

June 19, 2015

City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development  
Attn: Gordon Clowers,  
PO Box 34019  
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Department of Planning and Development,

AIA Seattle appreciates the opportunity to review the draft DEIS for the Comprehensive Plan and the companion document addressing Growth and Equity. We are encouraged by the general action the city is taking to manage the anticipated 70,000 additional housing units and 115,000 new jobs yet there are many areas of concern as we plan for the next twenty years. We believe the Seattle 2035 Plan requires more detail particularly in how this growth is handled through appropriate urban design guidance and a transparent proactive approach to social equity.

### **Add Urban Design Guidance**

The Comprehensive Plan should have an Urban Design Element that is more than a collection of policy statements. Each of the alternatives should include locale specific physical recommendations for our public realm in both verbal and graphic form, including plans and illustrations so that the recommendations and capacity can be visualized and understood by all city residents. A *physical* urban design element is important because an urban design framework plan will identify opportunities that may not be readily apparent and without plan guidance will not be creative. By identifying a collection of common, unifying goals, objectives and projects regarding physical improvements and benefits to our city, the urban design framework will provide focus and direction for many singular public and private actions toward achieving those goals and objectives. Concern for our public realm is critical because from 25% to 30% of our land area is in the form of streets and sidewalks and public space. It provides for critical movement and connections between destinations as well as a potential system of open spaces. In many ways, those “connectors” stitch our public and private spaces together creating the interaction so important for a healthy community. The plan relies on current policies that are inherent with conflicts in how public realm space is allocated and transitioned to private parcels. A synergy results where the resultant whole can far exceed the sum of the individual acts.

Such a visionary plan would assure that our public realm be safe and comfortable for pedestrian travel encouraging more activity and increased interaction of people. A visual plan would minimize uncertainty by illustrating holistic environments that embrace the pattern and form of our urban surroundings, that incentivize amenities and conveniences resulting in pedestrian environments and circulation networks that are safe and comfortable, that offer opportunities for making connections and interacting socially with friends and neighbors, and that contribute to the life and vitality of our city.

### **Connect Growth and Equity**

This verbal and visual representation through illustrative physical plans is critical if we hold to our “core value” of social equity and Mayor Murray’s Executive Order 2014-02 committing to equitable development. It is not apparent that the alternatives have been tested and the policy based plan does not communicate to the general public. Relying on current or future policies and “complaints” is not appropriate for land use decisions. Seattle 2035 should guide our city welcoming growth and

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concurrent vibrant public realm investments that are shared throughout the city not directed by market forces to direct development resulting in unbalanced public investment.

We encourage you to step back and provide more detail for each alternative so that we can work together to grow our city and provide for an interactive social life.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Anderson", written in a cursive style.

Eric Anderson, AIA  
Chair  
AIA Seattle Public Policy Board