenging conditions, which the design proposal shows and this application for a variance from height and setback requirements aim, to resolve holistically. In addition to the isolation from other zones, the Urban Plaza is constrained by the stream, wetlands and steep slope to the east and by right of way for the train (BNSF) to the west. The narrow shape of this parcel and the setback rules when applied verbatim would result in a long narrow build-able zone, that would be centered on the current bridge landing, oriented north - south to achieve the maximum allowable building height.
This zone is centered on the current bridge landing (see illustration 'Setback Envelope Maximum at Upper Plaza'). Concentration of the bulk and height in this particular area would block large view corridors from adjacent properties and result in a mediocre urban design solution. A tall structure directly adjacent to the tracks and residential units mostly facing east with an open plaza for public use and arrival point to the site that is blocked of views and access to sunlight are the result. The access traffic lanes would have to be located close to the eastern property line, while the buildings would be located against the western border and the railroad easement, which would expose eastern properties to traffic noise. In the proposed option (see illustration 'Planned Option for Upper Plaza design'), the proposed design mitigates noise from traffic and from the rail, both being located west of the buildings . The resulting solution would comply with the zoning code but affect surrounding parcels views negatively for reasons mentioned above.

POINT 3. The variance I am requesting will not be detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the properties or improvements in the vicinity and zone in which my property is located because:

The intent of the zoning code is to step bulk and height from neighboring residential zones up to the allowable height. The preferred design favors view corridors for the neighboring sites that are located to the south and east, which is in keeping with this intent. The higher plaza buildings are placed towards the east property line along the secondary access road and adjacent hillside. This zone directly east of the Urban Plaza is void of neighboring structures (the next neighbor is located ~750' further east) and includes critical areas, which will preclude from future construction directly adjacent to the Urban Plaza site. The zoning code interpretation to treat the Snohomish UR parcel and the Woodway R14.5 zone as normal low density R zones when strictly applied, causes a detrimental effect by resulting in a zoning envelope with a bulk and height combination that would drastically diminish views from the closer south, south-eastern parcels.
Placement of the buildings closer to the eastern property line of the site drastically improves view corridors to these neighboring properties, while not negatively affecting views for the northern neighbors. When placed along the east, the buildings step up from north to south, helping to control the scale of the development in relation to the southern neighbors.

POINT 4. Why would variance approval not adversely affect the comprehensive plan?

The development comprehensive plan is not adversely impacted by an approval of this request. The location of this particular part of the development is in a key position and builds a strong connection to the surrounding neighborhoods. The building massing is equally distributed and appropriate for this area. The comprehensive plan states that Residential net densities shall not be less than 12 dwelling units per acre, which equals about 60 units for this area of the site. The preferred design follows this guideline, placing office and residential functions in 3 mixed use buildings on the Urban Plaza, therefore creating a vibrant, safe mix of functions the site entry ('Eyes on the street'). This placement of the units will reduce traffic crossing the bridge to the lower site, and activate the retail spaces below.

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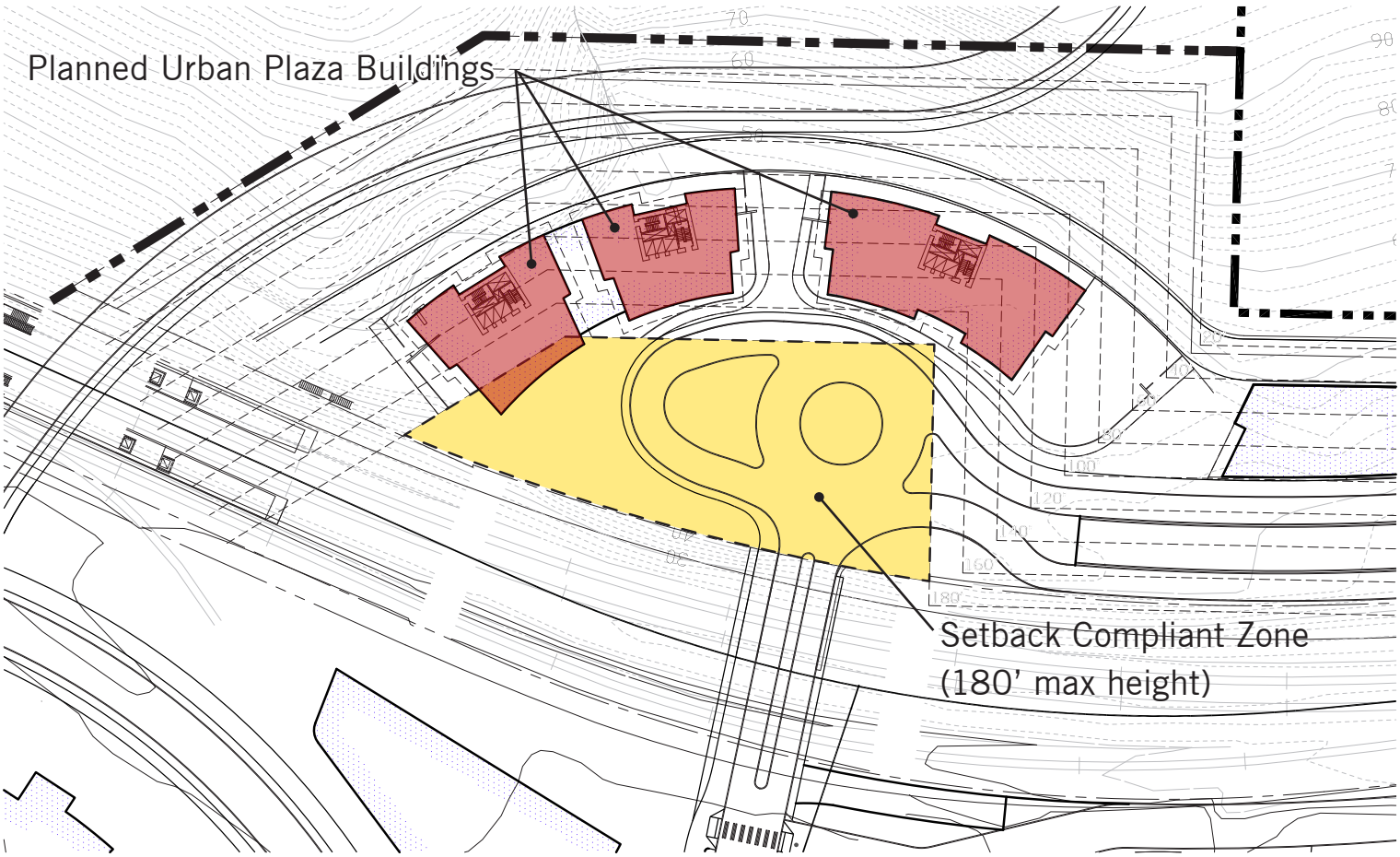
Plan Diagram Urban Plaza (Not to Scale)



In this excerpt plan, the proposed Urban Plaza buildings (Model 1) are shown alongside the Setback Compliant Zone on the site (Model 2).

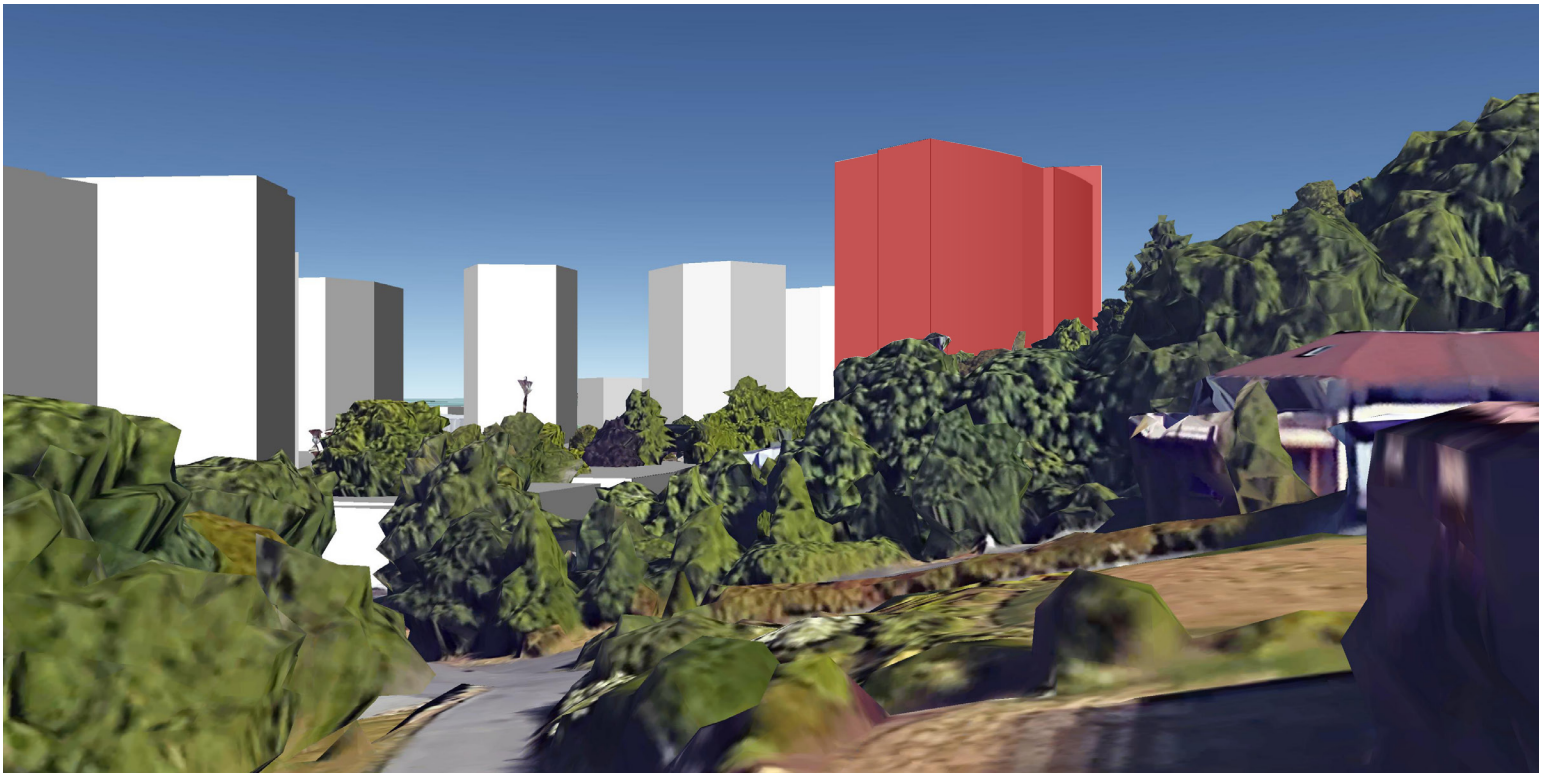
View Impact Analysis

Model 1 - Planned Option for Upper Plaza Design

Model 2 - Setback Envelope Maximum at Upper Plaza

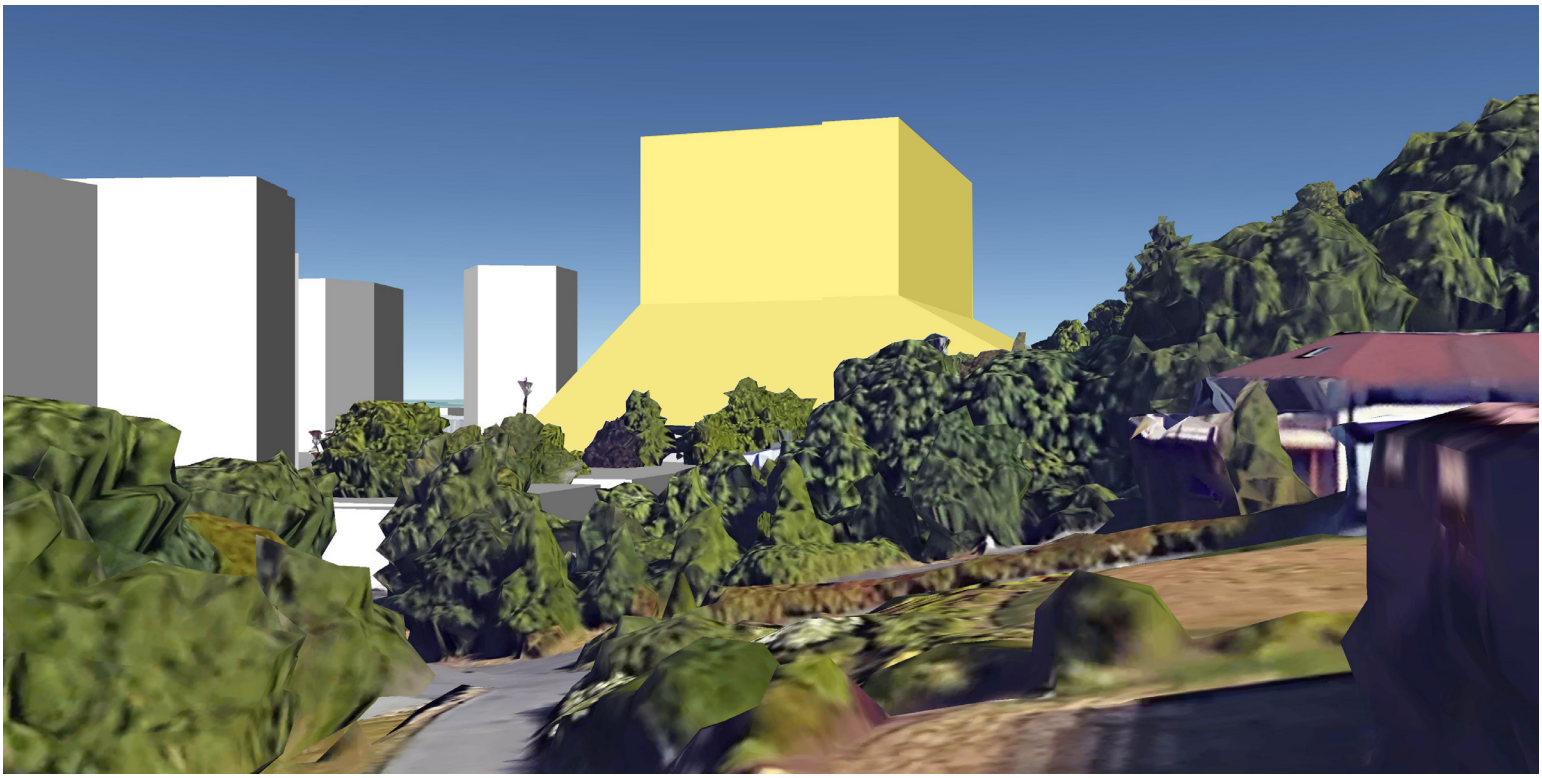
To study the view impact of different massing options, Models 1 and 2 were inserted as .KMZ files into Google Earth, and perspective views were taken from surrounding areas. This method of visualization enables an accurately scaled model of the project to be studied in realistic context created by Google's photogrammetry based earth mapping.

View 1 - looking NNW



Model 1

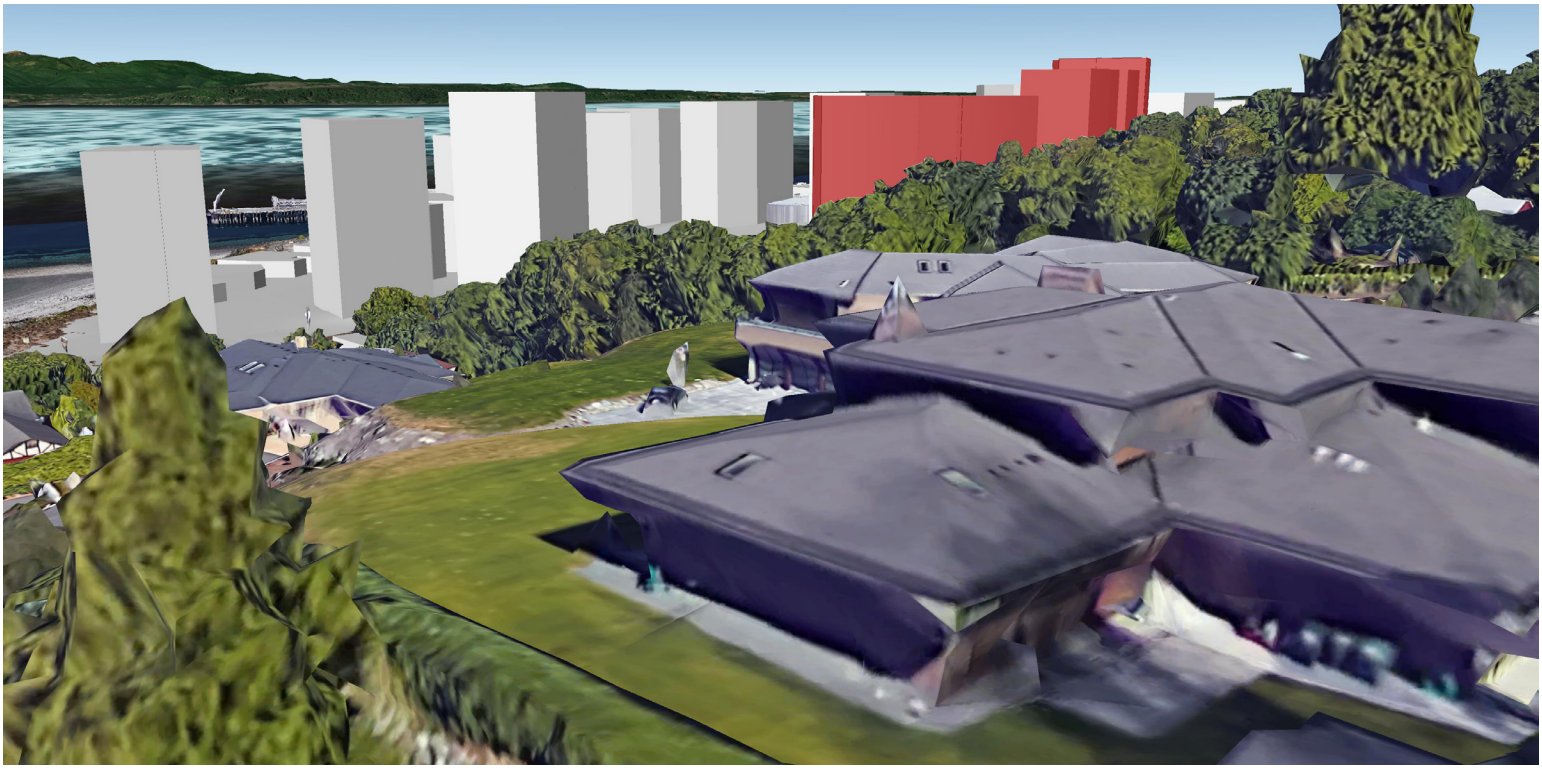
This model shows the view impact and scale directly adjacent to the site. When the view is oriented directly at the Point Wells development the Urban Plaza towers match the scale of the towers on the remainder of the site.



Model 2

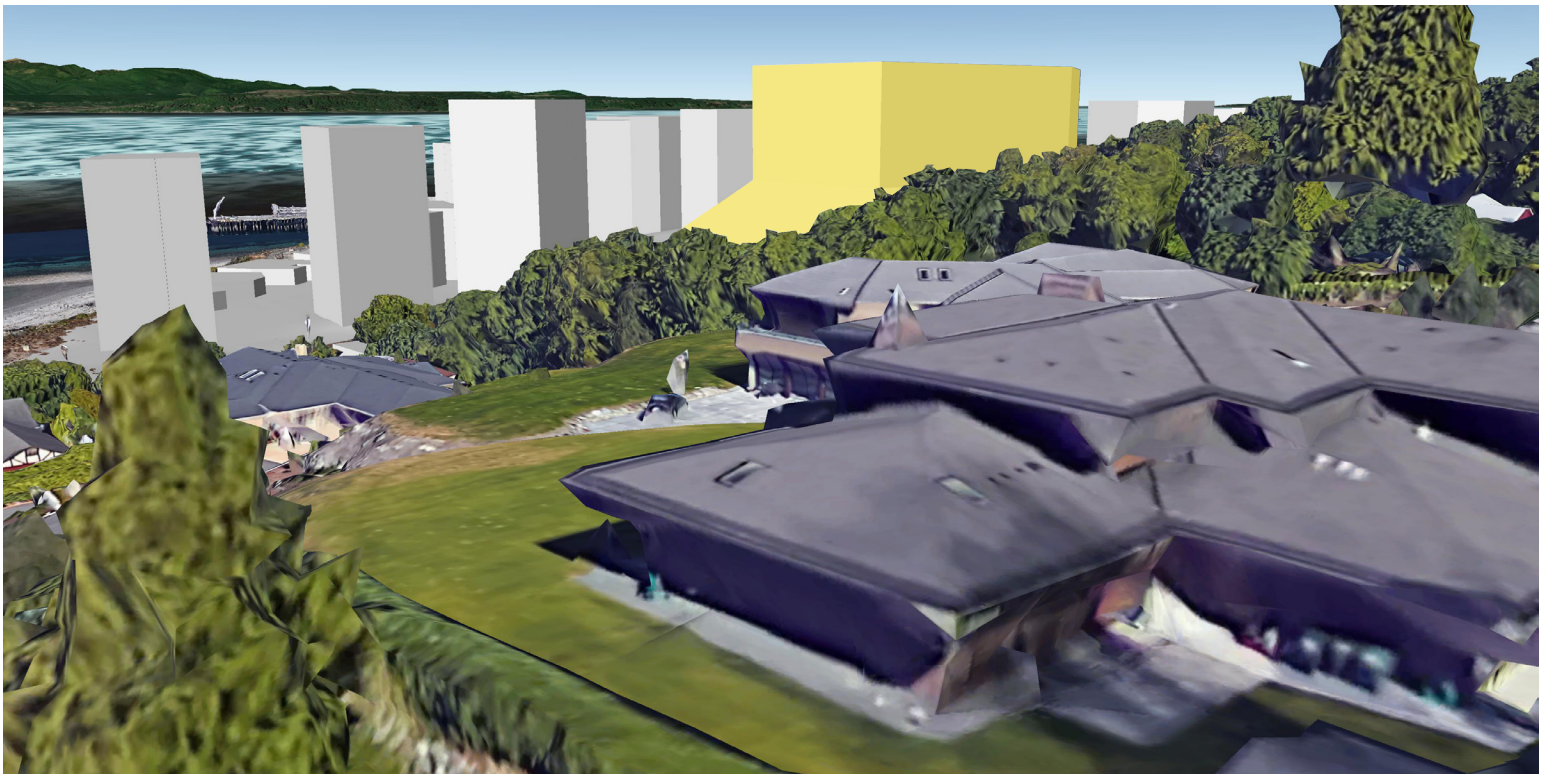
When the full massing without need for setback variance is shown, the scale of the tower in the Urban Plaza creates much more of a visual impact on adjacent properties, and does not match the scale of the adjacent towers (this could be diminished through facade development, but the tower would still block a substantial view).

View 2 - looking NW



Model 1

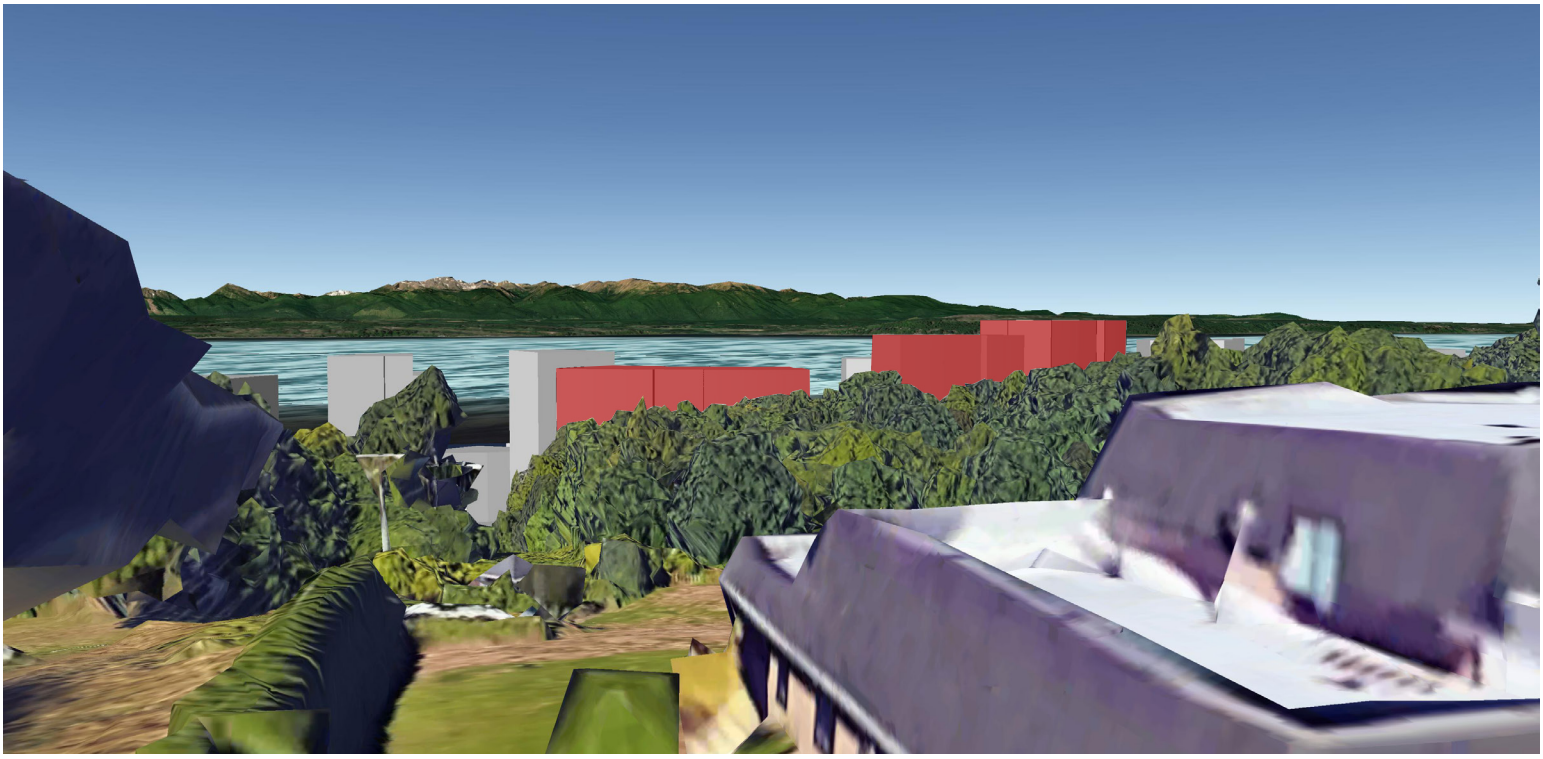
This view is taken from the roof of a building to to the south east of the Point Wells development. This view shows that the building heights stepping down towards the south significantly improves the sense of scale along the south edge of the site.



Model 2

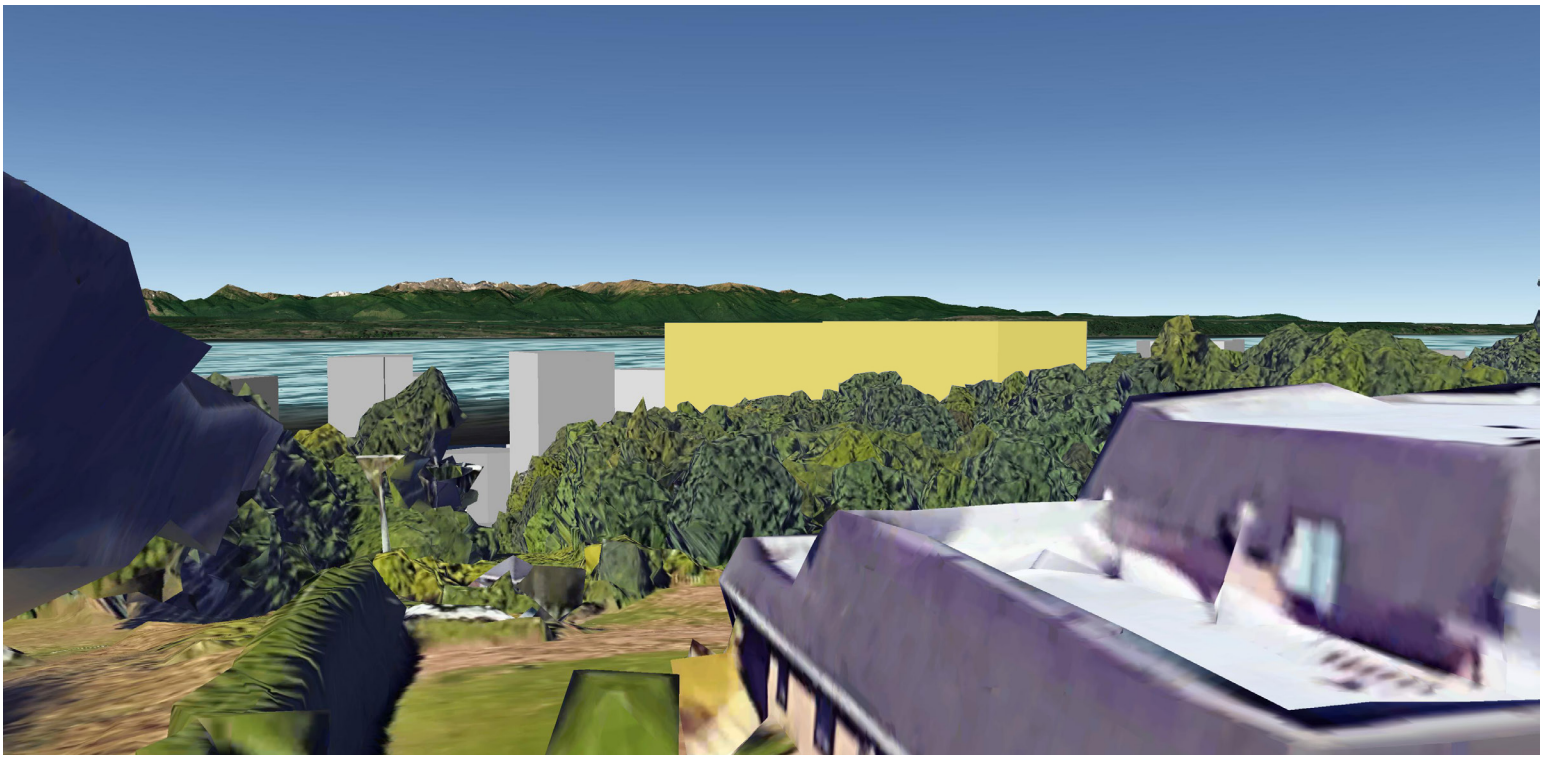
When the full envelope is used, mass and sense of scale of the Urban Plaza tower is much more prominent. The mass blocks any potential view that would have occured between buildings in the North and Central Villages.

View 3 - looking W



Model 1

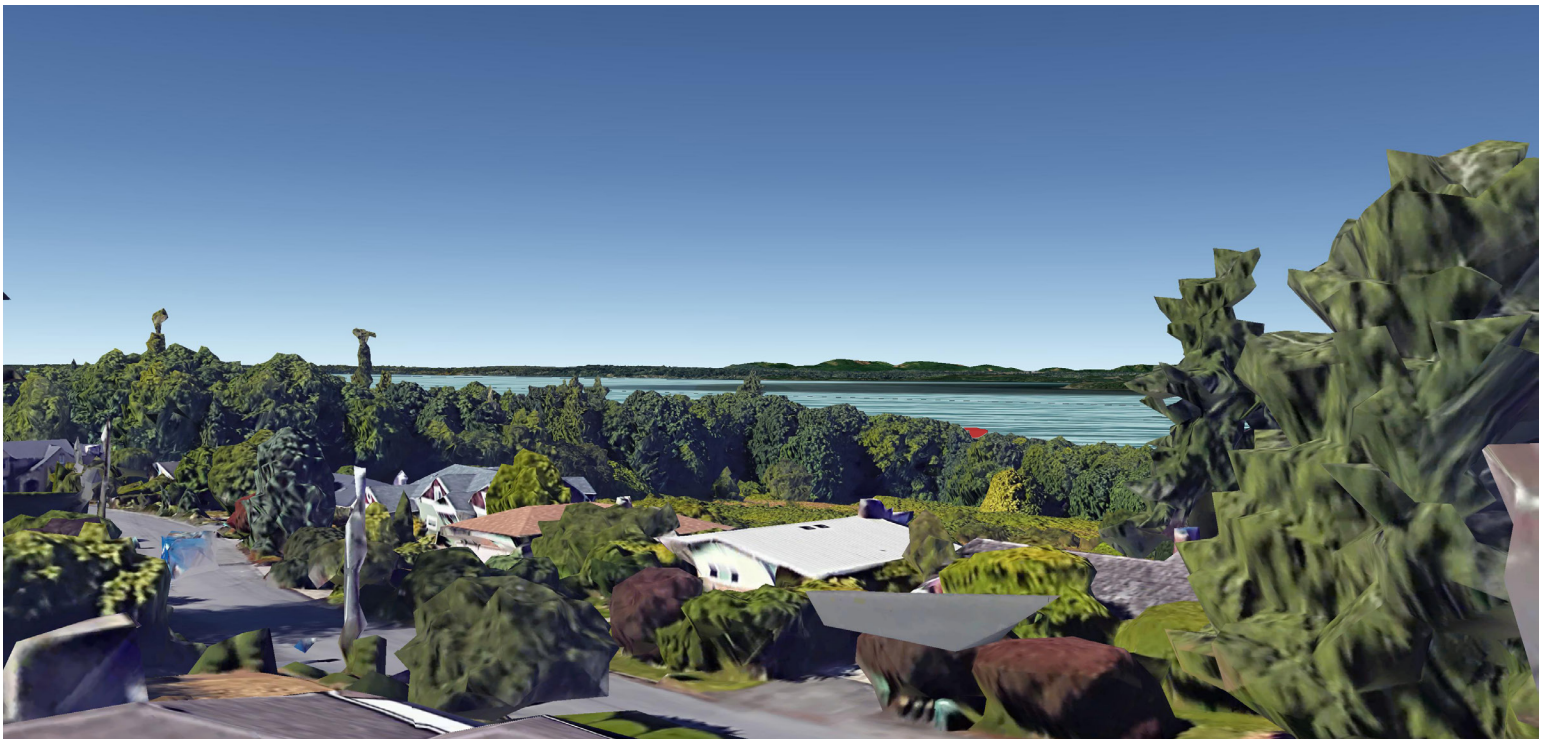
This view from directly east of the Point Wells development, looking over the wooded hillsite adjacent to the site. Again, the stepped heights of the buildings greatly improves the view over the development from these existing properties.



Model 2

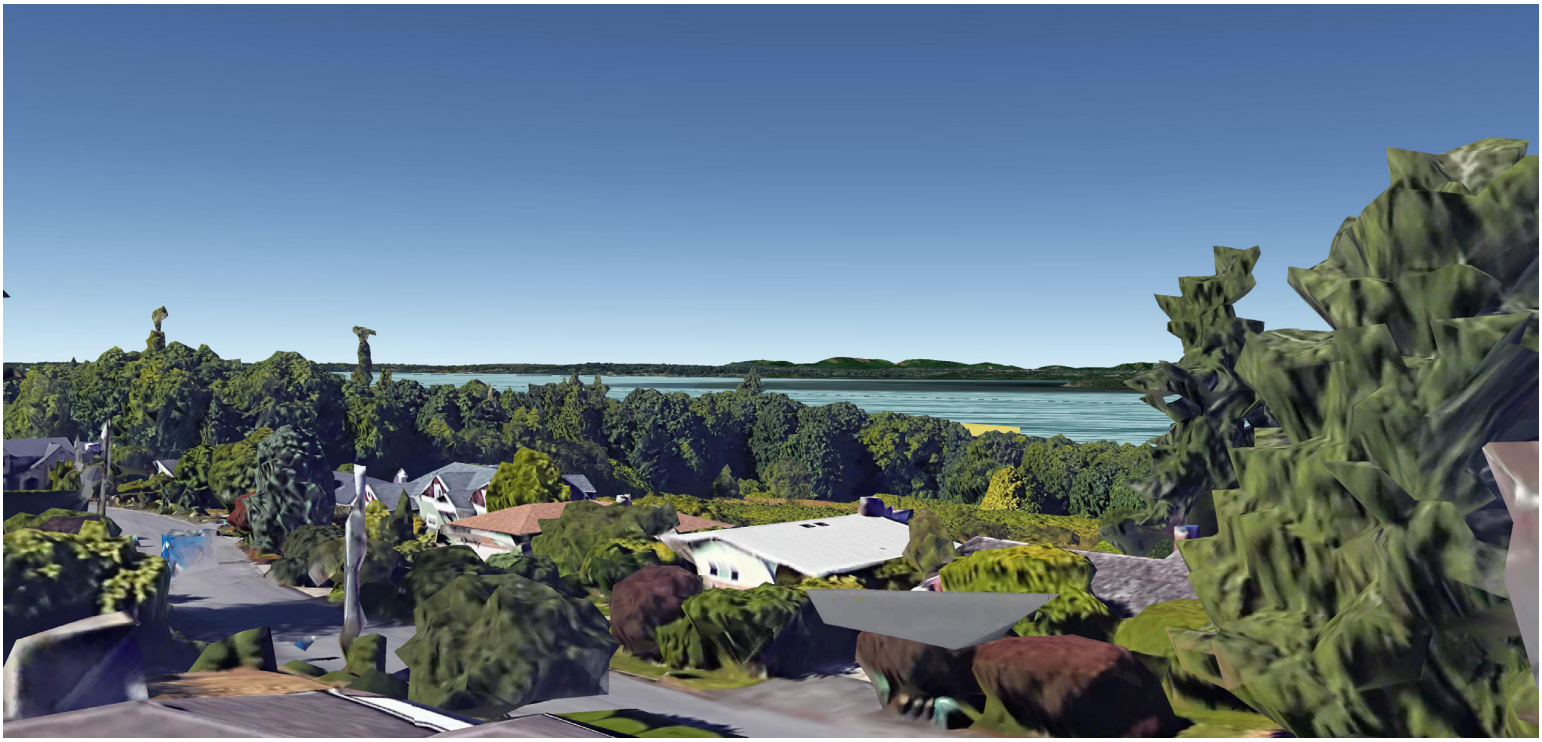
When the setback compliant envelope is placed into the site, the view impact is considerably more. The building fully masks a large portion of the shoreline on the opposite side of Puget Sound.

View 4 - looking SW



Model 1

Looking south towards the Point Wells development, the impact from the Urban Plaza is minimal. Only a corner of the north tower can be seen.



Model 2

The visual impact of the setback compliant envelope is also minimal. The view is slightly more obscured by this massing, however due to the distance from the Urban Plaza buildings neither model makes a significant impact.