



July 20, 2021

President Lorena González
Seattle City Council
600 Fifth Ave.
Seattle, WA 98104

RE: CB 120081

Dear Council President González and Seattle City Council Members:

AIA Seattle and NOMA NW (the National Organization of Minority Architects' Northwest chapter) echo calls by Seattle's Black religious leaders to repeal Council Bill 120081, which provides density bonuses for affordable housing built on land owned by religious organizations. AIA and NOMA NW enthusiastically supported this legislation when it moved to full Council, but we were disheartened by the enacted amendment to change the affordability threshold from 80 percent AMI to 60 percent AMI. We ask that you consider repealing this bill and for Council to reevaluate the amendment.

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While efforts to support deeper levels of housing affordability are important, this amendment will make many of these projects financially infeasible. As a result, most or all of the city's Black churches, which pioneered efforts to empower their communities through local development on church property as part of the Nehemiah Initiative, will be left out of the program. AIA Fellows and NOMA members Donald King and Dean Renée Chang have worked with graduate architecture, landscape architecture, planning, and real estate students at the University of Washington College of Built Environments in collaboration with Black church leadership over several years, analyzing the design and financial implications of these projects in great detail. As they [have persuasively argued](#), affordable housing projects at the 60 percent AMI level are so financially perilous that only large agencies and affordable housing developers with significant national fundraising ability and access to federal tax credits can achieve them.

AIA and NOMA NW strongly support ongoing efforts by the City to support Seattle's BIPOC communities with the tools they need to develop home and business ownership opportunities and wealth-building initiatives that combat community displacement. The program approved by CB 120081 in its original form was one of these. However, as amended, the legislation will likely deny the independent, bottom-up community organizations that have the opportunity to most impact BIPOC lives and communities access to the program that was intended to serve them. We believe this is the wrong message to send to Black and other religious organizations striving to effect meaningful change in their communities.

We strongly support affordable housing development programs at 60 percent AMI, but respectfully request that these be done through other programs.

Please recall CB 120081 so that it can be revised to empower the organizations with the greatest stake in their communities that it was originally intended to serve.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brendan Connolly". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Brendan Connolly, AIA
President, AIA Seattle

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Leon Holloway". The signature is cursive and includes a long, sweeping underline.

Leon Holloway
President, NOMA NW