



**CITY OF KIRKLAND**  
**Planning and Building**  
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## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Kirkland Planning Commission

**From:** Jeremy McMahan, Deputy Director, Planning and Building  
Adam Weinstein, AICP Director of Planning & Building

**Date:** June 3, 2020

**Subject:** Covid 19 and the "Period of Uncertainty" Presentations

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Receive presentations from Heather Kelly (City of Kirkland Emergency Manager) and Michael Luis (Public Policy Consultant, author, and founder of [The Puget Sound Indexer](#)) on local and regional impacts associated with the current pandemic.

### **BACKGROUND DISCUSSION**

Now that the State's "necessary and routine" limitations on public meetings have been lifted, the Planning Commission is able to resume its advisory role on numerous important land use challenges and opportunities. We restart this significant function acknowledging that the world is not the same as it was when the Planning Commission last met on February 27<sup>th</sup>.

We restart this function virtually because the world and the City are in the grips of a pandemic that has fundamentally changed the way we relate with each other and changed the way that we can interact with public that we serve.

Professionals who are responding to the pandemic crisis have dubbed the coming months or years as the "Period of Uncertainty". We don't know if the virus will spike again or when there will be a vaccine. We don't understand the repercussions for the economy, for transit, for housing choices, for the office market, or for urbanism in general. We have all been reading conflicting prognostications about how this will play out. The speakers we have invited are experts at explaining what we currently know about the effects of the pandemic. They are intentionally not futurists who will confidently tell us what life will be like in coming months/years/decades. Rather, they are experts in where we are today, what got us here, and how those factors may influence uncertain outcomes.

As if the challenge of a pandemic were not great enough, we also restart this function in the midst of protests and sweeping anger about ongoing inequalities that persist in our nation. As professional and citizen planners, we rightly ask ourselves what role we play in fostering a healthy community and one that is socially just, equitable and inclusive. We also reflect on role our profession has historically played in creating and supporting inequity in communities where

zoning tools created or promoted disparities and transportation and open space investments have neglected or destroyed disadvantaged neighborhoods.

In the coming months, the Planning Commission will be resuming work on numerous projects that will affect the community long after Covid 19 passes. As we move ahead, we know that we will need to listen intently, to be adaptive and creative, and to ask ourselves some challenging questions:

- Are we building resiliency into our community in terms of planning for healthy urban environments – those that prioritize walking and biking, promote recreation, foster social connections, produce more affordable housing, allow residents to access healthy food and provide public transportation options?
- Are we mindfully incorporating inclusivity, social justice, and equity into our dialogue and outcomes in land use decisions?

Staff looks forward to grounding this discussion at upcoming meetings and to working with you all again. Thank you for your commitment to taking on these challenges.