



# Seattle City Council

## Central Staff - Memorandum

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**Date:** July 7, 2015

**To:** Mike O'Brien, Chair  
Tim Burgess, Vice Chair  
Nick Licata, Member  
Planning, Land Use and Sustainability Committee (PLUS)

**From:** Lish Whitson and Eric McConaghy, Council Central Staff

**Subject:** Comprehensive Plan Docket ([Resolution 31599](#)) Recommendations

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### Introduction

With a few limited exceptions, the City Council may amend the Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan) once a year. Generally, these amendments are the result of an annual amendment cycle. However, in 2016 the Council will review the Mayor's proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments for Seattle 2035 (the second phase of the major update of the Comprehensive Plan), amendments docketed in last year's annual amendment cycle, along with any amendments docketed as part of this annual amendment cycle. [Resolution 31402](#) sets out the criteria for including proposed amendments in an annual review cycle. [Resolution 31117](#) provides the framework for the annual process for reviewing the Comprehensive Plan.

Generally, the process occurs in two steps. First, in the summer the Council reviews amendment applications and establishes by resolution a docket of the amendments the Council will consider. This is often referred to as the "docket setting" resolution. Second, in the spring of the following year, after Department of Planning and Development (DPD) and Seattle Planning Commission review and environmental analysis, Council considers the merits of proposed amendments and acts on a bill amending the Comprehensive Plan. In 2016, because of the breadth of the changes being considered as part of Seattle 2035, the Council will likely require additional time to review the proposed amendments.

This memorandum: 1) sets out the criteria Council uses to determine whether the eight proposed amendments should be included in the docket setting resolution and 2) discusses proposed amendments and the recommendations of DPD, the Planning Commission and Central Staff.

## **Selection Criteria for Annual Comprehensive Plan**

The Council applies a variety of criteria in deciding whether to include a proposed amendment in the docket setting resolution. A decision to include a proposed amendment in the resolution does not constitute Council approval of a proposed amendment. Rather, a decision to include a proposed amendment means that the Council has determined that the subject matter is appropriate for the Comprehensive Plan and consideration of the proposed amendment can be practically accomplished during the amendment cycle. Criteria applied by the Council are as follows:

- I. The amendment is appropriate for the Comprehensive Plan because:
  - A. It is consistent with the role of the Comprehensive Plan under the State Growth Management Act;
  - B. It is consistent with the Countywide Planning Policies and the multi-county policies contained in the Puget Sound Regional Council's Vision 2040 strategy;
  - C. Its intent cannot be accomplished by a change in regulations alone;
  - D. It is not better addressed as a budgetary or programmatic decision; and
  - E. It is not better addressed through another process, such as neighborhood planning.
- II. The amendment is legal under state and local law.
- III. It is practical to consider the amendment because:
  - A. The timing of the amendment is appropriate and Council will have sufficient information to make an informed decision;
  - B. City staff will be able to develop within the time available the text for the Comprehensive Plan and, if necessary, amendments to the Municipal Code, and to conduct sufficient analysis and public review;
  - C. The amendment is consistent with the overall vision of the Comprehensive Plan and well-established Comprehensive Plan policy, or the Mayor or Council wishes to consider changing the vision or established policy; and
  - D. The amendment has not been recently rejected by the City Council.
- IV. If the amendment would change a neighborhood plan, it either is the result of a neighborhood review process or can be reviewed by such a process prior to final Council consideration of the amendment.
- V. The amendment is likely to make a material difference in a future City regulatory or funding decision.

## **Docket-Setting Schedule**

Eight amendments were sent to the Council between April 1 and May 15. Those amendments can be found in Clerk File 319369. The proponent for an amendment related to property along Greenwood Avenue North has withdrawn their proposal, leaving seven amendments. The Planning Commission and DPD sent their comments and recommendations on the proposed amendments to the Council on June 26 and June 19, respectively. These are attached to this

memorandum. On June 29, a Resolution was introduced that includes four of the proposals, consistent with Central Staff and DPD recommendations. On July 7, PLUS will hold a public hearing on the proposed amendments, and will receive a briefing from the Planning Commission, DPD staff and Central Staff. PLUS will discuss and likely vote on a docket resolution on July 21.

### **Staff Recommendations**

The table on the following pages summarizes the proposed amendments and the recommendations of the Planning Commission, DPD, and Central Staff. For three proposals, there are unanimous recommendations to include the proposal in the docket. For one proposal, there is a difference of opinion between the Planning Commission and DPD and Central Staff. There are unanimous recommendations to reject three proposals.

#### *Recommended to move forward*

Amendments 1, 6 and 8 are unanimously recommended to be included in the docket for consideration in 2015. These three amendments are generally consistent with the criteria laid out above. They may require additional neighborhood review prior to final Council consideration of the amendment, but such review is either underway or could be accomplished in the coming months.

Central staff and DPD also recommend moving forward with amendment 4. This amendment would expand the boundaries of the Northgate Urban Center by half a block to include three properties in the Urban Center and to change the designation of these areas from single-family to multifamily. Areas outside of the Northgate Urban Center were not considered as part of the recently completed Northgate Urban Design Framework, and we recommend looking at whether this area, which will be approximately a half mile from the new Northgate light rail station, should be included in the urban center.

The Planning Commission does not recommend moving forward with proposed amendment 4. According to the Commission:

The Commission does not recommend this map change for docket setting siting Criterion C.3. The Commission has consistently supported more flexibility within the “Single Family Residential” areas and a reexamination of the Urban Village boundaries. However, the currently adopted Comprehensive Plan policies state the intent to maintain and preserve “Single Family Residential” outside of Urban Villages, and this amendment would be inconsistent with the current goals and policies. The Commission looks forward to a continued conversation, through the major update of the Comprehensive Plan, on flexibility in “Single Family Residential” and the vision for these areas of the City.

### **Amendments not recommended to move forward**

Three proposals do not meet the City's criteria for docketing an issue for review as part of the Comprehensive Plan.

Two proposed amendments have recently been rejected by the City Council (criterion III.D): Amendment 5 regarding Pier One, and Amendment 2 regarding the proposed open and participatory government element.

In 2011, City Council docketed the Pier One amendment for consideration and did not include the proposal in the Comprehensive Plan legislation, [Ordinance 117426](#), in 2012. The amendment was proposed again in 2014, and the City Council did not docket it.

The City Council has rejected an open and participatory government amendment, similar to the current proposal, every year since 2008, except for 2013. The amendment was not proposed that year.

The proposal related to social equity is not appropriate because the Council recently addressed this issue through Resolution 31577, adopted unanimously on May 11, and because the proponent will have many additional opportunities to comment on these issues through the Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan update. A draft plan for Seattle 2035, expected to be published in July, will include language related to Race and Social Equity that the proponent of this amendment can review and comment on through the public review process already set up for that plan.

### **Other amendments previously docketed**

In addition to the amendments proposed by members of the public in 2014, some proposals from previous years are still being developed and may return to the Council in 2016.

Primary among these is Seattle 2035, the major update to the Comprehensive Plan. The Council provided its priorities for this update in [Resolution 31370](#) and updated the schedule for this update in [Resolution 31451](#). The Council further updated the schedule for Seattle 2035 in [Resolution 31577](#). Further information about Seattle 2035 can be found at: [2035.seattle.gov](http://2035.seattle.gov).

There were three other items that were docketed in 2013 through [Resolution 31458](#) that Council deferred to 2015: amendments to the University Community neighborhood plan, amendments related to the creation of a Stadium District and amendments limiting changes to manufacturing/industrial areas. The Council held these items for future consideration pending additional outreach and analysis. The University Community plan is likely to come to the PLUS Committee in 2015. If outreach on the work related to the Stadium District and manufacturing/industrial areas is complete by the time the Executive sends proposed Seattle 2035 legislation to the Council, the Executive may include those amendments with Seattle 2035 for consideration in 2016.

[Resolution 31536](#), the docketing resolution adopted in 2014, also included some items that may be proposed for consideration in 2015 or 2016. In that resolution, the Council docketed proposals for a number of area planning efforts currently under way, including in Lake City, Georgetown, Ballard and Uptown. When those processes are complete, the Executive may forward amendments to the neighborhood plans for those areas.

### **Next Steps**

PLUS will discuss and likely vote on a docket resolution on July 21. After Full Council adoption of the resolution, the process for reviewing the amendments on the docket for 2016 is expected to be as follows:

- DPD reviews the proposed amendments, conducts public review as appropriate, and presents its analyses and the Mayor's recommendations to the City Council;
- The Council considers DPD's recommendations, conducts public hearing(s), discusses the merits of the proposed amendments, and votes on a recommendation to Full Council; and
- Full Council votes on a bill amending the Comprehensive Plan in 2016.

### **Attachments**

Attachment A: Summary of recommendations on proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments

Attachment B: Planning Commission's Comments and Recommendations for Docket Resolution

Attachment C: Comprehensive Plan Docketing Resolution: DPD Recommendation

**Attachment A: Summary of recommendations on proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments**

<b>App. #</b>	<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Brief Description of Proposed Amendment Application</b>	<b>Planning Commission</b>	<b>DPD</b>	<b>Central Staff</b>
1	John Arthur Wilson, for a group of property owners	Mr. Wilson proposes to amend the FLUM to change the designation of property south of N.E. 68 <sup>th</sup> St. and east of 12 <sup>th</sup> Ave. N.E. from multi-family to commercial/mixed-use.	Docket	Docket	Docket
2	Chris Leman	Mr. Leman proposes to add a new “Open and Participatory Government” Element to the Comprehensive Plan.	Reject	Reject	Reject
3	Chris Leman	Mr. Leman proposes to amend the Comprehensive Plan to clarify policies related to social equity.	Reject	Reject	Reject
4	Rita N. Chu	Ms. Chu proposes to amend the FLUM to add an area east of NE 1 <sup>st</sup> Ave. and south of N.E. 94 <sup>th</sup> St. to the Northgate Urban Center and to change the designation of that property from single family to multi-family.	Reject	Docket	Docket
5	AnMarCo	AnMarCo proposes to remove an area waterward of Harbor Avenue Southwest and south of SW Bronson Way known as Pier 1 from the Duwamish Manufacturing/Industrial Center and to change the designation of that	Reject	Reject	Reject

App. #	Applicant	Brief Description of Proposed Amendment Application	Planning Commission	DPD	Central Staff
		area from industrial to commercial/mixed-use.			
6	Gema Mae Apartments, LLC	Gema Mae Apartments, LLC proposes to amend the FLUM to change the designation of property on the west side of 40 <sup>th</sup> Ave. N.E., south of Sand Point Way N.E. from multi-family to commercial/mixed-use.	Docket	Docket	Docket
7	A Heavenly Sunrise, LLC	This application has been withdrawn			
8	DPD	DPD proposes to amend the FLUM to change the designation from multifamily to commercial/mixed-use in three areas along 35 <sup>th</sup> Ave. N.E.: south of N.E. 68 <sup>th</sup> St., south of N.E. 73 <sup>rd</sup> St. and south of N.E. 82 <sup>nd</sup> St.	Docket	Docket	Docket