



Advice #10

Date: April 26, 2007

To: Mayor Greg Nickels and Members of the Seattle City Council

From: Ron LaFayette, Chair, and Michelle Rupp, Vice-Chair, on Behalf of the Northgate Stakeholders Group

Subject: STAKEHOLDERS ADVICE #10 CONCERNING THE PROPOSED NORTHGATE WAY REZONE

The Northgate Stakeholders Group has taken great interest in the City's planning efforts to encourage development in the area along and around Northgate Way. The significant public investment in the future Northgate park at NE 112th street provides a rare opportunity to coordinate the public and private development opportunities, which are a key step in the revitalization of the Northgate urban center. In order to move this work forward, Stakeholders also believe it is essential to work with the City to advance the principles outlined by the Stakeholders in previous recommendations. These include recommendations regarding the Thornton Place/Thornton Creek Channel project; the 5th Avenue Streetscape; and the Coordinated Transportation Investment Plan (CTIP). In these recommendations, the Stakeholders have called for private and public investment that: 1) creates a new Northgate where people live, work, shop and play; 2) integrates major projects within a unified urban design framework; 3) establishes new public spaces; and 4) provides for improved transit, bicycle and pedestrian movement.

Transportation investment in the redeveloping area continues to be of the highest priority. In Advice #9, Stakeholders commented on critical issues related to the implementation of the CTIP, which creates a blueprint for large-scale additional transportation investments throughout the Northgate area. Central among these issues is the certainty of City funding to implement all priority CTIP investments. Though the proposed major public and private developments that are the subject of these recommendations were anticipated when the CTIP was prepared, moving them from concept to reality requires continued attention to the scope and sequencing of transportation investments. **These investments are nothing less than essential in managing the increased density of the area.**

On December 2, 2006, several Stakeholders participated in a Design Workshop focused on planning of the Northgate Way area and coordination of the proposed public and private developments. The major public investments are CTIP improvements on Northgate Way and the neighborhood park on NE 112th. Private development opportunities have been identified on property owned by the Mullaly family, Kauri Investments, and Wallace Properties. Among the issues reviewed at the Design Workshop and the subsequent February 27 meeting of the

Northgate Stakeholders Group were the character of the public realm improvements; coordination of public and private investment opportunities; and the potential for increased density along and around Northgate Way.

The Northgate Stakeholders Group believes that increasing density in the urban center is a critical element in achieving Northgate revitalization. Therefore, the Northgate Stakeholders Group endorses the City’s plan to study and propose changes in zoning to accommodate more density. The following key recommendations should be considered in such a proposal:

- **Heights up to a Maximum of 125 feet** – Stakeholders believe heights up to 125 feet should be included with the caveat that building heights should vary with modulation of rooflines and sensitive transitions to lower density residential zones. Further, the City should encourage development that breaks up the “superblock” patterns and creates pedestrian-friendly environments with complementary open space designs that reinforce the important role of the neighborhood park in the community.
 - **Study Area and Phasing Approach** – Stakeholders believe that increased density for areas along and around Northgate Way and the Transit Center should be considered in two phases. The first phase should be the study area consistent with the recommendations from the Design Workshop, which includes properties along Northgate Way from Meridian to Roosevelt and around the future park. A future second phase should be the properties near the future Sound Transit Northgate station and Metro/King County Transit Center. Commercially-zoned properties located from NE 116th St. south to Northgate Way along Roosevelt or Pinehurst should also be included in the study area and appropriate zoning should be considered for these parcels in either the first or second phase of the study.
 - **SEPA Public Engagement Process** – The City plans to prepare an EIS, which will thoroughly review the impacts of zoning alternatives on surrounding neighborhoods and transportation within and throughout the Northgate area and which will include extensive opportunities for public engagement and comments.
 - **Transportation is the Priority for Public Benefits-** In the Northgate area, City use of tailored incentives for developers to increase affordable housing, provide public spaces, and improve transportation should focus primarily on pressing transportation needs. The City should also consider needs to improve existing parks adjacent to the study area and how public benefit incentives, mitigation requirements (where there is a nexus to development impacts) or programmatic and capital improvement resources may address those needs. At the same time, the City must carefully consider the effect additional mitigation or impact fees may have on the ability to provide affordable housing and their potential to stifle plans for development.
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After the April 10 Northgate Stakeholders Group meeting, Stakeholder Velva Maye provided the following clarification related to the expanded study area:

The formal advice extended by the Northgate Stakeholders Group states that "Commercially zoned properties located from 116th St. South to Northgate Way along Roosevelt or Pinehurst should also be included in the study area and appropriate zoning should be considered for these parcels in either the first or second phase of the study."

As worded, the advice could confuse City officials and others regarding the current status of property north of NE 114th Street within the Northgate core area. This must be made clear to all parties: all such property is zoned Single-Family. Since none of it is "commercially zoned," none of it would be subject to the zoning review that the advice recommends.