



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development

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To: Councilmember Sally Clark
From: Diane Sugimura
Subject: Recommendations on Proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendments

The Growth Management Act limits amending Seattle's Comprehensive Plan to once each year, except for certain specified actions. City Council Resolution 30412 establishes a two-step process for considering annual amendments. The first step results in a resolution determining, according to the criteria set forth below, which proposed amendments are to be studied further in 2008. The second step will be legislation adopted in the fall amending the Comp Plan. This memorandum presents the Executive's recommendations regarding which of the proposed Comp Plan amendments are to be included in the resolution for further study in 2008.

Criteria for Consideration of a Comprehensive Plan Amendment

Following are the factors for determining whether a proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment will be placed on the annual amendment docket. The Executive's recommendations are based on these criteria.

- A. The amendment is appropriate for the Comprehensive Plan:
 - 1. The amendment is consistent with the role of the Comprehensive Plan under the State Growth Management Act;
 - 2. The amendment is consistent with the Countywide Planning Policies;
 - 3. The intent of the amendment cannot be accomplished by a change in regulations only;
 - 4. The amendment is not better addressed as a budgetary or programmatic decision; or
 - 5. The amendment is not better addressed through another process, such as neighborhood planning.
- B. The amendment is permissible under existing state and local laws.
- C. It is practical to consider the amendment:
 - 1. The timing of the amendment is appropriate, and Council will have sufficient information necessary to make an informed decision.
 - 2. Within the time available City staff will be able to develop the text for the amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and, if necessary, the Seattle Municipal Code, based on sufficient analysis.
 - 3. The proposed amendment is consistent with the overall vision of the Comprehensive Plan and well-established Comprehensive Plan policy, or the Mayor or Council is interested in significantly changing existing policy.

4. The amendment has not been recently rejected by the City Council.

D. There has been an appropriate neighborhood review process to develop any proposed change to a neighborhood plan, or a neighborhood review process can be conducted prior to final Council consideration of the amendment.

Summary of Threshold Recommendations

<p>The Executive recommends that the following proposed Comp Plan amendments be studied further in 2008: (Numbering corresponds to Council documents.)</p>
<p>1. Add a policy to the Neighborhood Planning Element related to constructing lids over I-5 to connect First Hill and Capitol Hill to Downtown.</p>
<p>2. Remove the Sand Point policies from the Comprehensive Plan, and incorporate them into another planning document.</p>
<p>3. Amend the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) to redesignate areas within the Livable South Downtown study area from Industrial to Commercial/Mixed Use and remove some areas from the Duwamish Manufacturing/Industrial Center (MIC).</p>
<p>4. Amend the FLUM to redesignate a portion of the South Lake Union Urban Center from Industrial to Commercial/Mixed Use.</p>
<p>5. Amend the FLUM to redesignate the Nelson Chevrolet site in Ballard from Industrial to Commercial/Mixed Use.</p>
<p>6. Amend the FLUM to redesignate the Harbor Avenue Corridor Property, from Industrial to Commercial/Mixed Use and remove the area from the Duwamish MIC.</p>
<p>7. Amend the FLUM to redesignate an area bounded by Airport Way S. to the north and east and interstate access ramps to the south and west, known as the Stadium East Property, from Industrial to a downtown designation.</p>
<p>20. Add a goal requiring a reduction in vehicle miles traveled in and through the city, and a policy favoring highway projects that produce little or no such increase.</p>
<p>21. Amend goals and policies to support Seattle Planning Commission's Affordable Housing Action Agenda.</p>

The Executive recommends that the following proposed Comp Plan amendments not be studied further in 2008:
8. Add new goals and policies to the Utilities Element related to development of solar energy infrastructure.
9. Add new goals and policies and consider adding a new element to the Comprehensive Plan related to preservation of existing trees and increasing Seattle's tree canopy.
10. Add a new policy prohibiting location of bicycle trails within 100 feet of an existing short line railroad within the BINMIC.
11. Amend the FLUM to redesignate approximately 25,000 square feet of property on the east side of Nesbit Ave. N., adjacent to and south of N. 90th St. from Multifamily to Commercial/Mixed Use.
12. Prohibit new surface parking in the Downtown Mixed Residential zone with both a Comp Plan amendment and a Land Use Code amendment.
13. Ensure that all transit stops have signaled crosswalks (pedestrian signal or full signal, as appropriate), when located on a roadway with vehicles traveling on more than one lane in any particular direction.
14. Create a new Comp Plan element entitled "Open and Participatory Government."
15. Amend Neighborhood Planning policy N-3 to express support for a model of neighborhood planning under which the City funds neighborhoods to conduct their neighborhood planning process under City contract and according to City guidelines.
16. Amend Neighborhood Planning goal NG-3 to call for neighborhood planning for all areas of the City, not just those that are expected to take significant amounts of growth.
17. Amend Land Use element shoreline policies to be more favorable to consideration of an aerial structure for replacement of the viaduct.
18. Remove land north of W. Dravus St. to W. Emerson St., and approximately between 15th Ave. W. on the east and 17th Ave. W. on the west (in the Interbay area) from the BINMIC.
19. Add a policy discouraging extra-heavy transit buses and solid waste trucks that unacceptably damage Seattle's roads and bridges.

Discussion of Proposed Amendments Not Recommended for Further Study

8. Solar Energy Technology Investments

The proposal is to add new goals and policies to the Utilities Element related to development of solar energy infrastructure.

Determining to invest in solar power infrastructure is a budgetary and programmatic decision not appropriate for the Comp Plan. Comp Plan goals and policies already set forth a clear preference for clean and renewable sources of energy when conservation and technologies that reduce demand cannot accommodate Seattle's planned growth.

9. Comprehensive Plan Trees Element

The proposal would add new goals and policies and possibly a new element to the Comprehensive Plan related to preservation of existing trees and increasing Seattle's tree canopy.

Goals and policies with respect to the value of trees already exist in the Comp Plan, placed in the context of the activities that may affect or be enhanced by them. The Land Use element has a section devoted to trees policies (LU39 to LU41) along with several additional references to the function of street trees; the Utilities Element references the capacity of trees to offset greenhouse gas emissions; and the Transportation Element references trees as characteristics within street types. Policies regarding trees are also found in the Cultural Resources element and the Neighborhood Planning element. The Environment Element was amended in 2007 to add goals for restoring Seattle's tree canopy and to direct that the Urban Forest Management Plan include a ten-year inventory of tree canopy. Improving City performance at preserving existing trees and increasing tree canopy will be more effectively achieved through regulatory and work program efforts conducted by each department. The Mayor's April 2007 Urban Forest Management Plan is a recent step toward coordinating the City's efforts and is a more appropriate tool for directing City resources toward fostering a greener Seattle.

10. Prohibiting Bike Trails near Rail Lines in the BINMIC

The proposal is to add a new policy prohibiting location of bicycle trails within 100 feet of an existing short line railroad within the BINMIC.

The objectives of the proposed amendment are better addressed by regulations and by careful design of the remainder of the Burke-Gilman Trail. This stretch of the Burke-Gilman Trail is currently being planned, and has been the subject of a broad public process associated with the Bicycle Master Plan. The Comp Plan is not an appropriate place to revisit the specific tradeoffs associated with adjacent land uses.

11. Aurora-Licton Springs Future Land Use Map Amendment

The proposal would amend the Future Land Use Map to redesignate approximately 25,000 square feet of land at the southeast corner of N. 90th Street and Nesbit Avenue N. from Multifamily residential to Commercial/Mixed Use.

The proposed amendment is in conjunction with a proposal to rezone the subject area to Neighborhood Commercial 3, which does not require an amendment to the Future Land Use Map.

12. Prohibition of New Surface Parking in the Downtown Mixed Residential (DMR) Zone

The proposal would amend Downtown Urban Design Policy 10 and Section 23.49.146 of the Land Use Code to prohibit principal and accessory parking at street level in DMR zones whether principal use or accessory, temporary or permanent, regardless of the number of stalls.

The intent of the proposed amendment can be entirely accomplished through a change in regulation. No Comp Plan change would be required because existing land use goals and policies (e.g.s, LUG 35 and LU 52) authorize regulations that prohibit certain uses.

13. Signaled Crosswalks at Transit Stops

The proposal would amend Transportation Policies 13, 24 and 27 to expand the definition of accessible transit stops to include the design and engineering of crosswalks at transit stops, and ensure that all transit stops have signaled crosswalks when located on a roadway with vehicles traveling on more than one lane in any direction.

The proposal's intent can best be achieved through budgetary or programmatic decisions, such as the transportation strategic plan or the street design manual that would further existing policy objectives of safe and convenient transit service to meet the needs of riders.

14. Open and Participatory Government Element

The proposal would create a new Comprehensive Plan element with goals and policies devoted to transparent and open government, among other matters, including public disclosure requests; operations of the executive and legislative branches, the City Attorney, advisory boards and commissions, Seattle Channel and City web sites.

The proposed amendment is not consistent with the role of the Comp Plan under the GMA, which is primarily concerned with growth management. The proposed amendment is more concerned with general City of Seattle government procedures, and would be most appropriately addressed by an amendment to the City Charter or by other legislative action.

15. Grassroots Model of Neighborhood Planning

The proposal would amend Neighborhood Planning policy N3 to indicate that the City is receptive to the model of funding neighborhoods to conduct their own neighborhood planning processes under City contract and according to City guidelines.

The intent of the proposed amendment will be better addressed by programmatic and budgetary decisions by the Mayor and City Council, who are currently engaged in determining appropriate processes for the forthcoming neighborhood plan updates.

16. Neighborhood Planning for Areas Not Considering Growth

The proposal would amend Neighborhood Planning Goal NG3 to encourage, rather than permit, neighborhood planning efforts in areas of the City not anticipated to take significant amounts of growth. It would also delete language encouraging limited scopes of work and focused planning objectives in areas not anticipated to take significant amounts of growth.

The proposed amendment is not consistent with the role of the Comp Plan under the GMA. The Comp Plan and GMA are fundamentally oriented toward managing growth in order to conserve and make most efficient use of limited resources. Neighborhoods outside of urban villages also deserve strong communities and quality services, but to further growth management objectives it is appropriate that the emphasis in neighborhood planning be on areas expected to take concentrations of growth.

17. Aerial Structure Viaduct Replacement

The proposal would amend Land Use goal 47 and policies 241, 250 and 270 to remove the prohibition of aerial transportation structures over 35 feet in height, and associated policies on height and allowed uses, in Seattle's Central Waterfront Shoreline Environment.

In 2006, the City Council amended the Comp Plan to support a vision of Seattle's waterfront articulated in the Central Waterfront Concept Plan. Adopting the proposed changes would be inconsistent with the Concept Plan's policy direction, which the City continues to pursue.

18. Removal of Interbay area from the BINMIC

The proposal would change the BINMIC boundary to exclude land north of W. Dravus St. to W. Emerson St., and approximately between 15th Ave. W. on the east and 17th Ave. W. on the west, leaving the new BINMIC boundary in this area adjacent to the Burlington Northern railroad tracks. The proposal is associated with a potential future proposal to rezone the area from IG2 (General Industrial 2) to IC (Industrial-Commercial). IC zoning is appropriate within the BINMIC's boundaries and thus the intent of the proposal can be achieved through a change in regulation, without amending the Comprehensive Plan.

19. Heavy Vehicles Policy

The proposal would add a policy discouraging extra-heavy transit buses and solid waste trucks that have more potential to damage roads and bridges, and would encourage transit agencies to purchase lighter-weight vehicles and offer incentives to solid waste contractors to use trucks that do not require the state's solid-waste-hauler weight exemption.

The proposal can best be achieved through budgetary or programmatic decisions by transit agencies and Seattle Public Utilities, or by changes to state law.