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MEMORANDUM

To: Kirkland City Council

From: Kirkland Planning Commission

Date: June 15, 2022

Subject: **Planning Commission Recommendation to Council – Station Area Plan Phase 1**

Planning Commission Public Hearing

The Planning Commission held a public hearing on June 9, 2022 to receive public testimony on Phase 1 of the NE 85th St. Station Area Plan amendments to the City's Comprehensive Plan, Kirkland Zoning Code (KZC), Zoning Map, and Kirkland Municipal Code (KMC), pursuant to the procedures for amendments set forth in KZC 160. Due to the extent of the public testimony on June 9 and the volume of written comments received just prior to the hearing, the Planning Commission closed the record after the last speaker was heard and completed their deliberations at a public meeting on June 14.

Planning Commission Deliberation

Commissioners have received numerous emails and letters from community members and stakeholders since they first began their work on the Station Area Plan in early 2020. For the public hearing, nearly 70 individuals provided the Commission with additional written testimony, and 31 individuals provided oral testimony at the June 9 public hearing. The Commission opted to continue the June 9 meeting specifically to allow more time to consider all the received testimony before beginning deliberations on June 14.

Commissioners discussed several aspects of the Station Area Plan and the draft code amendments under consideration. Discussion largely centered on:

- Questions and concerns regarding draft policies and regulations that would allow for a maximum allowed height of 250' in the southeast portion of the Commercial Mixed Use (CMU) district;
- Concerns that the incentive zoning program within the FBC does not provide enough clarity and/or certainty about what community benefits would be achieved by development above 150' of building height, and that the community benefits required to achieve heights up to 250' may not be commensurate with the community impacts associated with the height;
- Desire for the plan to provide more tangible plans for a new school in the Station Area to serve new students; and,
- Priorities for other community benefits such as affordable housing, parks, and transit

infrastructure.

In summary, the Commission supports allowing up to 150 feet of maximum building height, pursuant to the existing proposed inclusionary zoning system. The Planning Commission does not currently support 250 feet of maximum building height in the southeast quadrant.

Up to 250 feet may be acceptable pursuant to additional Planning Commission review regarding public benefits only if these conditions are met: Monumental public benefits that prioritize affordable housing in the first tier and transit infrastructure, parks, and schools in the second tier. The Commission would request another meeting where we could further explore these tradeoffs and develop a more specific recommendation to the City Council.

Planning Commission Recommendations to City Council - Station Area Plan Phase 1

The following are the specific Phase 1 amendments considered by Planning Commission, and a summary of the Commission recommendation to Council on each. Recommendations are based on the draft documents provided in the June 9 Planning Commission meeting packet (Links: [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#)).

Comprehensive Plan Amendments (subarea chapter for the full Station Area)
Adopts and new subarea plan chapter for the NE 85th Street Station Area.

The Planning Commission voted unanimously to recommend that City Council adopt the Comprehensive Plan amendments as drafted, with the following amendments (shown in underline and strikethrough text):

- Section 3- Station Area Vision and Objectives.
 - Amend the first sentence of the vision statement to read: "The Station Area is a thriving, transit-oriented, new walkable district with high tech and family wage jobs, plentiful affordable housing, sustainable buildings, park amenities, and commercial and retail services ~~linked by transit~~."
- Section 9- Transportation and Mobility.
 - Add a policy that reads: "Encourage and support high-frequency, broad-destination, transit throughout the Station Area."
- Section 10- Public Services and Public Facilities.
 - Amend drafted goal as follows: "Create opportunities for additional school capacity in, or near, the Station Area and prioritize the provision of a new school within the Subarea boundaries."
 - Add a policy that reads: "Plan for, and coordinate, construction staging at a subarea-wide level in advance of development."

Regarding our significant concerns related to school capacity reflected in our amendment to Section 10, the Planning Commission recommends that the City Council [view the video recording of the August 12, 2021 Planning Commission meeting](#). At that meeting, Lake Washington School District Superintendent, Dr. Jon Holman, provided a [presentation about growth trends and capital planning](#) in the District and noted the need for a school in the Station Area and emphasized the particular need for an elementary school.

Legislative Rezones (Commercial Mixed Use Zoning district)

Rezones Phase 1 properties (those closest to the new Bus Rapid Transit Stride Station) to Commercial Mixed Use.

The Planning Commission voted unanimously to recommend that City Council adopt the proposed rezones of the indicated parcels to Commercial Mixed Use (CMU). For parcels in the southeast quadrant, designated as CMU 85/250, our recommendation for heights above 150' is contingent upon the resolution of the Commission's recommendation noted above regarding community benefits associated with heights above 150'.

KZC Amendments

Adopts new Chapter 57 of the Zoning Code to establish regulations for properties in the Station Area and adopts supporting miscellaneous amendments. Includes the form based code and associated incentive zoning provisions as well as miscellaneous supporting amendments.

Planning Commission voted on two separate motions related to the KZC amendments:

1. Planning Commission voted unanimously on a motion to recommend that Council adopt the Form-based Code as proposed, with the exception of regulations related to building heights in excess of 150' and associated incentive zoning.
2. Planning Commission voted unanimously in support of the following statement to City Council regarding KZC amendments related to maximum building heights and incentive zoning in the CMU district:

We support the form-based code, allowing up to 150 feet of maximum building height, pursuant to the existing proposed inclusionary zoning system. The Planning Commission does not currently support 250 feet of maximum building height.

Up to 250 feet may be acceptable pursuant to additional Planning Commission review regarding public benefits only if these conditions are met: Monumental public benefits that prioritize affordable housing in the first tier and transit infrastructure, parks, and schools in the second tier. The Commission would request another meeting where we could further explore these tradeoffs and develop a more specific recommendation to the City Council.

While it was not explicitly voted upon, the Commission's motions and supporting discussion indicate a general preference for a priority of affordable housing within Option 2 of the Incentive Zoning program structure options discussed by City Council at their June 7 meeting, and scheduled for further policy discussion by Council at their June 21 study session. The Commission also expressed a strong preference that the incentive zoning program should be focused on our priority community benefits (noted in the motion above) and not diluted across a wider range of amenities. As noted, the Commission expressed a strong interest in an additional meeting to further consider the tradeoffs for 250' of height.

Station Area Design Guidelines and related Municipal Code Amendments

Adopts design guidelines for use during Design Board review of future development of properties in the Station Area and amends Design Guidelines for Pedestrian Oriented Business Districts for development of the RH 8 zone (east of the Station Area).

Planning Commission voted unanimously to recommend that City Council adopt the Design Guidelines and Municipal Code amendments as proposed.