



City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

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Diana Canzoneri,
Demographer &
Senior Policy Analyst

November 30, 2009

Honorable Councilmember Sally J. Clark, Chair
Planning, Land Use and Neighborhoods Committee
Seattle City Council
PO Box 34025
Seattle, WA 98124-4025

Re: Comments on the Proposed Multifamily Code Update – Midrise and Highrise Zones

Dear Councilmember Clark,

The Commission has reviewed and made recommendations about the proposed changes to the multifamily code since the project was initiated in 2005. Within the coming weeks, Council will likely approve the proposed changes to the Midrise and Highrise portions of the code. The Commission supports the proposed legislation and appreciates the diligent work of Councilmembers, DPD and Council Central staff in revising this portion of the land use code.

As you know, last month we submitted a series of discussion papers that included suggestions for how the proposed Multifamily Code could do more to meet the city's Comprehensive Plan goals, promote better design, encourage affordable housing and make the code easier to understand. Over the past month, Commissioners, DPD and Council Central staff have continued to discuss Highrise zone regulations. The Commission supports the amendments approved by PLUNC on November 18 as being responsive to the concerns raised in our 'discussion paper' dated October 21. PLUNC's amendments include:

- simplified setbacks to eliminate a large amount of building bulk that would have been allowed between 45-85 foot heights;
- reductions in minimum setback requirements along streets and alleys, which results in more efficient floorplate sizes; and
- changes to maximum width limits that allow for double-loaded corridor buildings when an affordable component is provided within the project.

The current legislation also includes a number of other changes that the Planning Commission supports:

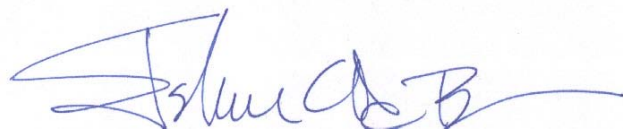
- SMC 23.54.030 Parking standards – eliminates parking design regulations where parking is provided voluntarily.
- SMC 23.45.524 Landscaping and screening standards in Midrise and Highrise zones – Green Factor requirements have been reduced from 0.6 to 0.5. The Commission supports a further reduction to 0.3.

- SMC 23.45.526 LEED, Built Green, and Evergreen Sustainable Development Standards (ESDS) – includes the ESDS, which is required for projects using State Housing Trust Funds, as an acceptable rating system.

Again, thank you, DPD and Council Central staff for your diligent work on this legislation. We believe the proposed legislation is a step in the right direction to help create high quality multifamily neighborhoods through development flexibility.

As you shift focus to the Lowrise zones, we look forward to providing additional detailed comments about townhouse design, unit lot subdivision and the administrative design review process. Please feel free to contact the Commission for any clarification on any of these points through our Executive Director, Barbara Wilson at (206) 684-0431.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Josh Brower", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Josh Brower, Chair
Seattle Planning Commission

cc: Mayor Greg Nickels
Seattle City Councilmembers
Tim Ceis, Nathan Torgelson, Mayor's office
Michael Jenkins, Rebecca Herzfeld, Council Central Staff
Diane Sugimura, Ray Gastil, Mike Podowski, Dennis Meier, DPD
Adrienne Quinn, Rick Hooper, Office of Housing

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION RECORD OF DISCLOSURE & RECUSAL:

- Commissioner Benotto disclosed that her firm, Weber Thompson, works on projects in multifamily zones.
- Commissioner Brower disclosed that his firm, Tupper Mack Brower, represents clients who own or develop own multi-family properties in Seattle.
- Commissioner Kaplan disclosed that his firm, Martin Henry Kaplan Architects, designs projects in multifamily zones. He also disclosed that he is currently a candidate for the Seattle City Council.
- Commissioner Cutler disclosed that his firm, GGLO, works on projects in multifamily zones.
- Commissioner Roewe disclosed that his firm, VIA Architecture, works on projects in multifamily zones.