



City of Seattle Seattle Planning Commission

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March 17, 2008

Honorable Councilmember Sally J. Clark
Chair, Planning, Land Use and Neighborhoods Committee
Seattle City Council
PO Box 34025
Seattle, WA 98124-4025

RE: Recommendations on Proposed 2008 Comprehensive Plan Amendments

Dear Councilmember Clark,

The Seattle Planning Commission is an independent volunteer body that advises city officials on broad goals, policies and plans for the physical development of the City. The Planning Commission is pleased to provide you with our comments and recommendations on the proposed 2008 Comprehensive Plan Amendments.

We will participate in the 2008 Comprehensive Plan amendment process in two stages. At this first stage, we were briefed by Council Central staff on the amendment submissions and now provide you these recommendations regarding which proposals we feel should be considered and further analyzed. Later in the year we will review your final set of amendments and provide our recommendations regarding adoption of each proposed amendment. In the following recommendations the Planning Commission used the well-established criteria for considering a Comprehensive Plan amendment included in Resolution 30976 adopted by Council on May 14, 2007 (Attachment 1), and those outlined on the Department of Planning and Development's website.

The Commission's approval to forward proposed amendments for further consideration should not be interpreted as our approval of the specific proposal itself – it is intended to be our agreement that the proposal should be further studied for possible inclusion as an amendment later in the year. In addition we have comments on several of the amendments and make suggestions for further analysis.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Purpose of Seattle's Comprehensive Plan

We believe that many of the applications for proposed 2008 amendments are not appropriate for consideration in the Comprehensive Plan. While some of the proposals may have merit as policy considerations, they are not appropriate for the mission and goal of the Comprehensive Plan. As the stewards of the Plan we are concerned about the overall effectiveness and meaningfulness of the Plan if it becomes diluted or weighed down. This certainly should not preclude city officials from considering these amendments

in other policy venues, and we try to make suggestions of other processes where they might be considered. This is true for several of the amendments proposed in 2008. With regard to these amendments, the Commission is not suggesting that there may not be an appropriate policy argument to be further considered, but that either it is not appropriately addressed in the Comprehensive Plan and/or there may be another more appropriate process for the discussion.

The purpose of Seattle's Comprehensive Plan is to articulate a vision for how Seattle will accommodate residential and employment growth over the next 20 years, while promoting the values of its citizens, a vibrant economy and livable neighborhoods. The plan, titled "Toward a Sustainable Seattle," was adopted in 1994 to comply with the requirements of the Washington State Growth Management Act. The Plan does this by encouraging most new growth to locate in places it designates as either urban centers or urban villages. It contains growth targets for each urban center and urban village to indicate the amount of growth the City is planning over the coming 20 years. The Plan also includes policies that describe how the City intends to serve this growth with transportation and other infrastructure. The Comp Plan is part of a hierarchy of related plans, including Vision 2020 prepared by the Puget Sound Regional Council (which addresses growth in the four-county region), the Countywide Planning Policies (which provides guidance to the comprehensive plans of all jurisdictions in King County) and Seattle's neighborhood plans (which tailor the City's Comprehensive Plan policies for individual neighborhoods). The goals and policies of the neighborhood plans are all contained within the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Industrial Lands-Related Proposed Comp Plan Amendments

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).*
5. *Amend the FLUM to redesignate a one block area, bounded by 15th Av. NW to the east, NW 50th St. to the north, 17th Av. NW to the West and NW 49th St. to the South, from Industrial to Commercial / Mixed Use.*
6. *Amend the FLUM to redesignate an area east of Harbor Av. SW and North of SW Spokane St., known as the Harbor Avenue Corridor Property, from Industrial to Commercial / Mixed Use and remove the area from the Duwamish MIC.*
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 Commercial / Mixed Use and remove the area from the Duwamish / MIC.*
18. *A proposal to remove land in the Interbay area from the BINMIC (north of Dravus to Emerson, approximately between 15th on the East, and west of 17th on the West).*

Commission Recommendation & Comments: Do Not Further Consider in 2008 Amendment Process.

We feel it necessary to note that six of this year's proposed amendments seek to make changes to industrial zoned land. The Commission has been concerned about the City allowing conversion of land from industrial zoning to any other zone before completing the work that is needed to have an Industrial Lands Strategy. It is critical that the City have a clear public policy basis for its industrial zoned areas so that a rational framework and an environment of certainty exist pertaining to the City's commitment to retaining its industrial base. We also recognize that this effort is well underway via the workplan outlined in the Mayor's 2007 recommendations on industrial land and Council's 2007 Resolution 31026. The guidance, criteria and strategy outlined by those efforts will be very useful when evaluating and making recommendations for future decisions to reclassify industrial land.

Because this work is currently underway and scheduled to be completed by December 20, 2008, we recommend that the amendments (noted above) dealing with changes to industrial zoning not be further considered in the 2008 Amendment Process and instead await the results of the current work proposed by the Executive and Council. The Commission has an expectation that this work will be completed and that it will result in clear guidance and criteria for requests to rezone industrial zoned land. We urge the City to complete this work quickly.

RECOMENDATIONS ON OTHER PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

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.*

Commission Recommendation & Comments: **Further Consider in 2008 Amendment Process.**

We support this concept and believe that better community connections, especially for cyclists and pedestrians, need more attention. We recommend that the following factors be considered in the analysis. The language of this application is too geographically specific and could be more broadly defined as a framework policy for the City. We recognize that the construction of a lid would be extremely expensive and that it might place limits to on any future capacity expansion of I-5 or more importantly, future expansion of transit along the I-5 corridor. While limits to future capacity on I-5 might be consistent with city policy, it should be analyzed in the context of regional north-south trips, especially if the viaduct capacity is not replaced and expansion of the transit system/TDM is not enough to deal with the north-south traffic. This issue should be further explored as it could severely limit this important federally designated NAFTA freight route, potentially reducing the attractiveness of Seattle as a port city. We also suggest examining whether corresponding language should be added to the Transportation Element and other appropriate elements to ensure consistency within the Plan.

2. *Remove the Sand Point policies from the Comprehensive Plan. Policy language would be incorporated into another planning document.*

Commission Recommendation & Comments: **Further Consider in 2008 Amendment Process.**

4. *Amend the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) to redesignate a portion of the South Lake Union Urban Center from Industrial to Commercial / Mixed Use.*

Commission Recommendation & Comments: **Further Consider in 2008 Amendment Process.**

While this amendment deals with redesignation of industrial zoned land to another use, in this instance we agree with including this proposed amendment for further study. In this instance, there has been a significant change in the designation of the area and a significant public process and review. South Lake Union was recently designated as an Urban Center in the city's Comprehensive Plan. An urban center designation recognizes the significant growth planned for the neighborhood. The Comprehensive Plan has targeted 16,000 new jobs and 8,000 new households to be added to the neighborhood between 2004 and 2024. This designation triggered significant analysis, public involvement and neighborhood planning. Therefore we find that this proposal meets criteria 4 stating that there has been a 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.

8. *Add new goals and policies to the Utilities Element related to development of solar energy infrastructure.*

Commission Recommendation & Comments: **Do Not Further Consider in 2008 Amendment Process.**

While we support the intent behind this application, it is too narrowly focused on a specific solution for achieving the city's energy goals. In addition, we find that the level of detail outlined in this proposal is not appropriate for the Comprehensive Plan. Furthermore we believe that this proposal is not consistent with the criteria to be considered for further review. As to criteria 1.c., we recommend that the intent of the amendment can be accomplished by a change in regulations only. With regard to 1.d., we recommend that the amendment would be better addressed as a budgetary or programmatic decision. As to 1.e.; we recommend that the amendment would be better addressed through another process.

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.*

Commission Recommendation & Comments: Do Not Further Consider in 2008 Amendment Process.

We acknowledge and support the intent of this proposal. However, we believe that this proposal is not consistent with criteria 1c and believe that the intent of the amendment can be accomplished by a change in regulations and does not require a Comp Plan change. With regard to criteria 1d, we recommend that the amendment would be better addressed as a budgetary or programmatic decision as part of the Mayor's 'Urban Forest Management Plan' and the Department of Planning and Development's tree regulation review, 'Keeping the Emerald City Green'.

10. *Add a new policy prohibiting location of bicycle trails within 100' of an existing short line railroad within the Ballard Interbay Northend MIC.*

Commission Recommendation & Comments: Do Not Further Consider in 2008 Amendment Process.

We do not support further consideration of this proposal as written. We do however recognize that it is within the public interest to consider protection and safety issues between transportation modes. It is our finding that the current language in the Comprehensive Plan already addresses modal safety issues between freight and bicycles. The Transportation Element T36 states; 'Promote safe walking, bicycling, and driving behavior through education, enforcement and engineering design, in order to provide public health benefits and to reinforce pedestrian, bicycle and motorist rights and responsibilities'. In addition the Comp Plan's Transportation Element includes language about promoting and recognizing the needs of freight mobility (Transportation Policies T49, T50, T51 and T52). We recommend that this issue be further studied as part of the Transportation Strategic Plan and that Federal Railroad Administration and Federal Highway Administration design standards and best practices be reviewed to ensure that freight mobility and bicycle mobility can safely coexist at this site and throughout Seattle.

11. *Change the designation of approximately 2500 Square feet of property on the east side of Nesbit Avenue North, adjacent to and south of North 90th Street from multifamily to Commercial/Mixed use.*

Commission Recommendation & Comments: Do Not Further Consider in 2008 Amendment Process.

It is our assessment that this amendment constitutes a small rezone and does not require a Comprehensive Plan amendment. We believe that the intent of the amendment can be accomplished by a change in regulations only.

12. *Prohibit new surface parking in the Downtown Mixed Residential zone with both a comprehensive plan amendment and implementing code amendment.*

Commission Recommendation & Comments: Further Consider in 2008 Amendment Process.

13. *Add the following wording: "Expand the definition of accessible transit stops to include the design and engineering of crosswalks at transit stops. Insure that all transit stops have signaled crosswalks (ped signal or full signal, whichever is appropriate), when located on a roadway with vehicles traveling on more than one lane in any particular direction."*

Commission Recommendation & Comments: Do Not Further Consider in 2008 Amendment Process.

In applying criteria 1.d., we believe that this issue may be better dealt with through another process, specifically in the development of the Pedestrian Master Plan and the update to the Transportation Strategic Plan. In addition, while we support the sentiment of the proposal - to improve pedestrian safety - this application appears to be focused on a specific solution. There are a lot of tools and strategies for strengthening pedestrian safety. We agree that 4 lane roads can be particularly problematic for pedestrians. However, requiring this particular treatment may not be the best and safest solution for in all cases. There are

other design treatments that might be more appropriate such as traffic calming, raised medians, etc., dependent on the situation.

14. Create a new element of the Comprehensive Plan entitled "Open and Participatory Government."

Commission Recommendation & Comments: Do not further Consider in 2008 Amendment Process.

The Planning Commission is dedicated to the principles and practice transparent, open and participatory government but we do not feel that the Comprehensive Plan is the appropriate document for this intent, per criteria 1.d.. Most of the proposed requirements outlined in the application are best dealt with through the RCW, Seattle Municipal Code, and by the application of the Seattle ethics code or through budgetary and programmatic decision-making.

15. Amend neighborhood planning policy N-3 to include the statement: "For those neighborhoods that wish to, the City is receptive to continuing the model of the 1990s under which it funds neighborhoods to conduct their neighborhood planning process under City contract and according to City guidelines."

Commission Recommendation & Comments: Do not further Consider in 2008 Amendment Process.

It is important to note that nothing exists in the Comprehensive Plan to preclude Council from allocating funds to neighborhoods in the manner suggested in the proposed amendment. With regard to criteria 1.d., we recommend that the amendment would be better addressed as a budgetary or programmatic decision and note that the City is currently involved in updating the neighborhood planning process. In addition the city is engaged in creating its 2009-2010 biennium budget where such policy decisions can be prioritized by dedicating budget authority to City Departments to focus on providing resources to areas of the city that require additional planning for new growth.

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.

Commission Recommendation & Comments: Further Consider in 2008 Amendment Process.

While we support the further consideration of this amendment, it is also important to note that an underlying premise of the neighborhood planning process is that those neighborhoods that wish to accept more growth would be the highest priority for receiving limited city resources for a neighborhood planning process. The neighborhood planning process was in fact created so that neighborhoods could decide the best strategies for managing growth, and this fact should be considered when reviewing this amendment.

17. Amend Shoreline Policies in the Land Use Element to be more favorable to consideration of an aerial structure for replacement of the viaduct.

Commission Recommendation & Comments: Do Not Further Consider in 2008 Amendment Process.

This is contrary to a Comprehensive Plan amendment that was very recently approved by the City Council in 2006 and therefore would not meet the criteria that states that to be eligible for consideration an amendment has not been recently rejected by the City Council. In 2006 the City Council made a clear policy choice in the Comprehensive Plan with regard to this matter when you passed a comprehensive plan (new shoreline transportation) policy that prohibits aerial transportation structures over 35 feet high, such as bridges and viaducts, on the Central Waterfront in the Shoreline Environments between King Street and Union Street, except for aerial pedestrian walkways associated with Colman Dock. This recent December 2006 decision by the City Council (signed by the Mayor) appears to be a rejection of an aerial structure on the waterfront, and the 2008 proposed comp plan amendment appears to be in conflict with that 2006 decision. We believe that reconsideration of that 2006 decision would require that new information has come to light that may change the Council's 2006 opinion. In addition, with regard to criteria 1.e., we note that matters concerning the shoreline are currently being reviewed under the city's update to the Shoreline Master Plan and matters

involving treatment of the Alaskan Way Viaduct are being considered in numerous forums and planning processes.

The Commission did not have adequate time to review the amendments that were submitted by Council on March 3, 2008 and therefore we refrained from discussion and from making recommendations. However, we would assume that the Council applied its criteria for meeting the threshold to its own submissions and will look forward to reviewing them in the second part of the review process. Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with our recommendations regarding the Threshold Resolution. We look forward to providing you with assistance as the 2008 Comprehensive Plan amendment process moves forward. Please contact me or our Director, Barbara Wilson at (206) 684-0431, if you have further questions.

Tony To, Chair



Seattle Planning Commission

cc: Mayor Greg Nickels
Seattle City Councilmembers
Tim Ceis, Nathan Torgelson, Mayor's office
Rebecca Herzfeld, Bob Morgan, Council Central Staff
Diane Sugimura, John Skelton, Tom Hauger, Mark Troxel, DPD
Grace Crunican, Susan Sanchez, Tracy Krawczyk, SDOT
Stella Chao, DON

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION RECORD OF DISCLOSURE & RECUSAL

- Commissioner Hough-Beck recused herself from discussion on item 17 *Amend Shoreline Policies in the Land Use Element to be more favorable to consideration of an aerial structure for replacement of the viaduct.*
- Commissioner Hough-Beck disclosed that the Port of Seattle is one of her clients at Hough Beck & Baird Inc. She noted that the Port of Seattle may have an interest in some of the proposed amendments.
- Commissioner Kaplan disclosed that he is a member of the Queen Anne community Council and has been in numerous meetings about the Dravus rezone proposal and discussions related to item 18 *A proposal to remove land in the Interbay area from the BINMIC (north of Dravus to Emerson, approximately between 15th on the East, and west of 17th on the West).*
- Commissioner Pennington disclosed that the Port of Seattle is a client for her firm, CH2MHill. She noted that the Port of Seattle may have an interest in some of the proposed amendments.
- Commissioner Tom Eanes recused himself from the following matters;
 12. *'Prohibit new surface parking in the Downtown Mixed Residential zone with both a comprehensive plan amendment and implementing code amendment'.*
 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).*
 5. *Amend the FLUM to redesignate a one block area, bounded by 15th Av. NW to the east, NW 50th St. to the north, 17th Av. NW to the West and NW 49th St. to the South, from Industrial to Commercial / Mixed Use.*
 6. *Amend the FLUM to redesignate an area east of Harbor Av. SW and North of SW Spokane St., known as the Harbor Avenue Corridor Property, from Industrial to Commercial / Mixed Use and remove the area from the Duwamish MIC.*
 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 Commercial / Mixed Use and remove the area from the Duwamish / MIC.*
 18. *A proposal to remove land in the Interbay area from the BINMIC (north of Dravus to Emerson, approximately between 15th on the East, and west of 17th on the West).*

Note for the record: Commission appointees Joshua Brower and Amalia Leighton are awaiting Council confirmation. They both sat in for the discussion of the 2008 Comprehensive Commissions discussion of the amendments and listened, but did not participate. Furthermore, Mr. Brower and Ms. Leighton recused themselves from item 10 *'Add a new policy prohibiting location of bicycle trails within 100' of an existing short line railroad within the Ballard Interbay Northend MIC.'* and left the room for during the discussion of this matter which is the common practice for Commissioners who recuse.

Ms. Leighton disclosed that her firm, SVR design, is working the pedestrian master plan, which relates to the matter of item 13. *Add the following wording: "Expand the definition of accessible transit stops to include the design and engineering of crosswalks at transit stops. Insure that all transit stops have signaled crosswalks (ped signal or full signal, whichever is appropriate), when located on a roadway with vehicles traveling on more than one lane in any particular direction."*

Attachment 1 –Guidelines for Establishing the Docket of Annual Comprehensive Plan Amendments

The City considers a variety of factors in determining whether a proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment will be placed on the amendment docket for a given year. Among those factors are the following:

1. The amendment is appropriate for the Comprehensive Plan:
 - a. The amendment is consistent with the role of the Comprehensive Plan under the State Growth Management Act;
 - b. The amendment is consistent with the Countywide Planning Policies;
 - c. The intent of the amendment cannot be accomplished by a change in regulations only;
 - d. The amendment is not better addressed as a budgetary or programmatic decision; or
 - e. The amendment is not better addressed through another process, such as neighborhood planning.
2. The amendment is legal - the amendment meets existing state and local laws.
3. It is practical to consider the amendment:
 - a. The timing of the amendment is appropriate and Council will have sufficient information necessary to make an informed decision.
 - b. Within the time available City staff will be able to develop the text for the amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and, if necessary, the Municipal Code, and conduct sufficient analysis.
 - c. 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.
 - d. The amendment has not been recently rejected by the City Council.
4. There has been a 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.