



# City of Seattle

## Seattle Planning Commission

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November 8, 2011

Honorable Councilmember Sally J. Clark, Chair  
Committee on the Built Environment  
Seattle City Council  
PO Box 34025  
Seattle, WA 98124-4025

### RE: Recommendations on West Seattle Triangle Rezone

Dear Councilmember Clark,

The Planning Commission has been tracking the West Seattle Triangle Rezone with great interest. In 2010, we released [Seattle Transit Communities](#), which provides clear direction for aligning the City's planning efforts around frequent transit service. That report identifies the West Seattle Triangle and Junction area as a high-priority mixed-use center.

The rezone is a well-conceived, thoughtful proposal and, along with the [Urban Design Framework and Streetscape Concept Plan](#), does an impressive job of implementing the goals of this effort<sup>1</sup> and advancing the vision outlined in our report: vibrant, safe, pleasant, walkable communities that make the most of our regional and local transit investments.

We strongly support the rezone and commend both DPD and the West Seattle Triangle Advisory Group for their work, which offers a superb example of the community working well with City. The proposal modestly advances growth management goals by providing an increment of density beyond the current zoning. Additionally, it also clearly articulates how the City will integrate land use, services, and capital projects around high capacity transit. This should help the community equitably accommodate new households and businesses while taking into consideration preserving and enhancing important community assets like Alki Lumber and the West Seattle YMCA.

### SUPPORT PROPOSED ZONING CHANGES

We generally support the zoning proposal by DPD and submit some modest changes for your consideration, along with comments and feedback as follows:

#### Zoning Designation

- We strongly support moving from General Commercial to a Neighborhood Commercial zoning designation. The proposed NC3 zone will help transition to a stronger pedestrian-orientation by addressing the location of parking, building facades, and types of uses.

- We strongly support extending the Pedestrian (P) Designation along SW Alaska Street to create a stronger connection between the Triangle and the Junction.
- We support base 4.75 FAR with the incentive 5.5 FAR.
- We recommend rezoning the L2 blocks in the area bounded by SW Oregon Street, Fauntleroy Way SW, 40<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW and 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW to a Neighborhood Commercial designation to allow greater density and better flexibility in this area for commercial or residential uses.

#### Height

- Policy UV25 of the Seattle Comprehensive Plan calls for concentrations of housing and jobs to be located near high-frequency transit within hub urban villages. The Triangle planning area is located within the West Seattle Junction Hub Urban Village and is at West Seattle's premier nexus of Bus RapidRide and other transit.
- We find the proposed heights to be reasonable and realistic with respect to the market for development in this neighborhood area. However, the Commission recommends application of the proposed 85-foot zone into other areas that are vacant or under-developed *per the attached map*. This will encourage investment in this core urban village area consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
- Consider zoning that would allow for a single iconic tower at Alaska and Fauntleroy. This could create a strong focal point for the community. However, in order to make such a tower feasible we suspect that a height of 160 feet or greater would be needed. The additional capacity in the tower would be tied to incentives that would yield neighborhood-specific public benefits.

#### Development Standards

- The proposed development standards--combined with the street concept plan--are specific and intentionally focused on creating breathing room, open areas, and a lively pedestrian oriented streetscape. We support these standards, including separation between structures, setbacks along the north and south, limit on lot coverage, and pedestrian-oriented street frontages, as a way of creating essential livability in the district.
- We support the provision to exempt upper level setbacks within 100 feet of the intersection consistent with the urban design intent to create an iconic building structure at this location.

#### FUTURE ACTIONS TO MAXIMIZE OUR PUBLIC INVESTMENT

- As a Citywide Transit Communities policy is created, we recommend this area be designated a Transit Community with associated overlay. This would enable this area to be prioritized for public investments to ensure the residential density is supported by essential components for livability.
- We recommend flexibility with the mid-block crossings and corridors as outlined in the concept plan.

- While the stadium, golf course and totem pole provide open space, these uses will not likely meet the open space needs of the new residents. We recommend the City evaluate these spaces with respect to design and usability. In addition to a more accessible entry and an enhanced pedestrian connection to Camp Long as outlined in the UDF, we also recommend re-purposing some of the area for a playground.
- The mini-parks along Fauntleroy create a great opportunity and should continue to be evaluated and developed to provide better quality community spaces.
- We recommend strengthening the connection across 35th (which is a major barrier) to the Totem Pole open space, and considering adding amenities such as a playground to that space.
- The Urban Design Framework and the neighborhood specific DRB design guidelines are both great vehicles for ensuring the sidewalk widths and landscaping can facilitate some breathing room.
- A healthy and lively neighborhood relies on a mix of shopping opportunities as well as jobs that are not readily or solely influenced by urban design and zoning regulations. Develop additional economic development strategies to facilitate a rich mix of activities.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our recommendations regarding the proposed zoning changes for the West Seattle Triangle. We look forward to assisting you as the City implementation process advances. We also hope to work closely with DPD and elected officials to articulate a citywide transit community policy that clearly establishes the City's goals related to land use and zoning around transit service. Please contact me or our director, Barbara Wilson, at (206) 684-0431 if you have further questions.

Sincerely,



Leslie Miller, Chair  
Seattle Planning Commission

cc: Mayor Mike McGinn  
Seattle City Councilmembers  
Ethan Raup, David Hiller, Michelle Scoleri, Rebecca Deehr; Mayor's Office  
Norm Schwab, Rebecca Herzfeld, Council Central Staff  
Diane Sugimura, Marshall Foster, Susan McLain, John Skelton, Mike Podowski, Geoffrey Wentlandt, DPD

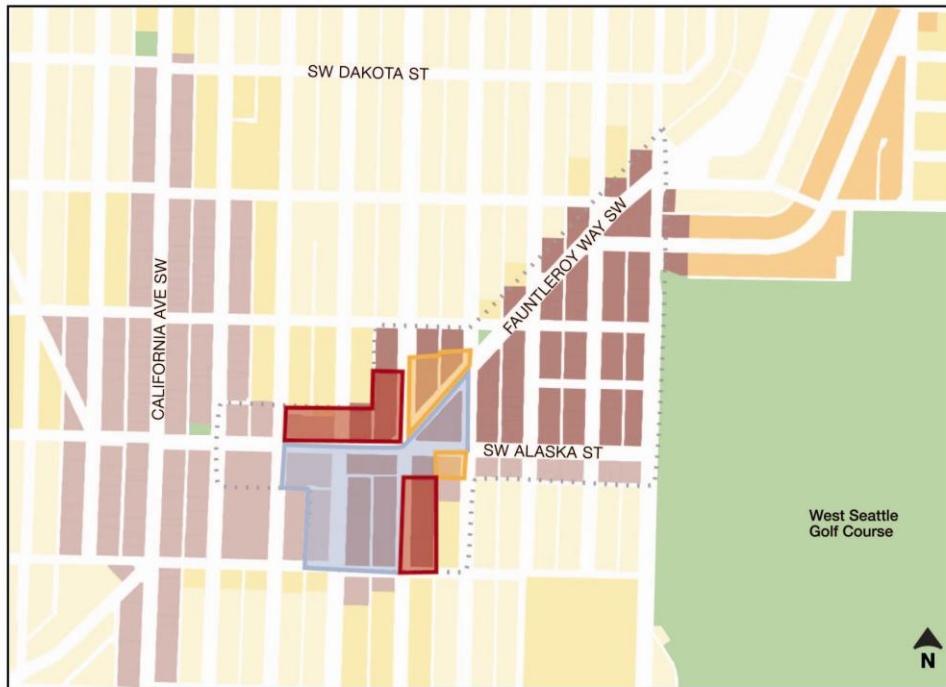
**SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION RECORD OF DISCLOSURE & RECUSAL:**

- Catherine Benotto disclosed that her firm, Weber Thompson, works on commercial and multifamily projects throughout the city and that she served on the West Seattle Triangle Advisory Board representing the Planning Commission.
- Commissioner Josh Brower disclosed that his firm, Brower Law, represents developers of commercial and multifamily property throughout the city.
- Commissioner David Cutler disclosed that his firm, GGLO, works on commercial and multifamily projects throughout the city.
- Commissioner Colie Hough-Beck disclosed that her firm, HBB, works on commercial, multifamily, and infrastructure projects throughout the city.
- Commissioner Martin Kaplan disclosed that his firm, Martin Henry Kaplan, Architects AIA, works on projects throughout the city.
- Commissioner Bradley Khouri disclosed that his firm, b9 architects inc, works on commercial and multifamily projects throughout the city.
- Commissioner Jeanne Krikawa disclosed that her firm, The Underhill Company LLC, works on transportation and planning projects throughout the city.
- Commissioner Amalia Leighton disclosed that her firm, SvR, works on commercial and multifamily projects throughout the city.
- Commissioner Matt Roewe disclosed that his firm, VIA Architecture, provides design and planning services to transit agencies, the city of Seattle and private sector developers in Seattle.

i i West Seattle Triangle Project Goals as outlined in the West Seattle Triangle Urban Design Framework

The West Seattle Triangle will change in the coming years. Throughout the West Seattle Triangle process, discussion has focused on how to anticipate change, capitalize on the opportunities that change will bring, and retain what is great about the Triangle today. The following goals were identified by members of the community through the planning process:

- **Build on what is great** about the Triangle while planning for the future
- Capitalize on the investment in transit and transportation: a **transit-friendly** neighborhood
- Embrace the area's location as a **gateway** to the West Seattle peninsula
- Support the continued success of **small businesses** & the Triangle business district
- Welcome a **diversity of residents**
- Building designs meet the needs of occupants and property owners while supporting a vibrant **community life**
- **Accommodate all travelers:** cars, transit, pedestrians, trucks and bicycles
- Create **places for people:** new community spaces and connections to parks
- Integrate **natural systems**
- **Link to other neighborhood areas**, including the Junction business district
- **Accommodate parking and loading**, and continue to plan for parking needs in the future



-  DPD's proposal for 85' height limits
-  Seattle Planning Commission recommends 85' height limits
-  Seattle Planning Commission recommends considering 85' height limits
-  rezone proposal boundary