

# COMMENTING ON THE EIS

## U DISTRICT URBAN DESIGN EIS

### 1. WHEN CAN I PROVIDE COMMENT?

The comment period for the U District Urban Design EIS will follow issuance of the Draft EIS. The Draft EIS is circulated so that the public and agencies can comment on the accuracy and content of the EIS before it is finalized.

The City plans to provide a 45-day comment period following issuance of the Draft EIS. During this period, written comment may be provided at any time and verbal comment may be provided at a public hearing to be held by the City. Additional information on dates and how to provide comment will be provided in the Draft EIS.

It should be noted that there is no comment period following issuance of the Final EIS.

### 2. WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO MY COMMENTS?

The City will consider all comments provided during both Scoping and the Draft EIS 45-day comment period. Comments may result in corrections, additions or clarification of information in the Draft EIS. The Final EIS will include all revisions made as a result of comments as well as specific responses to all comments.

### 3. HOW CAN I MAKE MY COMMENTS THE MOST EFFECTIVE?

The Washington State Department of Ecology has developed a Citizen's Guide to SEPA Review and Commenting ([www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/sepa/citizensguide/citizensguide.htm](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/sepa/citizensguide/citizensguide.htm)). The following tips for commenting on an EIS are extracted from this document.

- Be clear, concise, and organized. Decide what you need to say before you begin. Developing an outline, if you have a number of points, is a good idea to help you group your comments in a logical order. Jumping back and forth between several topics reduces the impact of your argument.
- Be specific. Saying that you are against a project will not have as much effect as saying why. It is always a good idea to give as much support as possible to your comments. Include as much factual information as possible. For instance, you can compare how things were, to how they are, to how you believe they will be in the future—and why. Referring to the Comprehensive Plan, development regulations, information on similar projects or situations, or other environmental laws and/or documents can also be helpful. It is important to be as accurate as possible.
- Identify possible solutions. Suggestions on reasonable mitigation (conditions to avoid, minimize, or reduce adverse impacts) may help shape a questionable project into a welcome addition to a community. After identifying your concern, whenever possible, suggest possible solutions.

# SEPA EIS PROCESS

## U DISTRICT URBAN DESIGN EIS

### 1. WHAT IS SEPA?

The State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) is a state policy established in RCW 43.21C that requires state and local agencies to consider the likely environmental consequences of governmental decisions, including decisions on neighborhood plans and regulatory changes. Implementing rules (often referred to as the SEPA Rules) are codified in the Washington Administrative Code 197-11 and in Seattle Municipal Code Title 25 Environmental Policies and Procedures. The SEPA Rules provide detail for the environmental review process, including the EIS process.

### 2. WHAT IS AN EIS AND WHY IS IT BEING PREPARED?

An environmental impact statement, or EIS, is a document that provides an impartial discussion of significant environmental impacts, reasonable alternatives, and mitigation measures that would avoid or minimize adverse impacts. The U District Urban Design EIS is being prepared because the City has determined that the proposal has the potential to result in significant adverse impacts.

### 3. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A DRAFT EIS AND A FINAL EIS?

A Draft EIS provides the public and agency decision-makers with information on likely significant adverse environmental impacts of a proposal and alternatives and on mitigation measures to reduce impacts. A Final EIS includes all comments received on the Draft EIS and responses from the City, and may include revisions to the Draft EIS based on comments received and new information learned.

### 4. HOW WILL I KNOW WHEN THE DRAFT EIS IS ISSUED AND WHERE WILL IT BE AVAILABLE?

The Draft EIS is tentatively scheduled to be issued in March 2014. Should the schedule change, updated information will be posted on the City's project web site.

A notice of availability of the Draft EIS will be posted on the City's U District project web site (See link below.) and emailed to those who have signed up to receive email updates.

[www.seattle.gov/dpd/cityplanning/completenesslist/universitydistrict](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/cityplanning/completenesslist/universitydistrict)

The draft EIS will be posted on the City's website and hard copies will be available at several public libraries and the Seattle Department of Planning and Development Public Resource Center.

# SEPA EIS PROCESS

## U DISTRICT URBAN DESIGN EIS

### 5. WHAT IS SCOPING?

Scoping is the process of identifying the elements of the environment to be evaluated in an EIS. Scoping is intended to help identify and narrow the issues to those that are significant. Scoping includes a public comment period so that the public and other agencies can comment on key issues and concerns. Following the comment period, the City considers all comments received and determines the scope of review for the environmental analysis.

The scoping process begins with issuance of the Scoping Notice. For the U District Urban Design EIS, the City of Seattle issued the Determination of Significance/ Scoping Notice on September 5, 2013 and made it available to the public through a variety of methods. The scoping period closes on October 7, 2013.

### 6. WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT? WHICH ONES WILL BE STUDIED IN THE EIS?

As defined in SEPA, potential elements of the environment that may be considered include both the natural environment (earth, air, water, plants and animals, energy and natural resources) and the built environment (environmental health, land and shoreline use, transportation, aesthetics, housing, public services and utilities). An EIS focuses on environmental impacts and is not required to evaluate all of the possible considerations and effects of a decision, such as economic competition and social policy analysis.

The U District Urban Design EIS will address land use, plans and policies, transportation, aesthetics, population, housing and employment, open space and recreation, public services and utilities, greenhouse gas emissions and historic resources.

### 7. HOW ARE THE ALTERNATIVES DEFINED?

The lead agency (in this case the City of Seattle) determines the alternatives based on their assessment of reasonable options that could feasibly attain the proposal's objectives. For the U District the City has identified three alternatives. The two action alternatives each describe different approaches to increasing height and density focused around the future light rail station. The third alternative (No Action) assumes that growth will continue to follow current trends.