



# Seattle City Council

April 15, 2016

Mr. Sam Assefa  
Boulder, CO 80302  
Transmitted via email

Dear Mr. Assefa,

In preparation for your first confirmation hearing on May 17, 2016 for the position of Director of the Office of Planning and Community Development, please provide written answers to the following questions.

1. The Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) was established by Mayor Murray in 2015. As a new department, you will have an exciting opportunity to shape its goals and operations. What are your goals for the office? How will you measure success?
2. Seattle has experienced significant growth recently. Much of this reflects positively on our strong economy, natural beauty and quality of life. However, this growth has contributed to the displacement of low-income communities and communities of color from our Seattle. How will you approach managing growth and investment while protecting Seattle residents and businesses who are at risk of displacement?
3. The 2035 Comprehensive Plan included Seattle's first displacement risk analysis. Some other cities do displacement analyses on area wide or zone wide upzones. Would you consider an approach like this?
4. This Council is particularly interested in ensuring all residents and workers of Seattle are able to participate in the decisions that affect them. OPCD will be working with the Department of Neighborhoods to build a better and more effective approach to community engagement. Please discuss how you will lead this effort to foster meaningful engagement, particularly with historically under-represented communities or those communities with barriers to participation in engagement?
5. In the 1990s, Seattle completed almost 40 neighborhood plans. Since that time, the demand from residents for updated plans has exceeded the City's resources to update the plans, particularly in high growth areas. Given our limited capacity for full-scale, multi-year neighborhood planning, how will you prioritize neighborhood plan updates and is there a way to meet our planning needs in a less resource- and time-intensive way for those areas without an updated plan?

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6. As Seattle grows, a constant issue has been in the design of our built environment, particularly in areas where new development is integrated into established neighborhoods. How can we better balance our need for infill development and goals of preserving the character and history of our communities?
7. Sustainability has been a core value of Seattle's Comprehensive Planning efforts since 1994. As we look forward for the next twenty, fifty or one hundred years, we will need to be more aggressive to proactively address climate change through adaptation and mitigation. What strategies will you prioritize so that Seattle will meet its climate change goals and prepare for climate change impacts?
8. One of Mayor Murray's stated goals for the department is to better coordinate planning with other City departments, such as Parks, Seattle Department of Transportation, Economic Development and the Department of Neighborhoods. How will you work with these departments to ensure integration of investments and services with growth?
9. The Office of Planning and Community Development reports to the Mayor's office, however they also receive feedback and direction from City Council. How will you balance these two sources of direction, particularly if there are conflicting priorities?
10. Seattle and all its departments are guided by the Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI), which is a citywide effort to end institutionalized racism and race-based disparities in City government. Like many cities, we have significant disparities which result directly from systemic racism, both in our history and in our current policies and practice. Discuss your priorities for how OPCD will contribute to this initiative to confront and address historic and current inequities.
11. Seattle has been growing rapidly for several years. As we know, development is cyclical and we most likely will soon see a slowdown in the market or our economy. Discuss your approach to planning and managing a Planning Department during an economic or real estate downturn.

Please do not hesitate to contact Council Staff Lish Whitson (206-615-1674, [lish.whitson@seattle.gov](mailto:lish.whitson@seattle.gov)) if you require clarification of any of the question. The Committee would appreciate receiving your written answers by close of business on Wednesday, May 11<sup>th</sup> to provide the members adequate time to review them.

Thank you,

Planning, Land Use, and Zoning Committee of the Seattle City Council:



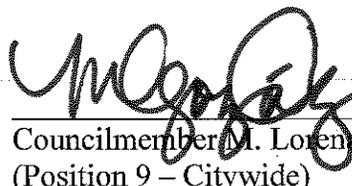
Councilmember Rob Johnson  
(District 4)



Councilmember Lisa Herbold  
(District 1)



Councilmember Mike O'Brien  
(District 6)



Councilmember M. Lorena González  
(Position 9 – Citywide)