

# 5 things you need to know about the Sodo rezoning plan



The rezoned area in Sodo includes Lumen Field and T-Mobile Park.

MARCUS R. DONNER | PSBJ FILE



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Seattle City Council voted, 6-3, last week to rezone a two-block area around the stadiums in Sodo to allow for housing.

The land, which has long been designated as an industrial zone, will be open to the development of up to 990 residential units. Now, the measure is headed to Mayor Bruce Harrell's desk and will likely go into law later this year following a contentious battle between unions, businesses and elected officials.

Despite its passage, the rezoning remains controversial and many questions loom. Here's a quick primer on the Sodo rezoning effort.

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### Wasn't the Sodo rezoning issue decided in 2023? How did it resurface?

Council President Sara Nelson, who introduced the proposal in January, said she felt that the zoning around Sodo should be revisited while the city goes through its One Seattle Plan, a citywide rezoning effort.

The proposal was framed as a way to address more affordable housing and more space for small businesses. But for more small business space to “pencil out” for developers, Nelson has said housing would have to be added on top of “Makers District.”

Half of any housing on industrial lands would also be required to be built for people making 60% to 90% of the area median income (about \$63,200 to \$94,800 for a single-person household).

### **Why did the Port of Seattle oppose the rezoning?**

The port argued that more housing would increase foot traffic in the area, which would disrupt maritime activities. The agency regularly pointed to trucks headed in and out of the port along Interstate 90 that could pose a threat to pedestrians.

### **What area will be rezoned?**

The final, rezoned Stadium Overlay District sits on a north-south stretch of a multiblock area that covers Lumen Field, T-Mobile Park, the Showbox Sodo and a few of the properties around them.

Initially, the district also included parcels between First Avenue and Alaskan Way, including the 5-acre, soon-to-be-developed Washington and Oregon Shippers Cooperative Association site.

Council members passed an amendment to the bill last week that would exclude properties west of First Avenue for development, trimming down on the district's total area. Councilmember Cathy Moore, who introduced the amendment, said it was to address some of the port's concerns about a 200-foot barrier between housing and major truck routes.

The area, according to the city, is built atop a liquefaction zone – land with loose, saturated soil that could destabilize during an earthquake. The council passed another amendment requiring property owners in the area to be notified of the liquefaction zone and related risks.

Another amendment requires housing in the area to include visible signage with similar warnings for residents.

### **What does it mean for the properties that Chris Hansen's owns in Sodo?**

The rezoned land could benefit Chris Hansen, a billionaire who owns many of the plots that would be in play for redevelopment.

Hansen, the founder of Valiant Capital Partners, had led a group to buy about 13.5 acres in Sodo for \$129.6 million. For a time, the vision had been to build an NBA-ready arena on that land, but now Climate Pledge Arena is considered the clear No. 1 option if the NBA returns to Seattle.

Council members also passed an amendment saying that any development on the land could not be done with public funds, a sticking point when the council discussed rezoning the land for a stadium in 2016.

Councilmember Dan Strauss, a vocal opponent of the rezoning, said at a meeting last week that the port has even proposed purchasing the plots from Hansen, but that he has not yet responded to its inquiries.

Hansen did not respond to the Business Journal's request for comment.

### **What has Mayor Bruce Harrell said about the rezoning effort?**

Mayor Bruce Harrell, a backer of the 2023 measure that protected industrial lands, has been quiet about the renewed effort to rezone Sodo. Harrell's press secretary, Callie Craighead, said that the mayor will "decide his response" once he receives a letter from the clerk with the measure.

“Our office continues to believe that the 2023 legislation was sound, and we remained neutral on this legislation throughout the City Council’s recent process,” Craighead said.

Notably, the bill would still go into law [without Harrell's signature](#), if the mayor opts not to act on it. If Harrell vetoes the bill, it would go back to the City Council, which can override the veto with a six-vote majority.

## **What’s next?**

The bill is slated to go into effect June 30. But one potential wrinkle hanging over lawmakers is the port’s threat of suing the city over the bill.

The Northwest Seaport Alliance sent the City Council a letter outlining “legal infirmities” with the legislation and pointing to places in state law that the legislation allegedly violates.

After the measure passed, the port said it is reviewing legal options.

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