



Seattle City Council

Central Staff - Memorandum

Date: June 2, 2016

To: Councilmember Rob Johnson, Chair
Councilmembers Mike O'Brien and Lisa Herbold, Members
Planning, Land Use and Zoning (PLUZ) Committee

From: Lish Whitson and Eric McConaghy, Council Central Staff

Subject: Seattle 2035: Growth Strategy and Land Use Elements

On June 7, the PLUZ Committee will discuss the Growth Strategy and Land Use Elements of the Mayor's recommended Comprehensive Plan, "[Seattle 2035](#)." The recommended Growth Strategy Element contains estimates for how the city will accommodate the 70,000 housing units and 115,000 jobs anticipated in Seattle over the next twenty years. The Land Use Element provides policies to shape development to accommodate that growth. Key changes in these elements include:

Growth Strategy Element

1. Combining the "Urban Village Element" and "Urban Design Element" into a new "Growth Strategy Element" with a new section of "community engagement" policies
2. Adopting new estimates of expected growth rate for urban based on type of village, transit accessibility and potential for displacement
3. Adding a potential future urban village at N 130th Street and Interstate-5
4. Including areas within a 10 minute walk of light rail stations or very good bus service within urban village boundaries
5. Removing specific policies and growth targets for "urban center villages"

Land Use Element

6. Changing how urban centers and urban villages are shown on the Future Land Use Map and providing new policy guidance regarding appropriate scales of development for each category of urban center and village
7. Removing specific criteria regarding the location of single-family zones, relying on the same language in the Land Use Code

This memo discusses these significant changes contained in the Growth Strategy and Land Use elements in the recommended plan, and identifies areas where the Council may want to

consider amendments. It also discusses a number of Future Land Use Map changes that were docketed for consideration in 2016.

1. Growth Strategy Element

In 2004, the City pulled information related to the urban village strategy and the City’s policies for accommodating growth into an “Urban Village Element.” The Urban Village Element has also included policies related to parks and open space and annexation. In 2013, the Council adopted a new “Urban Design Element,” which addresses design of the public realm, including the natural environment, built environment and public space. Seattle 2035 proposes to merge those two elements, and pull the parks and open space policies into a new “Growth Strategy Element.” The Growth Strategy Element would also include a new section on “Community Engagement” that would include the City’s commitment to engage with the community on planning efforts. The concept of “transit communities” from the current plan has been incorporated into the policies related to urban centers and villages and their appropriate characteristics.

2. Estimates of Future Growth

In 2015, the Council adopted new 20-year growth targets for Seattle: 70,000 housing units and 115,000 jobs added to the City between 2016 and 2035.¹ Those targets were set by the King County Countywide Planning Policies and derived from projections of population and housing growth promulgated by the Washington State Office for Financial Management. Seattle’s citywide targets represent 39% of King County’s housing unit growth and 34% of King County’s job growth.²

The King County Countywide Planning Policies require housing and employment growth targets for urban centers and manufacturing/industrial centers to be adopted into the City’s Comprehensive Plan. In 2015 the Council adopted new growth targets for those areas, as follows:

Urban Village Figure 8
Growth Estimates for Urban Centers and Manufacturing/Industrial Center 2015 - 2035

Location	Housing Units	Job
Urban Centers		
Downtown	10,000	30,000
First Hill/Capitol Hill	7,000	4,000
South Lake Union	4,700	20,000

¹ Between 1994 and 2014, the City accommodated 67,000 new units and 88,000 new jobs. (Source: Seattle Office of Planning and Community Development’s [Urban Center/Village Residential Growth Report](#) and [Urban Center/Village Employment Growth Report](#))

² [2012 King County Countywide Planning Policies](#), page 21 the 25 year targets included in the Countywide Planning Policies have been prorated to cover the 20-year time span of Seattle’s Comprehensive Plan.

Location	Housing Units	Job
Uptown	3,500	3,500
University District	2,700	8,000
Northgate	1,600	5,000
M/I Centers		
Duwamish		3,000
Ballard/Interbay		1,500
Remainder of the City (Urban Villages and areas outside of centers/villages)	40,500	40,000
Total	70,000	115,000

Source: City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan, amended October 2015, page 1.23

Based on analysis related and goals to focus housing growth in areas with high opportunities and access to transit, and to limit potential for displacement, the Mayor has proposed slightly different growth estimates in the Recommended Plan. The Recommended Plan estimates more housing growth in the Downtown, University District, Northgate and South Lake Union Urban Centers. More job growth is estimated for Downtown Seattle and Northgate. Job growth estimates for Manufacturing/Industrial Centers have doubled. In all other Urban Centers, housing and job growth estimates are lower. Growth Strategy Figure 2 includes the new estimates:

Growth Strategy Figure 2

Estimated Urban Center Growth 2015–2035

	Housing Units	Jobs
Urban Centers		
Downtown	12,000	35,000
First Hill/Capitol Hill	6,000	3,000
University District	3,500	5,000
Northgate	3,000	6,000
South Lake Union	7,500	15,000
Uptown	3,000	2,500
Manufacturing/Industrial Centers		
Duwamish	0	6,000
Ballard/Interbay	0	3,000

Source: Seattle 2035: Mayor's Recommended Plan, May 2016, page 29

The recommended plan uses the term “estimate” rather than “target” in order to better convey the role of these numbers in planning.

Unlike the centers, which are regional designations, “urban village” is a local designation and there is not a requirement that the City adopt specific targets for those areas. However, having a common understanding of expected future growth is useful as the City plans with its communities for that growth. Consequently, the recommended plan includes a set of estimates for future growth for urban villages based on access to transit and potential for displacement of existing residents and businesses due to growth.

Growth Strategy Figure 3

Estimated Urban Village Growth Rates

	Expected Housing Growth Rate	Expected Job Growth Rate
Hub Urban Villages	40%	50%
With very good transit service**	60%	50%
With high displacement risk and low access to opportunity, regardless of the level of transit service	40%	50%
Residential Urban Villages	30%	N/A
With very good transit service**	50%	N/A
With high displacement risk and low access to opportunity, regardless of the level of transit service	30%	N/A

**Percentage growth above the actual number of housing units or jobs in 2015, except where limited by zoning capacity. No job growth rate is assigned to residential villages.*

***Very good transit service means either a light rail station or a RapidRide bus service plus at least one other high-frequency bus route.*

Source: Seattle 2035: Mayor’s Recommended Plan, May 2016, page 30

There are a few villages where there is not sufficient capacity to accommodate the estimated growth (see Attachment 1). In those villages, estimates of future growth are reduced to 80% of the zoned development capacity. Growth that would have occurred within the village instead would be assumed, for the purposes of the Comprehensive Plan, to occur outside of urban villages. If the boundaries are expanded or zoning changes are made in those villages, the estimate of future growth in the village would increase. **The Council may want to provide additional discussion to clarify the estimates for areas that do not have capacity.**

3. 130th and I-5

The Mayor’s Recommended Plan includes a potential village that would cover the area within a ten minute walk of 130th and I-5, where a new light rail station is planned. This area is predominantly made up of single-family homes on large lots and large blocks. There are few

services within easy walking distance of residents in the area, and many blocks do not have sidewalks. Building a compact pedestrian-oriented community that can accommodate at least 12 dwelling units/acre will take significant time and effort and extensive work with the local community. **The Council may want to provide more direction to the Executive regarding a process for identifying and implementing the characteristics necessary to create a successful urban village in this area.**

4. Expanded Urban Villages

The Mayor's Recommended Comprehensive Plan includes a new policy GS 2.12 as follows: "Include the area that is generally within a ten-minute walk of light rail stations or very good bus service in urban villages." "Very good bus service" is not defined, however, Growth Strategy Figure 3 defines "very good transit service" for an urban village as including a light rail station or RapidRide bus service plus at least one other high-frequency bus route.

Applying this new policy, the Executive has proposed a potential future urban village encompassing the areas within a ten minute walk of the planned light rail station at N 130th Street and I-5. The proposed Future Land Use Map also includes potential future urban village expansions to the following urban villages:

- 23rd and Jackson-Union
- Ballard
- Columbia City
- Crown Hill
- North Beacon Hill
- North Rainier
- Othello
- Rainier Beach
- Roosevelt
- West Seattle Junction

The proposed Future Land Use Map does not currently show an expansion at the Aurora-Licton urban village or around the planned light rail station at Graham Street. There may be other areas within a ten minute walk of very good transit that are also not shown.

The dashed lines on the Future Land Use Map are intended to be preliminary indications of future expansion that would be better defined through a process with the local community. There are currently two processes underway to start to define where those boundaries would be located. The Executive has convened a set of focus groups that will discuss potential urban village expansions. Those focus groups started meeting in April, and will continue meeting through the winter. In addition, the Council, under Councilmember Johnson's leadership, will host a series of charrettes with communities in and around urban villages that might see

expanded boundaries. Those charrettes are expected to take place in the fall. Because the dashed lines on the Future Land Use Map are provisional, have no policy weight, and are not comprehensive, **the Council may want to remove the dashed lines from the Future Land Use Map until the charrettes and the focus groups have been completed and there is more community consensus on where urban villages should be expanded.**

Proposed policy GS 2.12 replaces a policy (LU273) that encouraged the creation of “transit communities” in locations with frequent and reliable transit. That policy explicitly stated that Manufacturing/Industrial Centers were not appropriate locations for transit communities. GS2.12, as proposed, would apply equally within and outside manufacturing/industrial centers. With the potential of light rail stops being added to both Manufacturing/Industrial Centers as part of ST3, **the Council may want to consider providing more direction whether areas within a ten minute walking distance of light rail stations in Manufacturing/Industrial Centers should be considered for urban villages.**

5. Urban Center Villages

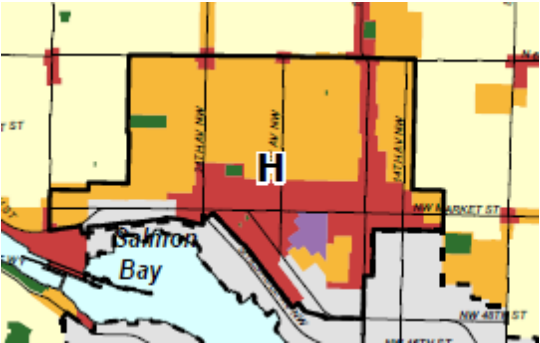
Seattle 2035 proposes to remove “Urban Center Villages” from the hierarchy of urban villages. Urban Center Villages have been used to provide a planning focus for neighborhoods within the three largest Urban Centers. Planning for these urban centers and urban center villages occurred depending on the wishes of the local community, so there has not been a consistent approach to these areas. **If the Council agrees to remove the designation of Urban Center Villages within Urban Centers, the Council may want to provide additional discussion of these areas in either the Growth Strategies or the Neighborhood Planning element to clarify the relationship between the different neighborhood plans applying to these subareas and the broader urban center plans.**

Urban Centers	Urban Center Villages within Urban Center	Neighborhood Plan covering the Center or Villages
Downtown	Belltown, Chinatown/International District Commercial Core Denny Triangle Pioneer Square	Downtown, plus: Belltown Chinatown/International District Commercial Core Denny Triangle Pioneer Square
First Hill/Capitol Hill	12 th Avenue Capitol Hill First Hill Pike/Pine	Part of the Central Area plan Capitol Hill First Hill Pike/Pine
Northgate	None	Northgate

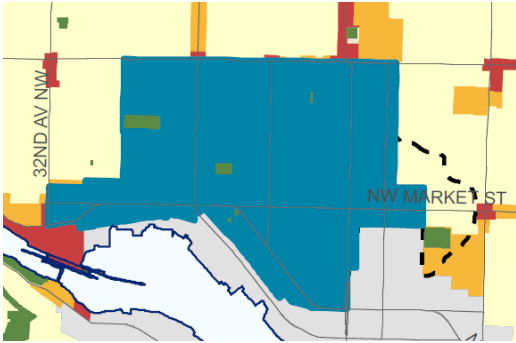
Urban Centers	Urban Center Villages within Urban Center	Neighborhood Plan covering the Center or Villages
South Lake Union	None	South Lake Union
University Community	University District Northwest Ravenna	University Community
Uptown	None	Uptown

6. Urban Centers and Villages on the Future Land Use Map

The proposed Future Land Use Map includes another significant change. On the current map, the boundaries of urban centers and villages are shown as a heavy boundary, within which are shown mixes of land uses. The proposed Future Land Use Map shows each category of urban center and village as a shade of blue. For example, this is how Ballard, a Hub Urban Village, is shown on the current and proposed maps:



Current Future Land Use Map



Proposed Future Land Use Map

Showing the entire village as one color is intended to shift the focus of the map away from distinct categories of uses within these centers and villages to the intended scale of development.

Practically, this would mean that zoning changes within urban centers and villages would not require a Future Land Use Map change. Under current practice, if a change is proposed from one category of land use to another throughout a large area, then a Future Land Use Map change must precede or accompany that zoning change. Under this proposal, a change to a large area within an urban village from a multifamily or single family zone to a mixed-use commercial zone would not first require a Comprehensive Plan amendment.

In addition to this change, the Mayor’s Recommended Plan includes a new policy that is intended to provide guidance regarding the types of zones that would be appropriate in these areas:

LU 1.3 Provide for a wide range in the scale and density permitted for multifamily residential, commercial, and mixed-use projects to generally achieve the following overall density and scale characteristics:

- In urban centers, a moderate to high-density and scale of development
- In hub urban villages, a moderate density and scale of development
- In residential urban villages, a low to moderate density and scale of development

The policy guidance given is relatively vague, and will likely be difficult to interpret when operationalized. **The Council may want to either amend this policy to provide more direction or refer to Growth Strategy Figure 1, which provides a more detailed description of appropriate zoning by category of center and village:**

Growth Strategy Figure 1
Urban Center and Urban Village Guidelines

Characteristic	Urban Centers*	Hub Urban Villages	Residential Urban Villages
Land Area	Up to 1.5 square miles (960 acres)	At least 20 contiguous acres of land currently zoned to accommodate commercial or mixed-use activities	At least 10 acres of commercial zoning within a radius of 2,000 feet
Public Transit Access	Within 0.5 miles of the existing or planned high-capacity transit station Existing or planned connections to surrounding neighborhoods by bicycle lanes and/or sidewalks	Transit service with a frequency of 15 minutes or less during peak hours and 30 minutes or less during off-peak hours, with direct access to at least one urban center Connected to neighboring areas and nearby public amenities by existing or planned bicycle lanes and/or sidewalks	Transit service with a frequency of 15 minutes or less during peak hours and 30 minutes or less during off-peak hours, with direct access to at least one urban center Connected to neighboring areas and nearby public amenities by existing or planned bicycle lanes and/or sidewalks
Zoning and Use	Zoning that allows for a diverse mix of commercial and residential activities	Zoning that allows a range of uses, including a variety of housing types as well as commercial and retail services serving a local, citywide, or regional market, generally at a	Zoning that emphasizes residential uses while allowing for commercial and retail services for the village and surrounding area, generally at a lower scale than in hub urban villages

Characteristic	Urban Centers*	Hub Urban Villages	Residential Urban Villages
		lower scale than in urban centers	
Growth Accommodation	Zoning that permits a minimum of 15,000 jobs within 0.5 miles of a high-capacity transit station an overall employment density of 50 jobs per acre, and an overall residential density of 15 households per acre	Zoning that permits at least 15 dwelling units per gross acre 25 jobs per gross acre 2,500 total jobs, and 3,500 dwelling units	Zoning that permits at least 12 dwelling units per gross acre

7. Single Family Areas

The Mayor’s Recommended Plan includes changes to the City’s policies related to single family areas. In the Land Use Element, the Mayor’s Recommended Plan proposes to remove two policies that have been used to limit the potential for rezones from single family to other zoning districts and to limit flexibility of housing types within single family zones. These policies state:

LU59 Permit upzones of land designated single-family and meeting single-family rezone criteria, only when all of the following conditions are met:

- The land is within an urban center or urban village boundary.
- The rezone is provided for in an adopted neighborhood plan.
- The rezone is to a low-scale single-family, multifamily or mixed-use zone, compatible with single-family areas.
- The rezone procedures are followed.

LU60 Apply small lot single-family zones to single-family property meeting single-family rezone criteria only when all of the following conditions are met:

- The land is within an urban center or urban village boundary.
- The rezone is provided for in an adopted neighborhood plan.
- The rezone procedures are followed.

Nowhere else in the Comprehensive Plan are such detailed rezone criteria provided. The effect of these policies has been to prioritize preserving single-family zones over other land use policy goals, such as accommodating a range of households throughout the City. By removing these

policies, the Mayor's Recommended Plan would provide more flexibility to rezone single family zones, particularly within urban villages.

8. 2015-2016 Policy Docket

Each year, the Council invites members of the public and City departments to submit recommendations for changes to the Comprehensive Plan. Last summer, the Council received a number of proposals for changes, and adopted [Resolution 31599](#) which identified four changes to the Future Land Use Map for further analysis:

1. [N.E. 68th Street](#). Amend the Future Land Use Map for property at the southwest corner of N.E. 68th Street and 12th Avenue N.E. to change the designation from multi-family to Commercial/Mixed Use.
2. [N.E. 94nd Street](#) Amend the Future Land Use Map for property on the south side of NE 94th Street east of N.E. 1st Avenue to include the property in the Northgate Urban Center and to change the designation from single-family to multi-family.
3. [40th Avenue N.E.](#) Amend the Future Land Use Map for property on the west side of 40th Avenue N.E., south of Sand Point Way N.E. from multi-family to commercial/mixed-use.
4. [35th Avenue N.E.](#) Amend the Future Land Use Map for three properties, one of which is located along 35th Avenue N.E. and south of N.E. 68th Street, the second of which is located along 35th Avenue N.E. and south of N.E. 73rd Street and the third of which is located along 35th Avenue N.E. and south of N.E. 82nd Street; each of which would be redesignated from multi-family to commercial/mixed-use.

The Executive has recommended not moving forward with these changes at this time for the following reasons:

Amendment 1 would be addressed by changing the color of urban centers and villages as discussed above under Section 5.

Amendment 2 is not consistent with existing Policy UV6, which directs that urban center boundaries should reflect "existing development patterns, intended community characteristics, and recognized neighborhood areas." Proposed policy GS2.3 contains similar language.

Amendment 3 is small enough that a Future Land Use Map change would not be required to facilitate a change in zoning, and thus a Comprehensive Plan amendment is not required.

The Executive continues to work with the Wedgewood community on Amendment 4, and may propose changes in the future.

In addition to the amendments identified in 2015 for Council consideration in 2016, [Resolution 31536](#), adopted in 2014, asked the Executive to review of a set of amendments alongside Seattle 2035. These amendments would have added a detailed monitoring process for urban village growth to the Comprehensive Plan. The Executive has instead recommended a more

general set of policies related to tracking and monitoring growth in centers and villages as follows:

- GS 1.4 Monitor development activity in urban centers and villages to track changes in the number of housing units, jobs, and population and evaluate whether development is consistent with this Plan.
- GS 1.5 Use information collected about growth, along with other information, to make decisions for further planning or for making investments that will meet the needs of residents and businesses.
- GS 1.6 Monitor development activity and other factors that will identify areas with high potential for displacement of marginalized populations and small businesses.

Rather than adopting specific policies to guide the timing and content of review, Council should consider providing direction to the Executive regarding the process this monitoring and evaluation should take through a resolution or other legislative process.

Next Steps

This is the last PLUZ Committee briefing for the next two months. Starting with the Transportation Committee meeting on June 21, we will be briefing other Council Committees on topics of interest to those committees. On June 27, at 6:00 in Council Chambers, a public hearing will be held on the Mayor's Recommended Comprehensive Plan. On August 2, we will return to PLUZ for an initial discussion regarding potential Council amendments to the Comprehensive Plan.

ATTACHMENT 1: Residential and Employment Growth Estimates

Table A: Residential Growth Estimates

Center/Village	Units in 2015	Estimated Percent Change in Units 2015-2035	Estimated Net Change in Units 2015-2035	Housing Capacity
Urban Centers				
Downtown	24,347	49%	12,000	33,512
First Hill/Capitol Hill	29,619	20%	6,000	19,009
University District	9,802	36%	3,500	8,933
Northgate	4,535	66%	3,000	10,966
South Lake Union	4,536	165%	7,500	20,277
Uptown	7,483	40%	3,000	4,165
Urban Center Total	80,322	44%	35,000	96,862
Hub Urban Villages				
<i>Ballard</i>	9,168	60% <u>48%</u>	5,501 <u>4,401</u>	5,314
Bitter Lake	3,257	40%	1,303	10,521
Fremont	3,200	40%	1,280	1,677
Lake City	2,546	40%	1,018	4,282
Mt. Baker (North Rainier)	2,454	60%	1,472	9,276
West Seattle Junction	3,880	60%	2,328	5,157
Hub Villages Total	24,505	53%	12,902	36,227
Residential Urban Villages				
23rd & Union Jackson	5,451	30%	1,635	4,381
Admiral	1,131	30%	339	817
Aurora-Licton Springs	3,454	30%	1,036	4,072
Columbia City	2,683	50%	1,342	3,405
Crown Hill	1,307	50%	654	1,556
<i>Eastlake</i>	3,829	30% <u>24%</u>	1,149 <u>919</u>	1,100
<i>Green Lake</i>	2,605	30% <u>24%</u>	782 <u>625</u>	774
Greenwood/Phinney Ridge	1,757	30%	527	2,295

Center/Village	Units in 2015	Estimated Percent Change in Units 2015-2035	Estimated Net Change in Units 2015-2035	Housing Capacity
Madison-Miller	2,781	30%	834	1,493
Morgan Junction	1,342	30%	403	583
North Beacon Hill	1,474	50%	737	1,952
Othello	2,836	30%	851	4,463
Rainier Beach	1,520	30%	456	848
Roosevelt	1,616	50%	808	4,362
South Park	1,292	30%	388	2,814
Upper Queen Anne	1,724	30%	517	1,115
Wallingford	3,222	30%	967	1,857
Westwood/Highland Park	2,150	30%	645	1,499
Residential Villages Total	42,174	33%	14,068	39,386
Manufacturing/Industrial Centers		No Specific Estimate		
Outside Urban Centers/Villages Total*	190,252	5%	9,094	51,238
City Total	337,253	21%	70,000	223,713

Note: Numbers in **bold** are from Growth Strategy Figures 2 and 3 (pages 29 and 30), all other figures are from Growth Strategy Appendices or derived from other numbers in this table. When an estimate is ~~struck out~~, it exceeds 80% of the capacity in that center or village. Instead, the City will consider the estimate of future growth to be equal to 80% of the capacity, as shown by the underlined figure, unless changes are made that increase capacity within the village.

* Includes existing housing units from Manufacturing/Industrial Centers.

Table B: Employment Growth Estimates

Center/Village	Jobs in 2014	Estimated Percent Change in Jobs 2015-2035	Estimated Net Change in Jobs 2015-2035	Employment Capacity
Urban Centers				
Downtown	150,694	23%	35,000	51,764
First Hill/Capitol Hill	39,047	8%	3,000	3,186
University District	36,256	14%	5,000	10,491
Northgate	12,288	49%	6,000	14,089
South Lake Union	35,859	42%	15,000	25,418
Uptown	14,592	17%	2,500	4,900
Urban Center Total	288,736	23%	66,500	109,848
Hub Urban Villages				
Ballard	7,199	50%	3,600	5,606
Bitter Lake	3,549	50%	1,775	19,391
Fremont	8,489	50% 5%	4,245 <u>412</u>	515
Lake City	1,323	50%	662	5,395
Mt. Baker (North Rainier)	4,254	50%	2,127	12,868
West Seattle Junction	3,334	50%	1,667	5,663
Hub Villages Total	28,148	50%	14,074	49,438
Residential Urban Villages No Specific Estimate				
Manufacturing/Industrial Centers				
Ballard/Interbay/Northend	16,308	18%	3,000	8,247
Greater Duwamish	62,571	10%	6,000	27,797
M/I Centers Total	78,879	11%	9,000	36,044
Outside Centers/Hub Villages Total*	118,948	30%	25,426	36,415
City Total	514,711	22%	115,000	231,745

Note: Numbers in **bold** are from Growth Strategy Figures 2 and 3 (pages 29 and 30), all other figures are from Growth Strategy Appendices or derived from other numbers in this table. When an estimate is ~~struck out~~, it exceeds 80% of the capacity in that center or village. Instead, the City will consider the estimate of future growth to be equal to 80% of the capacity, as shown by the underlined figure, unless changes are made that increase capacity within the village.

* Includes jobs and capacity from Residential Urban Villages.