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December 31, 2008

City of Seattle, Office of Sustainability and Environment
Attn. Jayson Antonoff, Green Building Coordinator
701 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000
P. O. Box 34019
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

Re: Green Building Task Force – New Buildings Committee Comments

Dear Jayson:

The City of Seattle's Office of Sustainability and Environment has put considerable effort into the Task Force. I have appreciated this effort, and enjoyed the opportunity to participate. As requested, below are a few thoughts on strategies we have considered. These are my comments, as an individual, rather than the firm's.

Achieving Architecture 2030 objectives requires an environment which supports constant innovation. An important step in creating this environment is fully supporting development that achieves identified objectives. The below comments suggest approaches to strengthening strategies the Task Force discussed.

Streamlined permitting can send a strong signal to the market. But, as the Task Force recognized, the strength of the signal depends on how it is implemented. A strong signal requires "real streamlining." Below are a few approaches for strengthening this signal:

- Every project (or every project within a designated "green zone" or "efficiency overlay") achieving certain energy performance and other sustainability metrics, may be deemed to automatically meet State Environmental Policy Act (Ch. 43.21C RCW) requirements for analysis and mitigation of environmental impacts. The SEPA statute allows for this approach.
- Dedicated planning staff may be assigned to review "green listed projects." Permits would be reviewed within a set number of days, or be deemed approved.
- Expedited design review could be used. As an alternative design review process, and to address quality control concerns, while improving efficiency, a qualified urban designer and architect could issue recommendations to the permit decision maker. This would be an alternative approach to the current process.

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To strengthen the financial incentive strategies the Task Force discussed, the City could review its entire land development fee structure, including utility hook up charges, with the goal of rewarding those projects which reduce use of City infrastructure. The City could also consider how to prioritize available funding strategies, perhaps by utilizing them in designated “green zones.”

Incentive zoning strategies can be further strengthened if coordinated with the streamlined permitting (as discussed above), and the requirements utilize industry recognized standards, such as LEED or Master Builders Built Green requirements. In addition, the City could publicly recognize projects achieving incentive zoning objectives, by providing some form of “green” certification, to enhance branding value for the developer. The City could also consider a similar form of recognition for developers who consistently achieve set benchmarks.

Please let me know if you have any questions, or would like to discuss.

Sincerely,

FOSTER PEPPER PLLC



Susan Drummond