



July 27, 2021

Chairman Dan Strauss  
Land Use & Neighborhoods Committee  
Seattle City Council  
600 Fifth Ave.  
Seattle, WA 98104

RE: Proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment for “Neighborhood Residential Areas”

Chairman Strauss and Members of the Land Use & Neighborhoods Committee:

AIA Seattle strongly supports an amendment to the current Comprehensive Plan to replace “Single Family” with “Neighborhood Residential.” Thank you for holding a public hearing on this topic this week.

We believe there are many reasons why this change makes sense now:

The name should reflect existing households

- “Single Family” is not an accurate description of the variety of households that currently exist in these zones. Non-related individuals live in single homes within these zones, for example, as do families in grandfathered in missing middle and multi-family housing and non-related families on parcels with DADUs.
- The use of “Single Family” has been inaccurate since the city approved Accessory Dwelling Unit legislation in 1994 (and expanded it in 2019), allowing more than one household to live on a single parcel within this zone.

Our nomenclature must be inclusive of all residents

- “Single Family” zones are directly linked to Seattle’s historical and exclusionary use of race-based zoning. Retaining this nomenclature signals to BIPOC and low-income individuals and families, as well as single individuals, that they are not welcome in a zoning designation that includes 75 percent of Seattle’s residential land.
- All of Seattle’s neighborhoods need to offer more housing choices in a range of housing types and affordability levels. Words matter—and retaining the “Single Family” name will indicate that Seattle is not serious when it talks about these goals.

Why “Neighborhood Residential”

- We believe that zoning designations should not be suggestive of who should be allowed to live in a given location (as in “single families”). Instead, the focus should be on neighborhoods and the diversity of households they welcome. The “Neighborhood Residential” designation emphasizes the primary use in the neighborhood as residential but also allows some flexibility for other uses

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(corner stores, home businesses, etc.) that make for complete and walkable neighborhoods.

- “Neighborhood Residential” can be seen as a companion designation to “Neighborhood Commercial,” which combines ground floor commercial space with higher density residential uses above.

#### Why now

- While we believe this name change is long overdue, it is especially critical to have this discussion now, as Seattle prepares to embark on our next major Comprehensive Plan update. This major update cycle is arguably the most critical in Seattle’s history, as it will determine whether and how our city responds to calls for greater equity in our neighborhoods and land use policies.
- Including this change as an amendment to the annual update will set the stage for these larger discussions during the major update and will send a clear message that the City is serious when we talk about the need to provide greater equity and more inclusivity for all residents.

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