Quality Growth Alliance
A Framework for Sound Action

May 16, 2012

Mr. Jon Regala
Senior Planner, Planning and Community Development
City of Kirkland
123 Fifth Avenue
Kirkland, WA 98033

Re: Quality Growth Alliance Support of Totem Station Project

Dear Mr. Regala:

I am the Chair of the Quality Growth Alliance (QGA) Recognition Program, and I am writing in support of the Totem Station Project. QGA has rigorous criteria for recognition and requires unanimous support from all of its member organizations in order to support a project. The eight member organizations include ULI Seattle, Puget Sound Regional Council, University of Washington, Enterprise Community Partners, Forterra (formerly Cascade Land Conservancy), Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties, Futurewise, and NAIOP- Commercial Real Estate Development Association. These organizations often hold diverging views on land use issues. Recognizing their common ground, they have come together to promote smart community growth in our region. The members agree that there are key areas that must be addressed to foster sustainable, enduring, quality growth. These include:

- Support the efficient concentration of development and infrastructure
- Encourage broad public awareness and participation in the smart growth planning process
- Improve the zoning and entitlement process
- Maximize transportation investments
- Address climate change through land use decisions

QGA recognizes one to three projects per year that embody its goals.

The Totem Station Project was formally recognized by the QGA on November 11, 2011. The Project will provide housing close to where people work, help minimize auto-dependence, and provide workforce housing to complement the more intensely developed commercial uses of the Totem Lake Urban Center. The location at the edge of a major employment center is good. This very visible site should be commended for a project that will lead neighborhood change. The QGA supports the project for the following reasons:

1) Shared Parking/Transportation: The number of parking stalls provided is consistent with smart growth for this suburban setting. Many services and facilities are within walking distance and Transit connections offer accessibility to regional destinations. By taking advantage of shared parking between residential and commercial uses, this project maximizes parking efficiency. The mixed use element allows peak parking demand by use which reduces overall parking stall count and minimizes the existence of empty parking stalls.

2) Work Force Housing: Totem Station provides affordable, high quality housing in a convenient location. By providing smaller, more affordable units and keeping construction costs down, the Project will help to address the housing needs of the adjacent employment center of Totem Lake along with other nearby workplace destinations. Participation in the City of Kirkland's Affordable Housing program provides long term affordability for 10% of the projects units at 80% of King County medium income level. 36% of jobs within the City of Kirkland are located within the Totem Lake area, so this project provides an opportunity for people to live near their jobs.

3) Economics: The proposed 3 stories of workforce housing over retail is suitably dense and excellent for this site. The use of under structure parking makes sense for a suburban project with affordability goals. QGA commends the City

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of Kirkland for having a code that supports the use of shared parking based on project specific parking needs. Ultimately this flexibility allows this type of workforce housing to be built. The cost of underground parking is substantial and on grade exposed parking limits the developable area of a site. Both of these constraints would prove insurmountable for workforce housing project. Fortunately, the City has recognized this and been able to provide the support to allow the economics of the project to work. The City needs pioneering projects like Totem Station to revitalize the Totem Lake area. Residential is the first step to revitalization and will support the commercial revitalization of the neighborhood.

4) Superior Design and Urban Streetscape: The project sets an example for the Totem Lake neighborhood of high quality design and superior urban streetscape. Massing and modulation of the project adds interest and breaks up the scale of long facades. Variation in building textures and materials, roof structure design and landscaping pockets throughout the site are visually appealing to pedestrians and the neighborhood. The 16 parallel parking stalls along the NE 115th Place and 124th Avenue NE frontages promotes success of the building's commercial space by providing visible, convenient parking. Pedestrians also benefit from the safety of a widened sidewalk. Quality of pedestrian and vehicular access will contribute to successful retail along these streets. And successful retail will contribute to the vibrancy of the neighborhood as it redevelops.

5) Pedestrian Plaza and Community Garden Terrace: The Project provides a south facing open plaza area with a sunny southern exposure which will complement the pedestrian street orientation of the project. The plaza is a unique amenity in the North Rose Hill community. It will provide a significant benefit to members of the public, including the patrons and employees of the future businesses and tenants of the building. The Community Garden located on the second level provides a retreat for tenants to gather, sit and enjoy the outdoors in a peaceful, landscaped setting.

6) Urban Forest: The inclusion of the urban forest in the southwestern portion of the site will provide a visual amenity to the community by including a natural, green space in an urban environment. This peaceful, treed space will also serve as a natural retreat for tenants and pedestrians.

7) Off-Leash Dog Area: The off-leash dog area element of the Urban Forest provides a significant benefit to the residents of the community. Urban/suburban renters want to live in a building where pets are welcomed and the off leash dog area provides a community amenity for dog owners.

The QGA is pleased to support the Totem Station Project and commends the City of Kirkland for its Comprehensive Plan and Municipal Code, which allows the flexibility for desirable, high quality projects to be built in urban and suburban locations such at Totem Lake.

Best regards,

William H. Kreager, FAIA, LEED® AP
Chair, Quality Growth Alliance Recognition Program

About the Quality Growth Alliance
The Quality Growth Alliance is committed to building upon shared principles and fostering creative approaches not only to manage urban growth, but also to leverage it as a regional opportunity. Alliance members are the Urban Land Institute Seattle District Council, Puget Sound Regional Council, University of Washington College of Built Environments, Enterprise Community Partners, Forterra, Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties, Futurewise, and NAIOP – The Commercial Real Estate Development Association Washington State Chapter. More information is available at www.qualitygrowthalliance.org.