



May 22, 2020

To: Councilmember Dan Strauss
Seattle City Council
600 4th Avenue, 2nd Floor
PO Box 34025
Seattle, WA 98124-4025

Re: **Land Use Code Omnibus Bill**

Dear Councilmember Strauss,

It has come to the attention of the Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board that changes to the required bicycle parking requirements related to affordable housing have been proposed as part of SDCI's annual Code Correction legislation. We have several concerns with the changes as proposed in the legislation and described in the Director's Report. Many of the changes go well beyond purported "routine maintenance" and are contrary to established city public policy.

The most problematic is the elimination of bicycle parking from affordable housing. The Director's Report summarizes:

"The fifth change would add a new footnote to Table D for 23.54.015 to indicate that there is no minimum bicycle parking required for income-restricted housing serving households at 60 percent of median income, when that housing has rent- and income-restriction commitments for at least 40 years. Also, an edit to a similar footnote clarifies a similar flexibility for congregate housing and supportive housing for seniors or those with disabilities. This is meant to bring parity to the treatment of parking requirements for automobiles and bicycles in these kinds of housing and avoid design challenges that could affect space for tenant amenities and services."

While we strongly believe that Seattle needs more affordable housing and that the city should facilitate its development, we think the proposed changes deny affordable housing residents, staff, and visitors a critical, affordable mode of transportation that should be available to all Seattle residents—especially low income individuals.

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Emily Paine, Co-Chair
Alex Lew, Co Vice-Chair
Kashina Groves, Co Vice-Chair
Andrea Lai, Secretary
Pierre Brunelle
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Andrew Danneberg
Benjamin Estes
Meredith Hall
Connor Inslee
Sarah Udelhofen

The Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board shall advise the City Council, the Mayor, and all departments and offices of the city on matters related to bicycling, and the impact which actions by the city may have upon bicycling; and shall have the opportunity to contribute to all aspects of the city's planing processes insofar as they relate to bicycling.

- City Council
Resolution 25534



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These proposed changes do not seem in line with our city's equity, climate change, or transportation goals and values. Bicycling is an affordable, healthy, and low impact transportation option that is used by people of all demographics in all parts of our city. As the city builds out its network of all ages and abilities routes, we expect bicycle usage to grow. Bicycle facilities should be supported for all people, including residents and visitors of income-restricted housing.

Removing all bike parking from affordable housing projects is a major public policy decision that should not be included in SDCI's annual "routine maintenance" omnibus bill. This is a significant departure from the intent of the 2018 legislation. It is against city public policy, and it has not been vetted with stakeholders.

With additional due diligence with a broad spectrum of stakeholders to explore alternative options to encourage both affordable housing and affordable transportation, we believe there are alternative policies that SDCI and Seattle City Council should consider:

- **No reduction in minimum short term bicycle parking.** The required amount is low (1 sidewalk rack per 40 units), it can be satisfied in the right-of way, and it serves visitors and the general public in addition to residents.
- **Provide a minimum required level of bicycle parking greater than zero.** Eliminating all bike parking makes the inaccurate assumption that no one will bike (including staff and visitors). By providing a minimal amount, the city can ensure that people have a safe place to store what may be their crucial mode of transportation, exercise, or enjoyment.
- **To permit a reduction in bicycle parking, require a type 1 decision to authorize the reduction rather than a blanket exemption.** The determination should consider whether the residents, staff, and visitors of the affordable housing complex are significantly less likely to bike than the general population due to the location of the development or the unique physical abilities of the residents.
- **Exempt bicycle parking within affordable housing from floor-area ratio (FAR) calculations.** A FAR exemption would be consistent with the existing exemptions for bicycle parking in small efficiency dwelling units and backyard cottages. The FAR exemption would balance the square-footage need for both affordable housing and affordable transportation.

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While we draw special attention to the bicycle parking exemption for affordable housing, we are also concerned about other changes to the bicycle parking code. We hope SDCI and Seattle City Council will remove changes that are not merely “routine maintenance,” engage SBAB and other key stakeholders to create policy solutions that are well-considered and consistent with existing public policy, and propose those solutions in a future legislative action.

We thank you for your time. Please let us know if there is anything we can do to help make sure the proposed changes will help facilitate affordable housing in our city while still respecting Seattle’s values.

Sincerely,

Emily Paine
Co-chair

Patrick Taylor
Co-chair

Andrea Lai
Secretary

Cc: Mayor Jenny A. Durkan
Seattle City Council

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