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June 10, 2014

To: Tom Hauger and Patrice Carroll, Department of Planning & Development

From: Seattle Planning Commission

Re: Commission comments on initial review of Major Comprehensive Plan update

CC: Mayor Ed Murray; Seattle City Councilmembers; Kathy Nyland; Mayor's Office; Diane Sugimura, Nathan Torgelson, Susan McLain; DPD; Lish Whitson, Eric McConaghy, Council Central Staff

Dear Mr. Hauger and Ms. Carroll,

The Commission is pleased to present our initial thoughts on the outlines for the Urban Village, Land Use, Transportation and Housing Elements of the Seattle Comprehensive Plan. Please find attached to this memo, bulleted points for your review. Providing recommendations on the Comprehensive Plan update is a responsibility we are pleased to fulfill as stewards of Seattle's Comprehensive Plan.

Our intention is to help highlight early issues the Commission feels strongly be embodied in the forthcoming draft Elements. The Major Comprehensive Plan update is an incredible opportunity to have a conversation with our community about our hopes, values, and how we want to grow in the next 20 years. We look forward to more opportunities to engage in this process and be an active participant through its final adoption in 2015.

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact either Co-Chair or Vanessa Murdock, Commission Executive Director.

Sincerely,

David Cutler
Co-Chair

Amalia Leighton
Co-Chair

Urban Village

- Urban Village is a good strategy and should be the vision and incorporated in the introduction to the Comprehensive Plan.
 - The UV should also remain as an element so that there is a holding place for maps, policies and goals guiding the urban village strategy.
- Acknowledge that Urban Village strategy alone will not alleviate the issue of affordability
- Address affordability within UV or Housing element. If in UV, refer to Housing element
- Use the word Estimate instead of target or threshold
- Maps if included should be updated regularly. When boundaries change this should be updated in the document itself.
- Generally agree with growth estimates only for Urban Centers because the intensity of development is much greater.
- Acknowledge regional function of industrial uses (Land Use element comment)
- Transit Communities is an evolution of the urban village strategy and should be in the Urban Village Element or the Land Use Element.
 - Recommend using walkshed methodology not just mentioning proximity to transit but specifically the 10 minute walkshed from frequent and reliable transit as planned for by the Transit Master Plan, and how boundaries are to be drawn for future urban villages (include in policy direction not to shrink existing UVs based on walk shed methodology)
 - Recommend explicit criteria for how new urban villages might be added using frequent and reliable transit as a key measurement; and
 - Reinforce the commitment to make these places great places to live by providing the essential components of livability through prioritized infrastructure investments.
- Acknowledge regional function of industrial uses (Land Use element comment)

Questions for DPD – Is the Residential Urban Village still necessary? Recommend DPD be more explicit as to which benefits each village type serves and what the village type should expect in return from growth and the City's resources.

Land Use Element

- Appreciate that the writers are critical of redundant policies and to that end suggest that each goal/policy have only one topic.
- Single Family section should focus on character of development (building types, aesthetic, parking and not homeownership or large lot single homes alone).
 - The goals and policies should also focus on options and opportunities. Establish clear criteria for opportunity sites where there could be change, single family like development.
 - Allow creativity in solving the problems of affordability, single family's role in that.
- Multifamily section should also be about the character. Family-sized units should be encouraged around good schools and amenities.

- Inclusion of goals for IC, IB and IG in the land use element could help clarify their role and tie them to their regional significance.
- Urban Design element – will be folded into Land Use element. Flag this, LUT task force are still working on this section.

Questions for DPD – The Commission would like more clarity on the proposed changes to the Future Land Use Map.

Transportation Element

- Multi-modal maps can be used to tell the vision – recommend that the maps focus on Transit, Bike and Freight priority corridors not at the “facility type” level.
- Interested to see how they will incorporate public health and vulnerable users in the Transportation Element.
- Transportation infrastructure facilitates and stimulates economic development. It would be good to have goals that reflect this sentiment.
 - Highlight non-motorized activity, pedestrian, as a clear economic driver.
- Recognize that Transportation Strategic Plan is not required if the Comprehensive Plan outlines the clear strategy and multi-modal plans are referenced and updated regularly.
- Complete streets are an important enough concept that it should have its own goals and policies that refer to the legislation.
- Good funding direction, adding leveraging as a topic is a good addition.

Questions for DPD – Does the economic development piece of the Comprehensive Plan duplicate or have redundant goals/policies for the Container Port Element?

Is it possible to remove street typologies from the Comprehensive Plan and refer to the Right-of-Way Improvement Manual?

Is there a reason to not include funding of transportation infrastructure in the Capitol Facilities section?

Housing Element

- Proposed organization of element into three sections generally makes sense
 - Housing growth (both preservation and development)
 - Providing equal housing opportunities and responding to diverse housing needs
 - Affordable housing for low-income households
- Policies should reflect importance of increasing Seattle’s housing supply for smart regional growth management *and* to reduce upward pressure on housing costs.
- Do not use phrase growth “targets.”
- Ensure that housing is not more expensive than it needs to be.
- Pleased that the update will continue this element’s strong focus on equity and will add specific policies equal housing opportunities.

- Quantitative goals for housing affordability will need to be updated per Countywide Planning Policies. Any quantitative goal considered for the Comp Plan should be readily measurable and provide a meaningful indicator of progress.
- All neighborhoods should have a variety of housing choices, including that for low income households.
- Address displacement.
- Continue to include policies to both encourage mixed-income communities and avoid exacerbating concentrations of poverty.
- Go through housing and related policies with a family-oriented lens: strengthen/add policies to help retain and attract families and encourage family-size housing; revise policies to remove barriers.
- Share of Seattle's population who are seniors is declining. Also review policies with senior-oriented lens.
- Goals and policies need to address affordability for moderate- and middle-income households, not solely low income households.
- Wording of current policy to encourage homeownership stigmatizes renters: needs to be reframed.
- Better to include broad policies for housing choices to address needs of a variety household types and population segments than to address a narrow group (e.g., artists) in a single policy.
- We appreciate effort to identify cross-cutting policy issues and reduce redundancy both within and across elements.
 - Mostly comfortable with the approach DPD staff described in the outline for handling crosscutting issues, e.g., makes sense to
 - place policies on zoning-related incentives in Land Use element.
 - include location of housing in communities with easy access to transit, jobs, services, open space, schools, etc. in the Urban Village Element/Strategy
 - Locating housing by transit; transit oriented development
 - At the same time, it will be important to clearly reference those policies in Housing element, and make sure that the housing-related policy intent remains very clear.
 - More analysis and policy focus needed on interrelationships between housing and jobs, and economic development to benefit residents.
 - Also critical to address crosscutting issues in Capital Facilities element—provide/catalyze investments in essential components of livability to coordinate with concentrations of housing.

Questions for DPD –

- Tell us more about types of cross-cutting policies on housing and transportation you anticipate will go in different elements (Urban Village, Housing, Transportation, Land Use, etc.)
- What specific ways you are planning on addressing family-sized housing and other livability needs of families in the Housing element, other elements?

- What do you anticipate the EIS analysis will be able to say about the impact of the different growth alternatives on affordability? How about the impact on the supply of housing suitable for families?
- What kind of geographic policies are you contemplating with respect to locating or prioritizing affordable housing investments?