



# City of Seattle

## Seattle Planning Commission

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May 18, 2015

Honorable Mayor Ed Murray  
Mayor of Seattle  
City Hall  
*via e-mail*

Dear Mayor Murray,

The Planning Commission, as stewards of the Comprehensive Plan, has spent over two years working with key staff in the Department of Planning and Development (DPD), the Department of Transportation (SDOT) and the Office of Housing (OH) reviewing drafts and making recommendations on the policy direction for this Major Update to the Plan. The Commission recently reviewed Draft 4 and looks forward to the release of the public draft and a robust public process and discussion on this important document update.

While bold policy discussions have and should continue to be the priority for the Comprehensive Plan Major Update, the Commission requests similar importance be placed on document accessibility and readability. The Comprehensive Plan in its current form is difficult to understand and difficult to navigate. The Comprehensive Plan should be a document that is meaningful and usable for all residents, sharing the vision for how we grow and what change will mean for the community.

**The Planning Commission requests additional resources be directed to the Comprehensive Plan project and that these additional resources be targeted toward accessibility and readability of the document.**

***Graphics including tables, infographics, pull out boxes, charts and high resolution imagery can be a helpful tool for explaining complex concepts.*** The current draft begins to incorporate these tools but does not go far enough. The Commission recommends employing external expertise to create these graphics focusing on readability and accessibility.

***The Plan layout needs graphic representation for better readability.*** The Planning Commission has proposed a plan diagram to the DPD staff with the goal to make the Plan more relevant for each reader. A graphic plan diagram helps to guide

the reader to personally relevant parts and emphasizes connections between elements based on topic. The current draft includes only a standard table of contents.<sup>1</sup>

***The Comprehensive Plan should be designed and written taking full advantage of current technology.*** The document should be created for publication in an electronic format, focusing both on content as well as functionality. This focus on electronic format will require a different kind of document planning and will likely require additional external expertise.<sup>2</sup> Specifically the Commission recommends the document be electronically searchable and include tools that link topics that are covered in more than one element.<sup>3</sup>

***The Comprehensive Plan should clearly relate to the City's implementing plans.*** The Comprehensive Plan is a visionary document that guides implementing plans. The Comprehensive Plan should reference implementing plans and provide a link for the reader. It should be clear to the reader the role of the Comprehensive Plan and individual implementing plans and how the two are connected.<sup>4</sup>

The Planning Commission looks forward to the release of the public draft of the Comprehensive Plan major update and the public conversation that follows. This public draft should be as accessible as possible so as to gather a broad range of public commentary. The Comprehensive Plan can and should reflect bold policy shifts and a clear vision for a more equitable Seattle. The Planning Commission believes that this work on the document itself is an extension of this new vision.

Thank you for your consideration and please do not hesitate to contact me or our Executive Director, Vanessa Murdock, at 733-9271 should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Amalia Leighton, Chair

CC: Kathy Nyland, Mayor's Office; Seattle City Councilmember O'Brien; Diane Sugimura, Nathan Torgelson, Susan McLain, Tom Hauger, Patrice Carroll, DPD

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<sup>1</sup> PlaNYC and SDOT's Move Seattle are good examples of graphically accessible and compelling documents.

<sup>2</sup> The SDOT process for update of the Right of Way Improvement Manual is an example of updating a complex document with an electronic format focus.

<sup>3</sup> Parking is a good example of a topic that is covered in more than one element and the tool should help the reader cross reference these items.

<sup>4</sup> The City of Bellevue Comprehensive Plan [Transportation Element](#) incorporates modal maps and is a good example of the Comprehensive Plan/Implementing Plans connection and cross-reference.