

**To:** Councilmember Tim Burgess, Chair  
Councilmember Lisa Herbold and Rob Johnson, Members  
Affordable Housing, Neighborhoods and Finance Committee

**From:** Lish Whitson and Eric McConaghy

**Date:** June 29, 2016

**Subject:** Seattle 2035: Housing and Neighborhoods Elements

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### **Overview**

On July 6, the Affordable Housing, Neighborhoods and Finance Committee will discuss the Housing and Neighborhood Planning Elements of the Mayor's Recommended Comprehensive Plan, "[Seattle 2035](#)."

The Comprehensive Plan's Housing Element provides goals and policies that guide Seattle's funding, investments, programs and regulations to meet the housing needs of current and future Seattleites. In 2015, the Council adopted a new version of the Appendix to the Housing Element that replaced countywide measures of affordable housing with a Seattle-specific analysis of housing need. Amendments proposed in Seattle 2035 build on that analysis. Key changes proposed for the Housing element include:

- Recognizing the recommendations of the [Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda \(HALA\)](#);
- Strengthening the plan's commitment to the Fair Housing Act;
- Allowing a broader range of housing types in single-family zones within urban villages.

The Neighborhood Planning Element guides development and implementation of plans for neighborhoods around the city. It focuses on planning for urban centers and villages and underserved communities. Key changes proposed for the Neighborhood Planning element include:

- Removing details regarding neighborhood planning processes;
- Separating the Neighborhood Planning Element from the Neighborhood Plans adopted for specific areas.

### **Discussion**

Central Staff has identified the following as possible items for discussion:

## ***Housing Element***

### **1. Ten and twenty-year estimates of housing growth**

In 2015, the City adopted new 20-year growth estimates into the Comprehensive Plan. The plan assumes 70,000 net new housing units will be built between 2015 and 2035. These figures derive from 25-year targets in the [King County Countywide Planning Policies](#). The Seattle 2035 Growth Strategy Element describes how the City expects to accommodate growth.

Between 2005 and 2015, approximately 51,000 housing units were built in Seattle. This was a significant increase over the 25,000 units built between 1995 and 2005. Recognizing the strong housing demand in Seattle, the Mayor's Recommended Housing Element incorporates an aggressive 10-year estimate of future growth. Housing Goal 2 states:

HG2 Help meet current and projected regional housing needs of all economic and demographic groups by increasing Seattle's housing supply. Strive to add or preserve fifty thousand housing units by 2025, including twenty thousand rent/income-restricted units.

HALA recommended creation of 20,000 rent- and income-restricted housing units, including:

- 6,000 affordable units produced through proposed development capacity increases that require a contribution towards affordable housing through payment or performance as commercial and multifamily development occurs
- 14,000 units produced or preserved through the Seattle Housing Levy and other affordable housing finance and incentive programs.

Because the 20-year housing growth figure represents net new units, and the 10-year figures include preservation of existing rent- and income-restricted units, they are not directly comparable. However, if the 10-year rate were extended over the 20-year life of the plan, the City would be expecting more than 70,000 housing net new units. In order to reconcile the two sets of growth figures, the **Council may want to either (1) make clear throughout the plan that the 20-year estimate constitutes a minimum and not a maximum number of units that the City plans to accommodate over the coming 20 years, or (2) change the 10-year estimates to a statement of intent rather than a goal.**

### **2. Housing types in single-family zones**

The Mayor's Recommended Plan incorporates the HALA recommendations, reflecting goals for increasing housing affordability and access to housing in areas that provide residents with increased opportunities for jobs, transit, public services, and quality education. For example, the Housing Element includes a new policy, H3.5, regarding appropriate housing types in Single

Family zones in urban villages. H3.5 states: “Allow additional housing types in areas that are currently zoned for single-family development inside urban villages; respect general height and bulk development limits currently allowed while giving households access to transit hubs and the diversity of goods and services that those areas provide.” This policy represents a significant change from current policy regarding single family areas, which has been to “maintain the current density and character of existing single-family areas” (current policy LU58).

### ***Neighborhood Planning Element***

#### **3. Direction for future neighborhood planning**

The Mayor’s Recommended Plan focuses on planning for “neighborhoods where growth is expected to occur” and prioritizes “planning in areas expecting or experiencing significant change.” The Recommended Plan removes policies that state that “community organizations or the City may initiate neighborhoods plans with City support, to the extent provided in the City’s annual budget.” Councilmembers have heard from neighborhoods around the city, both inside urban centers and villages and outside those areas that seek to undertake neighborhood planning processes. **The Council may want to either 1) provide policy direction regarding planning for areas that seek positive changes through neighborhood planning, whether or not they are currently experiencing significant change, or 2) ask the Office of Planning and Community Development to better define a new approach to neighborhood planning including Comprehensive Plan amendments as appropriate for consideration in 2017.**

#### **4. Relationship to community engagement policies**

In addition to streamlining the neighborhood planning element, the Mayor has proposed a new section on “community engagement” in the Growth Strategy Element. Various members of the public have recommended adding an element focused on civic engagement. Others have indicated that it is not clear that the community engagement policies apply to all Elements of the plan. **The Council should consider merging the community engagement policies with the Neighborhood Planning Element into a new Community Engagement Element to provide a clearer set of policies to guide the City’s community outreach and engagement.**