

## **Directors Report Proposed Changes to Comprehensive Plan Regarding Housing Affordability**

**July 24, 2015**

DPD is proposing amendments to the Comprehensive Plan to clarify the City's approach to promoting housing affordability and to support implementation of the recommendations of the Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda Stakeholder Committee.

### **BACKGROUND**

In September 2014, Mayor Murray and the City Council adopted Resolution 31546 calling for the creation of a Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA) and convening a HALA Advisory Committee. The purpose of the HALA is to chart a course for the next 10 years for ensuring the development and preservation of housing that addresses the wide diversity of housing needs of people across the income spectrum. On July 13, 2015, the HALA Advisory Committee issued their recommendations which are now available at <http://murray.seattle.gov/housing/>. These recommendations include implementation of a commercial linkage fee and a residential inclusionary housing program.

In October 2014, Council voted 7-2 to approve Resolution 31551, which requests the Executive to produce legislation to implement an "affordable housing linkage fee program".

### **PROPOSAL**

The proposal would make a number of changes to the Comprehensive Plan. Generally, the proposal for comprehensive plan changes is to:

- Clarify the City's goals and policies related to affordable housing to strengthen the City's policy direction and provide further policy support for addressing the need for affordable housing.
- Broaden the range of affordable housing strategies the City should consider.
- Make clear that both incentive-based and non-incentive-based strategies should be considered.
- Make clear that the City may establish a program whereby impacts on affordable housing that are generated by total project area, not just area above a base height or density, may be required to be at least partially mitigated.

Examples of the recommended policy changes include the following:

- Add a policy HG2.5 in the Housing Element that says, "Seek to reduce involuntary housing cost burden for households by supporting the creation and preservation of affordable housing."
- Add a policy HG8.5 in the Housing Element that says, "Encourage a shared responsibility among the private and public sectors for addressing affordable housing needs"

- Amend policy H8 to broaden from a recommendation only of “Consider providing incentives...” to “Consider using programs that require or encourage...” housing that meets the City’s objectives.
- Add to discussion in the Housing Element on affordable housing, by indicating the critical nature of low-income-affordable housing for giving “access to the diverse opportunities” in the city, and reducing existing disparities, to support “a host of positive social and economic outcomes in areas such as education, employment, and physical and mental health, especially for children and families” as well as “protecting our environment and sustaining a strong economy...” Other discussion added notes that “Seattle’s low-income households have disproportionately high housing needs” and that “housing costs unduly affect people of color” and that the consequences of past housing policies have “resulted in chronic inequity and racial disparities” and underscoring that “addressing these inequities and protecting marginalized populations is a primary focus of the Housing Element.”
- Add a Housing policy H29.4 that says, “Consider requiring that new development provide housing affordable to low-income households. Consider adopting such an approach either with or without rezones or changes in development standards that increase development capacity.”
- Add a Housing policy H29.6 that says, “Consider implementing programs to preserve or enhance currently affordable housing in order to retain opportunities for low-income households to live in Seattle.”
- Amend DT-G10 to change references relating to bonus floor area and transfer of development rights, and add language that allows for “non-incentive-based strategies” as well as incentive-based strategies.
- Amend DT-LUP8 to delete explanatory language that establishes “base” and maximum density levels for Downtown, where base density levels are indicated as representing a level of development the city would accommodate without requiring additional mitigation measures.
- Amend DT-LUP10 to clarify ability to pursue voluntary agreements to mitigate the impact of development, delete text about earning floor area increases above a base density, and encourage consideration of “adopting non-mitigation-based” strategies for the provision of low-income housing.
- Amend several neighborhood-specific policies that refer to affordable housing, including for Fremont, North Beacon Hill, North Rainier, Rainier Beach, and South Lake Union. The latter area policy edits note the possibility of “requirements” for provision of housing for people across a range of incomes, not just “incentives.”