



City of Seattle Seattle Planning Commission

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June 24, 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 Neighborhood Plan Update Process and Station Area Planning

Dear Councilmember Clark,

The Commission appreciates the opportunity to provide you with comments regarding the recently revised proposal for the neighborhood plan update process. As you know, the Commission is the steward of the City's Comprehensive Plan for growth and has also been an active steward of the 38 neighborhood plans. The original intention of the neighborhood plans was to implement the goals of the Comprehensive Plan and its urban village strategy.

The Commission generally approves of the update process proposed by the Executive. It is clear that the revisions take into account the feedback from outreach conducted over the last six months. As a result the revised proposal and course of action are moving in the right direction. In particular, we strongly support the plan to perform a comprehensive assessment of neighborhoods before beginning the update process, then using this assessment to determine the prioritization of neighborhoods that will update their plans.

The Commission also strongly approves of designating the station areas as the highest priority for immediate planning efforts. These areas are the recipients of a multi-billion dollar public investment, and efforts must be undertaken immediately to ensure that the opportunities that come along with this investment are addressed in a thoughtful, inclusive, and sustainable manner.

The Commission would also like to provide you with the following additional comments:

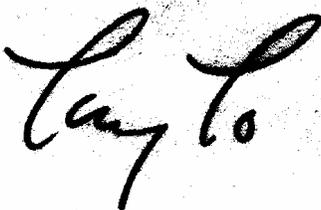
- **Before the Train Leaves the Station:** The goals and objectives of both the neighborhood update process and the station area planning updates need to be more clearly defined and articulated.
- **On the Right Track:** A clearer connection between the neighborhood update process and the station area planning must be provided. The Commission agrees that station areas need immediate planning work, and supports the concept of performing station area plan updates before any other neighborhood plan updates.

However, the current proposal is confusing regarding exactly how the station area plan updates relate to the neighborhood plan updates, and whether they are elements of the same process or two different initiatives.

- **Different Trains of Thought:** The Neighborhood Plan Advisory Group should be redefined as the 'Neighborhood Assessment Advisory Group'. This body should be distinguished from the body formed to oversee the actual update process once the assessment is completed. The two bodies would likely perform different roles in the oversight process, and the make-up of an assessment advisory group would likely consist of people with different skills and backgrounds than those chosen for the Neighborhood Plan Advisory Group.
- **All on Board:** The Commission appreciates being considered for involvement in overseeing both the assessment and update process. We believe Commission representatives will add a unique and important perspective to these issues, and hope Council will include the Commission to the fullest extent in the update process. We applaud the proposed neighborhood outreach efforts that will provide the City a better understanding of the community perspective on the state of the neighborhoods. We agree it is important neighborhood constituents have the opportunity to authenticate and respond to the information gathered in the assessment phase.
- **Don't Reinvent the Wheel:** An assessment process of the station areas should be performed before beginning the station area plan updates. It is vital to document all the planning efforts that have already been completed in and around the station areas, and ensure that the update process will use these previously created plans as a starting point for discussion with communities.
- **The Other Side of the Tracks:** It is important that during the station area plan updates, a balance is struck between planning for each station area and planning for its surrounding neighborhood. Developing connections between the surrounding neighborhood and station area should be an important element of the station area plan update process. Attention should also be paid to transit corridors as well as station areas, and the connections between station areas. Further, the market environment and cost escalation both for housing and fuel have changed dramatically since prior planning efforts. It will be critical to factor these changes into the current process.

The Commission is happy to continue providing our comments and recommendations. We look forward to working with you, the full Council, and the Executive to develop a workplan for our involvement in assisting the City in these important planning updates. We are committed to ensuring that this process is successful in guiding implementation of the goals and policies of Seattle's Comprehensive Plan and ensuring that Seattle residents are actively engaged in planning their future.

Tony To, Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony To". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent "T" and "O".

Seattle Planning Commission

cc: Mayor Greg Nickels
Seattle City Councilmembers
Tim Ceis, Nathan Torgelson, Mayor's office
Rebecca Herzfeld, Bob Morgan, Council Central Staff
Mary Jean Ryan, Mike Mann, Nora Liu, Office of Policy & Management
Diane Sugimura, John Skelton, Tom Hauger, DPD
Stella Chao, Kimberly Archie, DON
Grace Crunican, Tracy Krawczyk, SDOT

RECORD OF DISCLOSURE/ RECUSAL

- Commissioner Tom Eanes disclosed that he is a member of the Belltown Neighborhood Districts Land Use and Housing Committee.
- Commissioner Mark Johnson disclosed that he is a member of a Central District Community Group.
- Commissioner Martin Kaplan disclosed that he is a member of the Queen Anne Community Council and their Land Use Review Committee.
- Commissioner Kay Knapton disclosed that she is a consultant for the Capitol Hill Improvement District.
- Commissioner Amalia Leighton disclosed that she is an employee of SvR Design Company. SvR Design has projects at Rainier Vista in the vicinity of Columbia City Station.
- Commissioner Leslie Miller disclosed that she is a representative for her neighborhood group on the Southeast District Council and a steering committee member of OSCAT, the Othello Station Community Advisory Team.
- Commissioner Tony To disclosed that he is a voting member of the Southeast District Council. In addition he disclosed that he is the Executive Director of HomeSight and the President of the Rainier Valley Chamber of Commerce both his job and volunteer work with business associations are impacted indirectly to the station areas however he does not personally nor through corporate association own any property in the station areas.