

DRAFT

date, 2015

Honorable Councilmember Mike O'Brien, Chair
Planning Land Use and Sustainability Committee
Seattle City Council
PO Box 34025
Seattle, WA 98124-4025

RE: Recommendations on Proposed 2014 - 2015 Comprehensive Plan Amendments

Dear Councilmember O'Brien,

The Seattle Planning Commission is an independent and objective volunteer body that advises City officials on broad goals, policies, and plans for the physical development of the city. Providing recommendations on annual Comprehensive Plan proposals is a mandate of the Commission and a responsibility we are pleased to fulfill as stewards of Seattle's Comprehensive Plan. This letter offers the Commission's recommendations and comments on the proposed 2014-2015 Comprehensive Plan Amendments.

Purpose of the Seattle Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan, *Toward a Sustainable Seattle*, was adopted in 1994 to comply with the requirements of the Washington State Growth Management Act. The Comprehensive Plan articulates Seattle's 20-year vision for how the city will grow consistent with its core values of community, environmental stewardship, economic opportunity and security, and social equity. The Comprehensive Plan does this through an urban village strategy that directs most housing and employment growth to designated urban centers and villages.

Urban Village/Center boundary adjustments should be data driven.

Upon review of the annual amendments, the Commission would like to express support for the overall changes within Urban Villages that allow for flexibility into the future. The Commission supports the Urban Village strategy and supports a Future Land Use Map that recognizes Urban Villages as areas that provide

opportunities for increased density and flexibility in land use. The Commission continues to be concerned with redefining Urban Village/Center boundaries on a parcel by parcel, amendment by amendment basis.

This year's Annual Amendment cycle has two such cases – University District Urban Center and the Central Area Neighborhood. The Commission worked collaboratively with the Department of Planning and Development and the City Council to adopt Transit Communities policies as part of the 2012 annual amendment cycle. The Transit Communities policy outlines a data driven approach to redefining boundaries. This year as we continue the Major Update to the Comprehensive Plan, the Commission looks forward to a more complete and robust conversation about Urban Village boundaries.

Planning Commission Recommendations on the 2014-2015 Annual Amendments

1. Central Area Neighborhood Plan

Planning Commission recommendation: Adopt with modification

The Commission supports updating the Central Area Neighborhood Plan goals and policies to facilitate implementation of the 23rd Ave Action Plan. We understand that this amendment is a continuation of the extensive public engagement work in this area. The Commission is concerned with the prescriptive nature of the language in the amendment. The amendment could move forward without specific mention of the parcel or its ownership. This level of detail is inconsistent with the majority of the plan and with best practices of Comprehensive Planning.

The Commission concurs with the proposed Future Land Use Map (FLUM) changes within the Urban Village that are intended to encourage a vibrant business district within the 23rd and Jackson planning area. The changes give businesses added flexibility and are supported by the Comprehensive Plan's Urban Village Strategy.

The Commission does not concur with the proposal to change the FLUM and expand the Urban Village boundary. Per our earlier statement in this letter we have concerns that the process for changing boundaries lacks vision and guidance within the overall Comprehensive Plan.

2. Lake City Neighborhood Plan

Planning Commission recommendation: Adopt

The Commission supports updating the Lake City Area Neighborhood Plan goals and policies. The Commission appreciates the renewed focus on pedestrian safety and access. The pedestrian focus will help to build a more walkable and vibrant business district.

The Commission concurs with the proposed FLUM changes to give the business district added flexibility and support the Comprehensive Plan's Urban Village Strategy.

3. Morgan Junction Neighborhood Plan

Planning Commission recommendations: Adopt

The Commission supports updating the Morgan Junction Neighborhood Plan policies to support the goals of more flexibility within Urban Villages as well as providing more open space for this community. However, the Commission has concerns with the language in this policy that was not redrafted for the purposes of this amendment.

“Maintain the character and integrity of the existing single-family designated areas by maintaining current single family zoning both inside and outside the Urban Village...” (MjP-13)

The Urban Village Strategy clearly articulates the need for flexibility and growth within Urban Village boundaries and the recently released draft of Seattle 2035 further strengthens this vision and strategy. The Commission looks forward to a continued conversation on the Urban Village Strategy, Neighborhood Planning and how we can accommodate the new families that will call Seattle home.

The Commission concurs with the proposed FLUM change. The change has tremendous community support and supports the Comprehensive Plan’s Urban Village Strategy.

4. University District Update

Planning Commission recommendations: Adopt with modifications

The Commission supports updating the University District Neighborhood goals and policies. The goals and policies reflect a lengthy public engagement process and a recommitment to the vision of a compact, walkable community.

The Commission concurs with the proposed FLUM change for the areas within the Urban Center. These changes will provide greater flexibility and help to achieve the Urban Village Strategy.

The Commission does not concur with the proposal to change the boundary of the Urban Center on the FLUM. Per our earlier statement in this letter we have concerns that the process for changing boundaries lacks vision and guidance within the overall Comprehensive Plan.

5. Downtown Neighborhood Plan Updates

Planning Commission recommendations: Adopt

The Commission supports updating the Downtown Neighborhood Plan policies to allow for added flexibility in future affordable housing programs.

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me or our Executive Director, Vanessa Murdock, at 733-9271 should you have any questions.

Sincerely,