Livable South Downtown

...a project of the Mayor's Center City Seattle strategy

Environmental Impact Statement
Scoping Alternatives & Elements

May 2006

Understanding the Impacts of Different Approaches to Land Use

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) includes study of alternative land use scenarios that will help planners and the public understand how environmental impacts might vary if different sets of zoning choices are made. This helps foster public comment on zoning proposals, and provides information that assists leaders in making their decisions. The EIS alternatives will be defined to cover the variety of possible decisions that could be made, ranging from "no action" to the maximum amount of zoning change. This method of defining alternatives is known as "book-ending."

For large-scale efforts like Livable South Downtown planning, a broad level of impact analysis ("programmatic" in nature) is often preferable because information about the specifics of future development is limited. However, if conceptual development plans are available for some properties, they can be incorporated into the alternatives. This helps reduce the need for later environmental analysis, and allows for better-informed choices by decision-makers. This approach is anticipated to be used for the Livable South Downtown EIS.

DPD staff have identified four alternative approaches to land use that may be analyzed through the EIS process.

Alternative #1:
Neighborhood Infill and Commercial Growth Toward the West

- Encourage infill residential growth within and near Pioneer Square and Chinatown/I.D. neighborhoods (including Little Saigon)
- Encourage more intensive growth south of Pioneer Square, along 1st Avenue S. and the Stadium North Lot

Alternative #2:
Neighborhood Infill and Commercial Growth Toward the East

- Encourage infill residential growth within and near Pioneer Square and Chinatown/I.D. neighborhoods (including Little Saigon)
- Encourage more intensive growth south of Chinatown, along 4th Avenue S. and Airport Way

Alternative #3:
Distributed Commercial and Residential Growth

- Encourage infill residential growth within and near Pioneer Square and Chinatown/I.D. neighborhoods (including Little Saigon)
- Encourage distributed commercial development throughout the entire study area

Alternative #4:
Current Zoning

- Study future development pattern if no zoning changes occur (also referred to as "no action" alternative)

Analysis of these alternatives will provide a better understanding of how future commercial and residential growth could be distributed within the study area over the coming 25 years. With the existing land use patterns and complex transportation networks, different zoning choices would differently "load" these areas with future growth, leading to different land use and transportation implications. Understanding these differences will provide useful information to aid decision-making.

Throughout the EIS scoping process, staff will receive feedback from the community about the issues that have been identified for study and about the EIS alternatives. At the end of the scoping process (June 2006), staff will use community feedback to refine the alternatives. Staff will be happy to receive feedback throughout the EIS process.

After the Draft EIS is published (autumn 2006), public comments and other findings may lead City staff to add consideration of other alternatives for the Final EIS (early 2007). This provides flexibility to adjust and add to the EIS analysis if new information suggests other actions that should be explored.

EIS Elements

The Determination of Significance for this proposal indicates the probable elements of the environment to be included in the EIS as:

Earth	Historic Preservation	Parks and Recreation
Land Use	Public View Protection	Energy
Height/Bulk/Scale	Transportation	Water Utilities
Housing	Parking	Sewers/Stormdrain Utilities
Population and Employment		

The following summarizes what may be addressed in EIS analyses of these topics.

EARTH

- The level of risk and damages from a major seismic event
- How current regulations address earthquake safety in buildings
- How it relates to future growth

LAND USE

(including Compatibility, Height/Bulk/Scale, Urban Design and Relationship to Plans and Policies)

- Future development patterns to year 2030, compare the alternatives
- Overall land use compatibility of future growth with existing land use patterns
- Potential height, bulk and scale impacts of future development
- Implications of the associated urban design planning
- Relationship to relevant plans and policies
- Relationship to environmental sustainability principles

POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT

- Future amounts of population and employment growth to year 2030
- Impacts on demographic aspects of population and employment (including the potential for displacement of existing businesses and shifts in types of employment expected)
- Potential for indirect and cumulative impacts of population and employment growth (including determining the potential for displacement of existing residents)

HOUSING

- Current housing supply characteristics and relevant housing policies/programs
- Evaluate potential housing impacts—how the proposal may affect existing housing resources, the potential for future development of housing resources, and the regulatory and policy environment relevant to housing
- Evaluate potential effects of using regulatory, policy and/or financial strategies that would address the retention and expansion of affordable housing resources within the study area. To the extent possible, characterize how preferred strategies may help provide for a balanced approach to housing that will assist in the realization of a range of housing types, a goal expressed by relevant plans and policies

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

- Potential for adverse impacts on the character of historic districts and historic resources in the study area
- Discuss historic preservation implications of changes in regulatory tools, such as transfer of development rights and bulk/setback concepts

PUBLIC VIEW PROTECTION

- Potential for impacts on public views identified by the City's SEPA policies and other key locations.
- Relationship to pertinent City view protection policies

TRANSPORTATION

- Evaluate potential for significant adverse impacts on:
  - » Traffic and the transportation network in the year 2030
  - » Transit services and non-motorized transportation
  - » Freight and goods movement
- Evaluate the proposal's relationship to pertinent City transportation plans and policies and known major improvement projects (2030 conditions)

PARKING

- Existing conditions and description of past studies
- Potential impacts on parking supply and demand, on and off street.
- Impact of planned road improvement projects on parking conditions in the study area
- Relationship to pertinent City parking policies

PARKS/RECREATION, ENERGY, WATER UTILITIES, SEWER/STORMDRAINS

- Summarize existing park/recreation and utility systems, including reliability indicators
- Evaluate potential for impacts on park/recreation and utility systems—additional demands with future development
- Capacity of existing and planned systems to accommodate those demands
- Potential benefits of incorporating environmentally sustainable strategies

MITIGATION MEASURES

In each section, discuss mitigation measures or strategies that would or could be taken to avoid or reduce identified significant adverse impacts.

Public Scoping Meeting
June 1, 2006 6-7:30 p.m.
Klondike Gold Rush National Historic Park auditorium, Cadillac Hotel
corner of 2nd Avenue S. and S. Jackson Street

For more information about the Livable South Downtown EIS process,
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