



City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

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September 24, 2012

Diana Sugimura, Director
Department of Planning and Development
P.O. Box 34019
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

RE: Comprehensive Plan Proposal for Citywide Transit Communities Policy

Ms. Sugimura,

Attached you will find the Commission's completed Comprehensive Plan proposal for citywide transit community policies including a new subsection C-6 in the Land Use element of section C: Location Specific Land Use Policies. It also includes necessary changes to the Land Use, Urban Village and Capital Facilities elements which are meant to make them inclusive of transit communities as a geographic focus for investments and land use policies as well as alter policies which might conflict with or inhibit the performance goals of transit community policies. In writing the new material as well as in our edits, we attempted to clarify and streamline language where possible.

In November 2010, after extensive research, analysis and engagement, the Commission released *Seattle Transit Communities - Integrating Neighborhoods with Transit* which established the vision and primer for creating vibrant and successful transit communities. Our report was well received by city officials, stakeholders, community partners and many others who saw the importance of formally adopting the Commission's citywide strategy to better focus land use policies and investments in order to optimize frequent and reliable transit. Defining a strong framework in the Comprehensive Plan is the first step in achieving a citywide transit community outlined in the report and further defined in our [June 2011 letter](#) .

We anticipate additional changes to related Comprehensive Plan policies as the major update proceeds. We also expect changes to the city land use code and to capital facilities planning procedures. The Commission looks forward to continuing to work closely with DPD and other city departments as further policies and actions are developed and augmented. In addition, our outreach and engagement efforts will continue later this fall with a series of stakeholder discussions. We will offer our

findings to Council to inform their discussion as they consider the attached proposal and to assist the Commission and City staff in future policy development.

Finally, we appreciate your ongoing feedback and assistance in our careful and stringent efforts to develop this proposal.

Sincerely,



David Cutler, Chair
Seattle Planning Commission

cc: Mayor Michael McGinn
Seattle City Councilmembers
Daryl Smith, Julie McCoy; Ethan Raup, David Hiller, Mayor's Office
Diane Sugimura, Marshall Foster, Tom Hauger, Patrice Carroll, Geoff Wentlendt; DPD
Peter Hahn, Tracy Krawczyk, Kevin O'Neil, Tony Mazzella, SDOT
Rick Hooper, Ryan Curren, Office of Housing
Beth Goldberg, Budget Office

C-6 Transit Communities

discussion

Reliable, frequent transit service provides a meaningful opportunity to cultivate livable, equitable, and connected “transit communities” across Seattle. The City will leverage local and regional transit investments by aligning and coordinating land use policies and public investment to foster the development of strong residential and business communities oriented around transit. This strategy will help expand housing options for Seattleites, improve local services and direct infrastructure investments appropriately.

Transit communities are places within a ten-minute walk (“walkshed”) of frequent transit stops or stations that offer a unique, sustainable lifestyle. While transit communities range in scale and intensity of use, on the whole they tend to be more compact and connected than the surrounding area. People who live, work or attend school in a transit community enjoy enhanced livability in the form of diverse housing types; car-free access to goods, services and jobs; a comfortable, safe connected system for walking and bicycling; high quality open space and distinctive neighborhood culture and diversity. Such features are necessary to create vibrant, walkable, sustainable communities and make up essential components of livability. Transit communities provide environmental, economic and social benefits to individuals and to the greater community, including healthy lifestyle choices, low transportation costs, low greenhouse gas emissions and easy access to jobs.

Transit community policies enhance the core values and principals outlined in the long-standing Seattle urban village strategy. Since the adoption of the urban village strategy in 1994, the region’s commitment to and investment in transit has grown to include light rail, streetcar and bus rapid transit in addition to bus and ferry systems and commuter rail.

Citywide transit community policies provide a tool to help implement the urban village strategy, as well as other state and regional growth management efforts. Transit community policies support the City’s decision-making process regarding capital investments, land use changes and transportation improvements by defining place-types, implementing the “walkshed” to define the geography of a transit community, and identifying additional data-based methods to successfully plan for transit communities.

goals

- LUG 60 Create communities that are complete, compact, connected places within a ten-minute walk of reliable, frequent transit.
- Complete: Depending on the type of transit community (see LU272), a variety of people will live and/or work in and visit the neighborhood. The essential components of livability make it easy and safe for pedestrians and bicyclists to travel to and within the area. Infrastructure serves and protects the urban environment. Residents, workers and visitors are able to obtain a variety of goods and services within transit communities, subject to the uses defined in each transit community typology.
 - Compact: Transit communities are designed so that higher concentrations of people and commercial activities are located within the five-minute walkshed of transit service, creating a critical mass of people and activity to encourage safe streets and public spaces and support more services for the larger neighborhood. More moderate densities are found within a ten-minute walkshed (the approach to determining walkshed can be found in LU271).

- Connected: Neighborhoods are internally accessible to everyone and are connected to one another by reliable, frequent transit service. People have increased mobility choices without need for a car.

- LUG 61 Focus investments and infrastructure in transit communities in order to take advantage of high concentrations of jobs and residents.
- LUG 62 Strengthen Seattle’s neighborhoods by ensuring land use policies encourage services, activity and quality infrastructure in and around frequent transit.
- LUG 63 Create opportunities for people to live and work within close proximity to transit and so they can easily access other daily needs such as healthy food, healthcare, child care, education, services, retail, good jobs and reliable utilities, thereby potentially lowering overall household costs.
- LUG 64 Ensure equitable access to the transit system and preserve opportunities for a broad cross-section of socio-economic groups, ethnicities and household types to live and work in transit communities.
- LUG 65 Lessen dependencies on automobile transportation and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by supporting transit communities.

policies

- LU270 Determine the center of a designated transit community based on criteria including the location of transit stations or stops, transit mode, frequency and span of transit services available at a stop or station, and the number of transit boarding’s. Additional factors include equity, the mix and intensity of use in the surrounding area, as well as proximity to activity-generating destinations.
- LU271 Define the boundaries of a designated transit community generally as the area within a ten-minute walk or “walkshed” of a transit station or stop, accounting for the street network, topography, and physical barriers. Expand transit community boundaries as necessary to take advantage of activity-generating destinations such as a major employer or institution, a neighborhood business district or major housing development.
- LU272 Establish transit community typologies or place types that consider the nuance of different aspirations, characteristics, qualities and features of a given area. Define transit community typologies as follows:
- *Mixed-use center*: Local or regional hub where transit supports a high concentration of jobs, housing and services in a vibrant neighborhood; variety of smaller open and gathering spaces; businesses open 16-18 hours per day; healthy food access; community facilities for all ages; high levels of complete street improvements and a network of dedicated bicycle facilities. Features a high intensity of activity lasting 16-18 hours per day, and a land use mix of residential, pedestrian-oriented retail and other employment.

- *Mixed-use neighborhood*: Local neighborhood centered around transit where a range of retail, commercial and housing options meet most of residents' daily needs; variety of public open spaces often integrated with other public facilities including natural areas, trails and sports fields; service businesses open 10-14 hours per day; healthy food access; high level of complete street improvements; community facilities and dedicated bicycle facilities connecting to transit. Features a moderate intensity of activity lasting 10-14 hours per day, as well as a land use mix of residential and pedestrian-oriented retail.
- *Industrial job center*: Cluster of large and small industrial businesses and ancillary commercial uses well-served by transit; transit focused on serving industrial sector operations; zoning to allow new residences is strictly prohibited; features complete streets, including facilities to ensure pedestrian and bicycle safety in areas frequented by freight movement. Features a land use mix of light industrial and commercial uses that support a twenty-four-hour workday.
- *Special district*: Area near transit featuring a major institution, entertainment district, sports facility, or multimodal transfer hub that creates large pulses of activity; pedestrian environment designed to accommodate large groups, displays and vendors. May have a very high, intermittent intensity of use associated with large cultural or sporting events.
- *Urban center*: Regional hub in downtown or other regionally designated intensely urbanized area where abundant transit and very-high-density land uses predominate; features wayfinding linkages to and between transit nodes in addition to a rich network of public spaces, civic institutions and destinations.

LU273 Use zoning tools to achieve overall land use goals for transit communities and the aspirations expressed by each transit community. Specific land use tools may include an overlay district, rezone evaluation criteria specific to transit communities, and development standards and incentives specific to transit communities.

LU274 Prioritize and focus city investments in transit communities, in addition to urban centers and urban villages, to provide features that support a highly livable, walkable urban environment.

LU275. Identify essential components of livability appropriate to each transit community typology based on land use mix, scale, intensity and vibrancy, job and residential density, as well as unique land uses and conditions.

A Citywide Land Use Policies

A-1 The Future Land Use Map & the Location of Zones

policies

LU6 In order to focus future growth consistent with the urban village strategy and transit community policies, limit higher intensity zoning designations to urban centers, urban villages, ~~and~~ manufacturing/industrial centers and transit communities. Limit zoning with height limits that are significantly higher than those found in single-family areas to urban centers, urban villages, ~~and~~ manufacturing/industrial centers, and transit communities, and to those areas out-side of urban villages where higher height limits would be consistent with an adopted neighborhood plan, a major institution's adopted master plan, or with the existing built character of the area. However, the City Council may permit greater heights on commercially-zoned sites in the Interbay area along and near W. Dravus Street between 15th Avenue W. and 20th Avenue W., through overlay zoning, zoning map amendment, or other implementing measures.

A-6 Parking

parking quantity policies

LU50 In urban centers ~~and~~, urban villages and transit communities, consider removing minimum parking requirements and setting parking maximums in recognition of the increased pedestrian, bicycle and transit accessibility these areas already provide or have planned. Parking requirements for urban centers and villages as well as transit communities should account for local conditions and planning objectives.

B Land Use Categories

B-1 Single Family Areas

policies

LU59 Permit upzones of land designated single-family ~~when and meeting single-family rezone criteria, only when all of the following conditions are met:~~ the land is within an urban center, urban village or transit community. In areas outside transit communities and urban centers, permit up zones of land designated single-family when the rezone is provided for in an adopted neighborhood plan or similar community-based plan based on public engagement.

- ~~• The land is within an urban center or, urban village.~~
- ~~• The rezone is provided for in an adopted neighborhood plan, or similar community-based plan with an inclusive engagement process.~~
- ~~• The rezone is to a low-scale single-family, multifamily or mixed-use zone, compatible with single-family areas.~~
- ~~• The rezone procedures are followed.~~

LU60 Allow for a wider mix of lowscale housing types (i.e. duplexes, triplexes and courtyard cottages) in single family zoned areas inside of transit communities. In areas outside transit communities allow small lot single family zones in urban villages when provided for in community-based planning effort based on public engagement.

~~Apply small lot single family zones to single family property meeting single family rezone criteria only when all of the following conditions are met:~~

- ~~• The land is within an urban center or urban village;~~
- ~~• The rezone is provided for in an adopted neighborhood plan;~~
- ~~• The rezone procedures are followed.~~

B-2 Multifamily Residential Areas

policies

LU71 Designate as multifamily residential areas, existing areas predominantly occupied by multifamily development, as well as areas where greater residential development is desired to increase housing opportunities and promote development intensities consistent with the urban village strategy and transit community policies.

~~LU75 Limit the multifamily zones to areas that do not meet the single family zone criteria, except in circumstances where an adopted neighborhood plan indicates that a different zone is more appropriate.~~

LU76 Provide flexibility in rezone criteria for rezoning multifamily residential areas to compatible neighborhood commercial zones if approved in an adopted neighborhood plan, particularly within transit communities.

multifamily residential use policies

LU79 Provide zoning classifications that permit limited amounts of commercial use in what are otherwise residential zones in order to either provide retail and service uses in close proximity to residents in the densest multifamily environment or to create transitions between commercial and multifamily areas, particularly within transit communities.

B-3 Mixed-Use Commercial Areas

policies

LU103 Prioritize the preservation, improvement and expansion of existing commercial areas over the creation of new business districts.

LU104 Consistent with the urban village strategy and transit community policies, preference the development of compact concentrated commercial areas, or nodes, in which many businesses can be easily accessed by pedestrians, to the designation of diffuse, sprawling commercial areas along arterials, which often require driving from one business to another.

LU105 Designate as mixed-use commercial areas, existing areas that provide locations for accommodating the employment, service, retail and housing needs of Seattle’s existing and future population. Allow for a wide range in the character and function of individual areas consistent with the urban village strategy and transit community policies.

LU106 Provide a range of commercial zone classifications, which provide different mixes and intensities of activity, varying scales of development, varying degrees of residential or commercial orientation, and varying degrees of pedestrian- or auto-orientation and relationship to surrounding areas depending on their role in the urban village strategy, transit community policies and community goals as voiced in adopted neighborhood plans.

uses policies

LU108 Provide for a wide range of uses in commercial areas. Allow, prohibit or allow under specified conditions uses according to the intended pedestrian, automobile or residential orientation of the area, the area’s role in the urban village strategy, transit community policies, and the impacts the uses can be expected to have on the commercial area and surrounding areas.

density limits policies

LU116 Seek to focus development ~~in transit and in~~ pedestrian-friendly urban villages and transit communities while maintaining compatibility between new development and the surrounding area through standards regulating the size and density of development.

LU117 Generally permit a greater intensity of development ~~in pedestrian and transit supportive environments found~~ in pedestrian-oriented commercial areas within urban villages and transit communities than is permitted in general commercial areas or outside of urban villages and transit communities.

heights policies

LU120 Assign height limits to commercial areas independently of the commercial zone designations. Allow different areas within a zone to be assigned different height limits based on the appropriate height needed to:

- Further the urban village strategy’s goals of focusing growth in urban villages;
- Further transit community policies;
- Accommodate the desired functions and intensity of development;
- Provide a compatible scale relationship with existing development; and
- Address potential view blockage.
- Establish predictable maximum heights that respond to varying topographical conditions.

LU179 Permit the establishment of zoning overlay districts, which may modify the regulations of the underlying land use zone categories, to address special circumstances and issues of significant public interest in a subarea of the city. ~~subject to the limitations on establishing greater density in single family areas. Overlays may be established through neighborhood planning.~~

Introduction

discussion

Seattle's strategy for accommodating future growth and creating a sustainable city builds on the foundation of these neighborhoods and brings together a number of tools to create a better city:

- diverse housing and employment growth,
- pedestrian and transit-oriented communities,
- the provision of services and infrastructure targeted to support that growth, and
- enhancements to the natural environment and the city's cultural resources.

The strategy of focusing future development in urban villages and transit communities will direct most new development away from Seattle's single-family toward these areas. Some areas outside urban villages and transit communities will accommodate limited growth in less dense development patterns consisting primarily of single-family neighborhoods, limited multifamily and commercial areas and industrial areas.

A Urban Village Strategy

goals

- UVG4 Promote densities, mixes of uses, and transportation improvements that support walking, use of public transportation and other transportation demand management (TDM) strategies, especially within urban centers and urban villages and transit communities.
- UVG5 Direct the greatest share of future development to urban centers, ~~and~~ urban villages and transit communities and reduce the potential for dispersed growth along arterials and in other areas not conducive to walking, transit use, and cohesive community development.
- UVG9 Use limited land resources more efficiently and pursue a development pattern that is more economically sound, by encouraging infill development on vacant and underutilized sites, particularly within urban villages and transit communities.
- UVG13 Promote physical environments of the highest quality, which emphasize the special identity of each of the city's neighborhoods, particularly within urban centers, ~~and~~ villages and transit communities.
- UVG16 Provide parks and open space that are accessible to urban villages and transit communities in order to enhance the ir livability ~~of urban villages and transit communities~~, ~~to~~ help shape the overall development pattern and to enrich the character of each village and transit community.

policies

- UV1 Promote the growth of urban villages and transit communities as compact mixed-use neighborhoods in order to support walking and transit use, and to provide services and employment close.
- UV2 Promote conditions that support healthy neighborhoods throughout the city, including those conducive to helping mixed-use urban village communities and transit communities thrive, such as focused transportation demand management strategies,

vital business districts, a range of housing choices, a range of park and open space facilities, and investment and reinvestment in neighborhoods.

UV2.5 In ~~areas~~ the 1/2 mile walksheds surrounding major transit hubs, except in industrial zone allow densities sufficient to take advantage of significant investment in public transportation infrastructure. Use incentive zoning programs and other strategies to help ensure the provision of affordable housing.

UV7 In order to support the existing character of areas outside of urban villages and transit communities, and to encourage continued investment in all of Seattle's neighborhoods, permit areas outside of urban villages to accommodate some limited growth in a less dense development pattern consisting primarily of single-family neighborhoods and limited multifamily, commercial, and industrial areas.

UV7.5 Coordinate public and private activities to address transportation, utilities, open space and other public services to accommodate the new growth associated with subarea rezones (e.g., in transit ~~station-areas~~communities) that result in significant increases in density.

UV10 Maintain and enhance retail commercial services throughout the city, especially in areas attractive to pedestrians and transit riders, to support concentrations of residential and employment activity, with special emphasis on serving urban villages and transit communities.

A-1 Categories of Urban Villages

hub urban village goals

UVG25 Accommodate concentrations of housing and employment ~~at strategic locations in the transportation system conveniently accessible to the city's residential population within transit communities to~~ reduce the length of work-trip commutes.

residential urban village goals

UVG28 Promote the development of residential urban villages, which function primarily as compact residential neighborhoods providing opportunities for a wide range of housing types and a mix of activities that support the residential population. Strive for densities in residential urban villages and transit communities that support transit use.

A-2 Areas Outside of Centers & Villages

policies

UV35 Provide that the areas of the city outside urban centers, villages and transit communities remain primarily as residential and commercial areas with allowable densities similar to existing conditions, or as industrial areas, or major institutions.

~~UV36 Protect single family areas, both inside and outside of urban villages. Allow limited multifamily, commercial, and industrial uses outside of villages, to support the surrounding area or to permit the existing character to remain.~~

UV38 Permit limited amounts of development consistent with the desire to maintain the general intensity of development that presently characterizes the multifamily, commercial, and industrial areas outside of urban centers and villages as well as transit communities and direct the greatest share of growth to the urban centers, and villages and transit communities.

B Distributions of Growth

discussion

The urban village strategy directs Seattle's future growth primarily to areas designated as centers and villages. The greatest share of job growth will be accommodated in urban centers – areas that already function as high density, concentrated employment centers with the greatest access to the regional transit network. Growth in industrial sector jobs will continue to be accommodated primarily within the two manufacturing/industrial centers where this activity is already securely established. Job growth will also occur in hub urban villages and mixed-use center transit communities, that which are distributed throughout the city to promote additional employment concentrations in areas close to frequent transit or easily accessible to the surrounding residential population, thereby locating jobs and services near where people live.

goals

UVG30 Encourage growth in locations within the city a ten-minute walk of frequent transit that support more compact and less land-consuming, high-quality urban living.

C Open Space Network

goals

- UVG40 Enhance the urban village strategy through the provision of:
1. Essential components of livability in more densely populated areas transit communities
 2. Recreational opportunities for daytime populations in urban centers
 3. Mitigation of the impacts of large-scale development
 4. Increased opportunities to walk regularly to open spaces by providing them close by
 5. Connections linking urban centers and villages and transit communities, through a system of parks, boulevards, community gardens, urban trails, and natural areas
 6. A network of connections to the regional open space system
 7. Protected environmentally critical areas
 8. Enhanced tree canopy and understory throughout the city

policies

UV46 Strive to accomplish goals in Urban Village Appendix B for the amount, types, and distribution of open space.

UV53 Direct efforts to expand the open space network according to the following considerations:

1. Locations for new facilities:
 - a. Urban centers and villages targeted for largest share of residential growth; especially those existing high density residential areas presently not served

- according to the population-based or distribution goals for urban village open space;
 - b. Other urban village and transit community locations where an adopted subarea plan or recognized neighborhood plan includes open space recommendations consistent with these policies; and
 - c. Specific locations enumerated in the Parks functional plan outside urban centers or villages.
2. Types of open space acquisitions and facility development:
- a. Village open space sites, urban center indoor recreation facilities, village commons sites, and community gardens;
 - b. Critical open space linkages, connectors, and corridors that are highly accessible for active use within or directly serving urban villages, high density and/or high pedestrian, bicycle, or transit ~~use areas~~ communities;
 - c. Open space linkages, connectors, and corridors that are highly accessible for active use serving other high pedestrian, bicycle, or transit ~~use areas~~ communities and
 - d. Other types of open space within or adjacent to urban villages that is accessible from adjacent urban villages.

Urban Village Appendix B

Citywide Open Space & Recreation Facility Goals

City Open Space	Goal	Area
Breathing Room Open Space	1 Acre per 100 residents	Citywide
Usable Open Space	¼ to ½ acre within ¼ to ½ mile of every resident	Areas outside Urban Villages
Recreation Facilities	Specific Goals for Recreation Facilities such as Community Centers, swimming pools and athletic fields are contained in the Parks Comprehensive Plan	Citywide, except as modified by Village Open Space and Recreation Goals

Urban Village and Transit Community Open Space & Recreation Facility Goals

Goal	Urban Center Villages	Hub Urban Villages <u>and Mixed-Use Center Transit Communities</u>	Residential Urban Villages <u>and Mixed-Use Neighborhood Transit Communities</u>
Urban Village Open Space Population-based Goals	One acre of Village Open Space per 1,000 households and one acre of Village Open Space per 10,000 jobs in each urban center, or in the four contiguous urban centers that comprise the	.One acre of Village Open Space per 1,000 households.	Same as for Hub Urban Villages.

Seattle Planning Commission – DRAFT Transit Communities 2012 Comp Plan Proposal
Urban Village Element line-in/line out edits

	center city, considered as a whole		
Urban Village Open Space Distribution Goals	All locations in the village within approximately 1/8 mile of Village Open Space.	Same as for Urban Center Villages.	For moderate and high density areas: All locations within 1/8 mile of a Village Open Space that is between 1/4- and 1-acre in size, or within 1/4 mile of a Village Open Space that is greater than 1 acre. For low density areas: all locations within 1/4 mile of any qualifying Village Open Space.
Qualifying Criteria for Village Open Space	Dedicated open spaces of at least 10,000 square feet in size, publicly accessible, and usable for recreation and social activities.	Same as for Urban Center Villages.	Same as for Urban Center and Hub Villages.
Village Commons, Recreation Facility and Community Garden Goals	At least one usable open space of at least one acre in size (Village Commons) where the existing and target households total 2,500 or more. (Amended 11/96). One indoor, multiple- use recreation facility serving each Urban Center. One dedicated community garden for each 2,500 households in the Village with at east one dedicated garden site.	At least one usable open space of at least one acre in size (Village Commons). One facility for indoor public assembly. Same as for Urban Center Villages.	At least one usable open space, of at least one acre in size (Village Commons), where overall residential density is ten households per gross acre or more. One facility for indoor public assembly in Villages with greater than 2,000 households. Same as for Urban Center and Hub Villages.

A Capital Facilities Policies

strategic capital investment policies

CF2 Assess policy and fiscal implications of potential major new and expanded capital facilities as part of the City's process for making capital investment choices. The assessment should apply standard criteria, including the consideration of issues such as a capital project's consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and neighborhood plans, specifically the urban village and citywide transit community strategies and their ~~its~~ effects on Seattle's quality of life, the environment, social equity, and economic opportunity.

facility siting policies

CF10 Seek to locate capital facilities within designated transit communities where they are accessible to a majority of their expected users by walking, bicycling, car-pooling, and/or public transit.

relations with other public entities policies

CF14 Work with other public and non-profit entities to include urban village locations and transit community designations as major criteria for selecting sites for new or expanded community-based facilities or public amenities.