

date

Honorable Mayor Edward B. Murray
Mayor of Seattle
City Hall
via email

RE: Seattle 2035 – the major update of Seattle’s Comprehensive Plan

Dear Mayor Murray,

As stewards of our City’s Comprehensive Plan, The Seattle Planning Commission has closely reviewed the public draft of the Major Update to Seattle’s Comprehensive Plan – Seattle 2035. The Commission would like to recognize the high quality work of the Department of Planning and Development (DPD). Per guidance provided by you and City Council in resolution 31577, race and social equity has been elevated as a core value in the Comprehensive Plan. In particular, the equity analysis conducted by DPD is an exceptional and important step that will help inform goals, policies and strategies to help Seattle become a more equitable city as it welcomes 120,000 new residents and 115,000 new jobs. While the draft plan has incorporated equity in many regards, we look forward to the Mayor’s proposed Plan being even more explicit in establishing a clear and powerful vision for how the city will grow over the next 20 years as it welcome new residents and jobs while sustaining and elevating the quality of life for those already living and working here.

Seattle’s Comprehensive Plan, which is required through the State Growth Management Act, is the appropriate guiding document for establishing a “cohesive and focused approach to planning and development.”¹ The following recommendations address how the plan can articulate a **more explicit vision for an equitable Seattle**; make the plan more **accessible and relevant** to community members; provide direction for a process through which we **monitor our progress** to achieve racial and social equity in Seattle.

Articulate a more explicit vision for an equitable Seattle.

The plan should set an aspirational tone for the next 20 years and establish a pathway that will help achieve this vision. The existing draft Plan states: “We envision Seattle as a city where growth benefits and increases opportunities for all residents while offering ways to enhance and preserve our natural environment.” This is a strong vision that should be echoed through all elements of the Plan. When the Plan was last updated in 2004, the focus on environmental sustainability led to pioneering programmatic changes which have had an enduring impact on the region. *This update should do the same for racial and social equity.*

The public draft incorporates race into the Plan’s core value of social equity and many of the Plan elements make great strides in addressing this value. However, more could be done on this front. In late 2014, the Commission participated in crafting equity statements for each element of the Plan. These statements provide valuable models for articulating an equitable vision. We urge that components of these statements be

¹ Executive Order 2015-04: Directing the Creation of a New Executive Office to Coordinate Planning and Implementation to Build Thriving and Equitable Communities

integrated more consistently across the elements with introductory narrative clearly describing the role each element plays in advancing equity. **The introduction to the Community Well Being element is an excellent example of how equity should be discussed and addressed in the Plan.**

Furthermore, the Commission supports the urban village strategy which guides most future households and jobs into designated growth areas. The Commission would also like to see the Plan acknowledge and address the inequities and displacement that can be consequences of the growth strategy.

Make the Plan more relevant and accessible to community members.

This update provides a renewed opportunity to establish policies for coordinating and prioritizing investments in infrastructure and services. By prioritizing equity considerations in these policies, this update sets the stage for Seattle's neighborhoods to become complete, compact, and connected communities where everyone can attain the resources, opportunities, and outcomes that improve their quality of life and enable them to reach their full potential.²

DPD is working hard to streamline the Plan and make the intent and impact of its policies on people and communities easier to see. Yet, the Plan remains a long and complicated document that the public may see as bearing little connection to their day-to-day lives. This challenge is inherent in setting forth a comprehensive set of long-range policies. The final Plan should communicate its relevance and importance by showing more clearly how it guides the regulation of development, and the prioritization and implementation of community services and infrastructure.

The public draft includes some helpful references to other planning documents, such as the Climate Action Plan, and SDOT's modal plans. These are functional plans that describe and prioritize how we invest in our communities in alignment with Comprehensive Plan goals and policies. The Comprehensive Plan should communicate these connections more explicitly. Interactive graphics could also be included in individual elements to allow readers to quickly navigate from goals and policies in the Plan to projects that implement the vision.

Seattle is at the heart of a growing region that is grappling with equitable development challenges on a broader geographic scale. Framing equity within the context of our regional growth strategy can help remind readers that of this context. Resolution 31577, which called for the incorporation of race into the core value of social equity, also called for the [Principles of Equitable Development](#), ratified by the Puget Sound Regional Equity Network in 2012, to be included in the Plan. These Principles are currently not in the draft Plan and should also guide Seattle's Comprehensive Plan.

Earlier this year the Commission wrote in support of additional resources that would help ensure that Seattle's Comprehensive Plan is accessible to all residents. We hope that your recommended Plan will include an interactive version of the plan with additional graphics that explain complex concepts. The current version does include a diagram that illustrates how the Comprehensive Plan fits within the context of state and regional plans as well as the implementation plans, codes, and initiatives. This diagram should continue to be

² From the definition of race and social equity in resolution 31577

refined. Current technology allows for web-based and printable pdfs to be developed simultaneously. Because all of the content of the plan is being updated, this is an excellent opportunity to make use of this software. It is especially important to ensure the Plan is readily accessible for people with disabilities.

Provide direction for a process through which the City will monitor our progress and highlight community-wide efforts to achieve racial and social equity in³ Seattle.

A strong and sustainable monitoring process is essential for gauging the extent to which the City is making progress toward the vision, values, and goals set forth in the Plan. Monitoring is also necessary to identify whether policies need to be strengthened or implementation strategies changed.

While the Commission generally cautions against incorporating *specific metrics* within the Comprehensive Plan itself, we would like to work with your office and the new Office of Planning and Community Development to provide advice for establishing a process to measure and report on the City's progress and highlight community-wide efforts to achieve racial and social equity in Seattle.

Equity Measurements. Resolution 31577 also calls for the City to identify and measure over time “quantifiable city-wide community indicators of equitable growth.” Reporting on these equity measures in concert with the broader monitoring process could help make the Plan relevant and accessible to more Seattleites.

Indicators will have to be developed with great attention to measurability and context. Many monitoring processes at city and broader levels have been cut back between major plan updates or have been dropped entirely. It will be crucial to develop a monitoring process that is feasible to sustain throughout the 20-year planning horizon.

Following is a summary of key comments and recommendations for specific elements. We offer more detailed comments and suggestions by element beginning on page ____)

Seattle's Growth Strategy

- Support added language regarding equity and access to opportunity
- Support revising urban village boundaries consistent with [Seattle Transit Communities](#) methodology and policies
- Ensure final equity analysis and mitigation strategies are addressed in the Plan
- Address growth that occurs outside of urban centers and villages - (particularly along frequent transit corridors)
- Clearly articulate how public investments will be equitably prioritized, not based solely on growth

Land Use

- Support proposed change to the Future Land Use Map
- Concerned that single family zoning continues to be designated as an area to be protected and removes these areas from our regional growth boundaries and limits diversity of housing types
- Allow more flexibility to support a diversity of low-density housing options

³ From Executive Order 2014-02: Race and Social Justice Initiative

- Emphasize mitigation strategies that will minimize displacement, particularly for most vulnerable individuals, businesses, and communities
- Confirm which policies are consistent with HALA, revise as necessary those policies that are inconsistent with HALA
- Reiterate support for industrial uses in manufacturing and industrial centers

Transportation

- Support mode share goals that reflect the [Climate Action Plan](#) and [Seattle Transit Communities](#) policies.
- Support overall connection between this element and implementation as articulated in Seattle's modal plans and maps; the final version of the Plan should include links to these modal plans
- Support recognition of transit-dependent communities rather than just peak-hour commuters
- Support recognition of connections to all business districts in addition to the Port of Seattle
- Support Vision Zero

Housing

- Support extensive incorporation of race and social equity throughout element
- Support policies related to housing for families with children
- Reference Growth Strategy and Land Use element and how housing policies are related to them both
- Acknowledge regional nature of housing challenges
- Reiterate need for more access within single family areas to enable a broader variety of housing
- Appreciate incorporation of health; would like to see Environmental Justice addressed
- Add a policy about monitoring as required by Countywide Planning Policies; could also monitor HALA goals

Community Well-Being

- Support how equity is referenced in this element; a great example of including equity in the Plan
- Explain and highlight role of element in the overall introduction – consider moving element to front of Plan
- Support the multiplicity of ways policies advance race and social equity, including promotion of civil rights
- Strengthen connections with Housing and Environment elements; connections to the Growing Seattle and Land Use elements are good.
- Strengthen policies related to emergency preparedness
- Co-location of facilities are important and should be encouraged
- Acknowledge at-risk youth in policies who have already dropped out of school or gotten entangled in the criminal justice and need access to services and opportunities that promote rehabilitation

The Commission appreciates the work of the DPD and in particular Tom Hauger and Patrice Carroll. The Commission would not have been able to do as thorough a review of the public draft without their

willingness to attend many meetings and present regularly on their work. The Commission looks forward to your recommended Comprehensive Plan.

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

STAFF DRAFT