



January 26, 2011

Ms. Diane Sugimura, Director
City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development
PO Box 34019, 700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000
Seattle, Washington 98124-4019

RE: Project: 3006101, Address: 11200 1st Avenue NE

Dear Ms. Sugimura:

Greetings from the Maple Leaf Community Council. Our representatives were involved in the development of the Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan (NACP) and have actively participated in multiple subsequent planning initiatives since the plan's adoption in 1993. Based on this informed background, we have reviewed the proposal for a Council Land Use Action, Project 3006101, to rezone approximately 8.4-acres of land in the Northgate Core from MR-60 to NC3-85. We strongly oppose the rezone proposed by this project for multiple reasons.

Background:

The action proposed in Project 3006101 is not in line with the existing NACP. The NACP recognized that the Northgate Area had zoning that would allow for the most intense development outside of Downtown Seattle. The 1989 Northgate traffic study of existing conditions also showed that the area had significant infrastructure deficiencies that would make it difficult for the transportation network to accommodate the traffic that would be generated when Northgate developed to its full capacity. Instead of down-zoning, the NACP created a framework under which the Northgate would develop in ways that supported alternate modes of transportation, including transit, bicycles and pedestrians. The NACP recognized the significant potential of the area's superblocks, including the proposed rezone site, in achieving the success or the failure of the area's transformation.

Comments:

The Maple Leaf Community Council does not support the proposed Council Land Use Action, (legislative rezone). We have serious concerns and reservations about the proposal to rezone the entire \approx 8.4-acre superblock site Neighborhood Commercial. The NACP called for commercial activity to be focused along the major pedestrian streets and provided for a gradual transition to multifamily zones and on to single family zones. If approved, the commercial zone would be extended much further to the north, altering the transition zone provided for under the NACP. Current access is extremely limited.

The Maple Leaf Community Council could support a **contract** rezone process for this site because it would provide the mechanism for this developer to demonstrate how their development proposal will respond to the important characteristics desired for the Northgate Urban Center, including but not limited to the following:

To: Ms. Diane Sugimura
From: Maple Leaf Community Council
Date: January 26, 2011
Page: 2

- Create an overall development plan for the \cong 8.4 acres
- Enhance the pedestrian environment and network of connections to and through the site
- Integrate publicly accessible open space into the development
- Increase density in the Northgate Urban Center
- Consider and provide transitions to zones of differing densities and heights
- Site and design buildings to reinforce the pedestrian realm
- Strive for “net zero” environmental footprint
- Actively provide for affordable housing
- Offer a hierarchy and range of methods to accomplish a variety of goals: moving cars efficiently and providing smaller attractive, landscaped streets that work for pedestrians and local residents

The strong relationship between the built environment and pedestrian walking activity has long been established. The NACP assumed that connectivity to and within areas with a mix of residential and commercial development density would enable walking for transportation, hence, the NACP calls for additional or enhanced physical improvements to support and encourage pedestrian trips. The NACP also assumed that pedestrian enhancements would help mitigate the traffic impacts of the concentrated development capacity allowed for within the Northgate Core area. However, there is no current standard for evaluating impacts or assessing mitigation that could be applied at the project-level SEPA review. **If the City is committed to achieving the goals of the Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan and reducing it’s carbon emissions, this \cong 8.4-acre rezone action must receive the level of consideration and review provided by the contract rezone process.**

Over the past several years, millions of public dollars have been invested in the Northgate area-\$35 million for the Northgate Library, Community Center, Thornton Creek Water Quality Channel Project and the 5th Avenue NE Streetscape project and \$13 million for the Hubbard Homestead Park and an extension of the Streetscape project. Future public investments will include an extension of light rail to Northgate. All properties benefit from public streets and sidewalks and transit service. Some private property owners have expressed concern that engaging in a contract rezone process would result in an unfair and inequitable imposition of terms and conditions placed on development. This concern is valid but conclude that it is the City’s responsibility to ensure that there is balance between benefits that accrue to private property from the public investments when a rezone that would increase private property value is under consideration.

In summary, the City has adopted an incentive program that potentially applies to rezones citywide, including this \cong 8.4-acre site. It provides a means to encourage provision of affordable housing, open space and other amenities, which would help achieve the Comprehensive Plan’s goals and policies. A contract rezone process would allow for detailed planning to encourage pedestrian pathways to break up the large block of the site and possibly create additional storefront opportunities, plus design streetscape improvements and amenities that could result in the highest level of street level pedestrian activity. Furthermore, it would allow for consideration of affordable housing, implementation of the Northgate CTIP, concurrency required under SEPA, and the potential for significant changes to water runoff from an increase in impermeable surfaces on this \cong 8.4-acre site.

Sincerely, on behalf of the Executive Board,



Joshua Newman
President