

Director's Report and Analysis
2022 Annual Amendments to the Seattle Comprehensive Plan



Office of Planning and Community Development

October 2022

Director's Report and Analysis on the Mayor's Recommended Comprehensive Plan 2022 Annual Amendments

Section 1 – Introduction

This document describes the Mayor's recommendations for amending the City's Comprehensive Plan, Seattle 2035. The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) permits, with some exceptions, the City to amend its plan once a year. As required by the GMA, the Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan or Plan) includes goals and policies that guide City actions for managing future population, housing, and employment growth over a 20-year period. The Mayor recommends adoption of one amendment contained in the City Council Resolution 332010, which docketed potential amendments for consideration in 2022. The annual amendment process is described in City Council Resolution 31807, which was adopted on April 23, 2018, and consists of several phases. The annual amendment schedule this year was delayed to accommodate potential consideration of amendments from the Industrial and Maritime Strategy. Milestones in the process included:

- The City Council accepted applications seeking Comprehensive Plan amendments from April 1, 2021, to May 15, 2021.
- Adoption of a Docketing Resolution. The Council adopted resolution 32010 on August 2, 2021, identifying amendments to be “docketed” for further consideration in the 2021-2022 cycle. This resolution also included proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments identified for future consideration by the City Council in previous legislative actions.
- Analysis of proposed amendments by the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) and the Seattle Planning Commission, with recommendations to the Council for action on selected amendments. This report constitutes a summary of the analysis conducted by OPCD and its recommendations to Council.
- Consideration of recommended amendments by the City Council commencing in April of 2022.

Section 2 – Background on Seattle's Comprehensive Plan and Amendment Process

The City first adopted a Comprehensive Plan under the state GMA in 1994 and conducted a review and update of the Plan in 2004 and again in 2015, extending the Plan's horizon to 2035 and planning for revised growth estimates. GMA requires that all comprehensive plans include seven chapters, or “elements” – land use, transportation, housing, capital facilities, utilities, parks and open space, and economic development. GMA also requires that certain cities, including Seattle, have elements in

their plans that address marine container ports. In addition to the required elements, Seattle has chosen to include elements related to growth strategy, environment, arts and culture, community well-being, community engagement, and shorelines in the City's Plan.

The City has amended the Plan nearly every year since it was first adopted. Currently the City is engaged in planning efforts to prepare a major update of the Comprehensive Plan with new growth estimates to be adopted in 2024.

Section 3 – Docketed Amendments Recommended for Adoption

Based on the Office of Planning and Development's (OPCD) evaluation, the Mayor recommends the following amendment be adopted into the City's Comprehensive Plan:

- **Neighborhood Connections Across Highways.** Amend the Comprehensive Growth Strategy and Transportation elements to enhance support for the use of lids that cover or cross highways to restore disconnected neighborhoods, expand neighborhoods, and open hundreds of acres of buildable land for housing and parks, with the aim of creating safer, healthier, and more vibrant neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Connections Across Highways

Proposal: Amend policy GS 3.13 in the Urban Design section of the Growth Strategy element and policy T3.12 of the Transportation element to strengthen the City's support for lids across highways to restore disconnected neighborhoods, expand neighborhoods, and open hundreds of acres of buildable land for housing and parks, with the aim of creating safer, healthier, and more vibrant neighborhoods.

Element: Growth Strategy and Transportation

Submitted by: Seattle City Council

OPCD recommends amending existing policies to meet the intent of the docketed proposal as shown below:

GS 3.13 Preserve, strengthen, and, as opportunities permit, reconnect Seattle's street grid as a means to knit together neighborhoods and to connect areas of the city. Support efforts to use lids and other connections over highways that separate neighborhoods, especially when such lids provide opportunities to reconnect neighborhoods and provide amenities such as affordable housing, open space, or pedestrian and bike connections to transit stations.

T 3.12 Look for opportunities to reestablish or improve connections across ~~I-5~~ state highways by creating new crossings, enhancing streets where ~~I-5 or~~ state highways crosses overhead, or constructing lids, especially where these can also enhance opportunities for development or open space, affordable housing, and neighborhood cohesion.

Analysis

Currently the Comprehensive Plan contains policies that generally express the City's support for lids across highways. The term 'lid' refers to structures that cover highways that provide usable space for community needs such as affordable housing, open space, or other city priorities. Policy GS 3.13 supports reconnection of Seattle's Street grid to connect neighborhoods in the City. The proposed amendment to this policy specifically supports lids and other connections over highways to reconnect neighborhoods. The additional language identifies amenities the lids should provide including affordable housing, open space, and pedestrian/bike connections to transit stations. Policy T 3.12 expresses the city's support to improve connections across Interstate 5 in areas where it crosses overhead or using lids when there are opportunities for development or open space. The proposed amendment to T 3.12 expands the policy to cover all state highways and expands the amenities that such lids should provide to include opportunities for affordable housing and neighborhood reconnections.

There are 5 state highways that pass-through Seattle (I-5, I-90, SR 520, SR99, SR599). Each of these separates neighborhoods that were better connected prior to construction. These highways have significant rights-of-way ranging from 100 feet in width (SR99) to 800 feet in width (I-90) that have

the potential for reestablishing connections and providing opportunities for affordable housing, open space, and pedestrian/bike connections to transit stations.

Recommendation

Amend policies GS3.13 and T3.12 as shown above to expand areas where lids are supported and the range of amenities such lids could provide.

Section 4 – Docketed Amendments not Analyzed, No Recommendation at this Time

There are several proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments that were docketed by Council in Resolution 31970 but have not been analyzed by OPCD and for which OPCD is not making any recommendation at this time. Each is briefly described below, with an explanation of why OPCD has not analyzed the proposal as part of the 2021-2022 annual amendment cycle.

A. Remove the arterial classification from Florentia Street and West Florentia Street in the Queen Anne neighborhood

Element: Transportation Appendix Figure A-1

Submitted by: Seattle City Council

Proposed amendment: The proposal is to reclassify Florentia Street and West Florentia in the Queen Anne neighborhood to remove the Arterial classification. This proposal is intended to allow for this segment of West Florentia Street/Florentia Street to be managed as a neighborhood street to promote traffic calming, reduce speeding, and discourage cut through traffic. The parcels along this segment are zoned as Neighborhood Residential, Low Rise 1, and Low Rise 2.

Reason for not analyzing: The Comprehensive Plan does not designate street classification. The Comprehensive Plan does include a transportation appendix where the street classification map is an exhibit. Changing this map will not reclassify Florentia Street.

Reclassification of Florentia Street is determined by the Functional Classification Map. Functional Classifications are administered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), with involvement of both the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC). Each local jurisdiction is encouraged to review the Functional Classification of its entire street network rather than one corridor at a time. The City Traffic Engineer follows that guidance—reviewing the entire street network as a whole—to ensure the arterial/non-arterial network remains intact and cohesive. The cohesivity of the network factors into legibility and, therefore, safety. The Functional Classification map also forms the backbone of our emergency response network.

After consultation with Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), OPCD is deferring this amendment until a citywide review of collector arterial and high volume non-arterial streets is completed as part of the Seattle Transportation Plan. The Seattle Transportation plan will inform the Transportation Element for the Comprehensive Plan Major Update scheduled for Council review and approval in 2024.

B. South Park Urban Village Designation

Element: Growth Strategy

Submitted by: Seattle City Council

Proposed Amendment: Assess how the South Park neighborhood meets the criteria for Urban Village designation and provide a report to Council.

Reason for not analyzing: The City will be adopting a major update to the Comprehensive Plan in 2024. As part of the update, OPCD expects to review the Urban Village Strategy. Whether the South Park neighborhood should continue to be designated as an Urban Village is more appropriately addressed as part of this more comprehensive work.

C. N 130th Street and I-5.

Element: Growth Strategy

Submitted by: Seattle City Council

Proposed Amendment: Specific to the area surrounding the future light rail station at North 130th Street and Interstate 5, along with other City departments, complete community-based planning and provide a proposal to establish an urban village as described in Resolution 31970.

Reason for not analyzing. The City will be adopting a major update to the Comprehensive Plan in 2024. As part of the update, OPCD expects to review the Urban Village Strategy. This review will build on the ongoing community-based planning in this area to develop a recommendation for and study a potential future urban village designation of the 130th/145th Station area.

D. Fossil Fuels and Public Health

Element: Environment, Land Use, or Utilities Elements

Submitted by: Seattle City Council

Proposed Amendment: The Council requests that OPCD, in consultation with the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections, the Office of Sustainability and Environment, and the Environmental Justice Committee, draft, evaluate, undertake environmental review, and provide recommendations of potential amendments to the Environment, Land Use, or Utilities Elements that would clarify the City's intent to protect the public health and meet its climate goals by limiting fossil fuel productions and storage.

Reason for not analyzing: The level of analysis to effectively identify and evaluate potential amendments does not align with OPCD's current work plan and staffing capacity. Work to propose and evaluate such amendments is more appropriate for the major update to the Comprehensive Plan in 2024.

Docketed Amendments Deferred to 2022-2023 Amendment Cycle

The Mayor recommends deferring the docketed amendments to industrial lands policies to the 2022-2023 annual amendment cycle. Currently these amendments are the subject of an EIS process that will not be complete in time for consideration this annual amendment cycle.

A. Industrial and Maritime Strategy amendments

Element: Land Use

Submitted by: Seattle City Council

Reason for deferral: Currently the City is undertaking an environmental review process for the land use components of the Industrial and Maritime Strategy, including amendments to the industrial land use section of the Land Use Element. This review and resolution of any subsequent appeals will not be complete for consideration of these amendments in 2022. OPCD anticipates transmitting these amendments in 2023.