



City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

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Planning Analyst

Diana Canzoneri,
Demographer &
Senior Policy Analyst

September 23, 2010

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

RE: Recommendations on South Downtown Neighborhoods

Dear Councilmember Clark,

The Planning Commission has been tracking the Livable South Downtown planning effort since 2005 when the project began. Over the past five years, we have provided feedback and recommendations to DPD staff in a variety of ways; a member of the Commission also served on the South Downtown Advisory Committee. The Commission supports the proposed changes, which will set the stage for culturally and historically sensitive future development in accordance with the regional growth management strategies outlined in Seattle's Comprehensive Plan.

The staff recommendation for the Livable South Downtown project reflects careful consideration and balances diverse interests of businesses, historic and cultural preservation, and industrial lands. The proposed zoning changes are thoughtfully tailored to each neighborhood and reflect input from many stakeholders who have participated in the planning process. DPD staff has done a commendable job in crafting legislation that reflects the broad array of interests in the Chinatown/International District, Little Saigon, Pioneer Square, the Stadium district, and northern portion of the Duwamish Manufacturing and Industrial Center. Similarly, the proposed increased height limits balance opportunities for new development while considering the historic contexts of Pioneer Square and the Chinatown/International District. The proposed zoning changes have been crafted to enhance the diverse neighborhoods of South Downtown while accommodating new households and jobs.

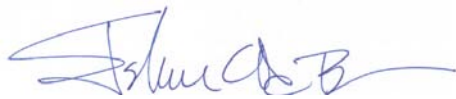
Seattle's Comprehensive Plan encourages the use of incentive zoning to promote affordable housing¹; as stewards of the Comprehensive Plan, the Commission supports the provisions for incentive zoning within the proposed South Downtown legislation. In 2007, the Commission released a white paper – [Incentive Zoning in Seattle: Enhancing Livability and Housing Affordability](#) – in which we provide recommendations for creating effective incentive zoning programs. We believe the proposed legislation is consistent with our recommendations by linking incentive zoning to growth and density, prioritizing neighborhood-specific public improvements, and encouraging the development of affordable workforce housing. The Commission supports the provisions of the transferable development rights and potential (TDR and TDP) that could help owners of historic property renovate their buildings.

While the Commission supports the proposed zoning changes and notes that the current economic climate continues to limit opportunities for new development; zoning changes are beneficial but not sufficient, in and of themselves, to encourage new construction, particularly in the current economic climate. At the same time, there are key opportunities that could serve as catalytic sparks in South Downtown, particularly if the City prioritizes this area as a focus for investment in the public realm. The North Lot Development, will add many needed households to Pioneer Square and could activate the adjacent public space. Yesler Terrace, which will be redeveloped over the next 15 years, will add numerous households and employment opportunities near South Downtown in a manner that could serve as a national model for the federal interagency partnership for [Sustainable Communities](#). The First Hill Streetcar will improve connections within South Downtown and to Capitol Hill and provides an opportunity to improve the streetscape and pedestrian crossings along the route. Public investment in the pedestrian realm, public safety, support for business districts, and code enforcement are necessary complements to zoning changes that will help enhance South Downtown.

Many areas in South Downtown neighborhoods are within a short walk of the most transit-rich location in Seattle: light rail, ferries, commuter rail, local and express buses, and inter-city passenger rail are easily accessible now, and the First Hill Streetcar will begin serving the area in 2013. The Planning Commission will soon release a report, *Seattle Transit Communities*, which will provide a road map to combine land use with the essential components of livability. This report will include specific recommendations for the area around King Street Station, which could help serve as a blueprint for implementing improvements to one key area of South Downtown.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with our recommendations regarding the proposed zoning changes for Seattle's South Downtown neighborhoods. We look forward to assisting you as the City implementation process advances. Please contact me or our Director, Barbara Wilson at (206) 684-0431 if you have further questions.

Sincerely,



Josh Brower, Chair
Seattle Planning Commission

cc: Mayor Mike McGinn
Seattle City Councilmembers
Ethan Raup, Julie McCoy, Rebecca Deehr; Mayor's Office
Rebecca Herzfeld, Martha Lester, Council Central Staff
Diane Sugimura, Marshall Foster, John Skelton, Susan McLain, DPD

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION RECORD OF DISCLOSURE & RECUSAL:

- Chair Josh Brower disclosed that his firm, Tupper Mack Brower, represents developers of commercial and multifamily property throughout the city. He also disclosed that he has passive, non-managerial ownership interest in a property located within South Downtown that is not currently and would not in the near-term future be seeking any benefit provided by the proposed zoning changes.
- Commissioner Amalia Leighton disclosed that she was formerly the co-chair of NPAC and that her firm, SvR is working on the redevelopment of Yesler Terrace and does work for the Port of Seattle.
- Commissioner Colie Hough-Beck disclosed that her firm, HBB, is working on the Goodwill site project, SR519, the Viaduct replacement, and that the Port of Seattle is one of her clients.
- Catherine Benotto disclosed that her firm, Weber + Thompson, has done work for a private developer at the North Lot and works on projects in downtown adjacent to South Downtown.
- Commissioner Jeanne Krikawa disclosed that the SODO Business Association is currently one of her clients. Former work for SDO'T included the Rainier Avenue corridor beginning at South Dearborn St. Former work for DPD included Third Avenue S. to S. Jackson St.

- Commissioner Chris Fiori disclosed that his firm, Heartland, is working with SHA on redevelopment of Yesler Terrace and that their office is located in Pioneer Square.
- Commissioner David Cutler disclosed that his firm, GGLO, is working with SHA on the redevelopment of Yesler Terrace.
- Commissioner Matt Roewe disclosed that his firm, VIA Architecture, has worked on private sector projects in the South Downtown neighborhoods in the past and is engaged with a design build team for the SR99 Bored Tunnel Project.

ⁱ Urban Village goal 2.5: In areas surrounding major transit hubs, except in industrial zones, allow densities sufficient to take advantage of significant investment in public transportation infrastructure. Use incentive zoning programs and other strategies to help ensure the provision of affordable housing.

Housing policy³¹: Promote the continued production and preservation of low-income housing through incentive zoning mechanisms, which include density and height bonuses and the transfer of development rights. Consider expanding the use of incentive zoning for affordable housing in neighborhoods outside downtown, particularly in urban centers.