



May 01, 2025

RE: Interim and Permanent Phase I Legislation of the One Seattle Plan

Dear Councilmembers,

Seattle faces an urgent need to act on its housing crisis. While we recognize the substantial efforts made to date and commend the city's vision in the One Seattle Plan, the recent decision to postpone many major zoning updates until 2026 places even more importance on the interim and permanent Phase I measures now under consideration.

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As architects, planners, and advocates for a more equitable and resilient city, AIA Seattle with its membership of over 2,800 professionals urges the Council to use the interim legislation to meaningfully advance the housing, affordability, and climate goals articulated in the draft Comprehensive Plan. We support the swift passage of Phase I legislation this spring and recommend the inclusion of several targeted improvements to maximize its impact.

### Key Recommendations for Phase I Legislation

#### 1. Legalize Stacked Flats Near Transit Without Lot Size Minimums

The ECO Northwest analysis found that *stacked flats*, multi-family buildings with individual flats stacked vertically, are one of the most promising forms of “missing middle” housing in terms of financial feasibility. However, current lot size minimums undercut their potential in many of Seattle’s neighborhoods.

Allowing stacked flats on all lots within frequent transit areas, without artificial constraints on lot size will unlock new housing options in high-opportunity areas and promote accessibility for seniors and multigenerational households.

#### 2. Increase FAR for Missing Middle Housing

We recommend raising the floor area ratio (FAR) for Neighborhood Residential (NR) zones to match the levels necessary to make stacked flats and other middle housing financially feasible per findings in the ECO Northwest feasibility study. A 1.6 FAR should be baseline for 4+ units, as the current interim FAR is insufficient to unlock new production.

### 3. Eliminate Parking Mandates Near Transit

We appreciate the city's alignment with HB 1110 in removing parking minimums for certain areas, but we urge Council to extend this to all areas served by frequent transit, not only urban centers. Parking mandates drive up development costs, limit unit counts, and hinder climate goals. For small stacked flat buildings on a single parcel, it is nearly impossible to physically get any more than 5 parking spaces on sites with alleys. Sites without alleys require drives and rear parking lots that eliminate all potential for landscaped open space or large trees.

### 4. Expand Access to the Affordable Housing Bonus

We encourage a flexible bonus system in both Neighborhood Residential and Low-Rise zones. This should be accessible to nonprofit, private, and social housing developers alike and should not hinge on parking or overly complex performance criteria.

### 5. Retain and Expand Neighborhood Centers

Neighborhood Centers are crucial for creating walkable, service-rich communities. We strongly recommend retaining all proposed centers and reintroducing high-opportunity locations that were removed from the plan, such as North Queen Anne, Loyal Heights, and North Broadway. These should not wait until 2026.

We urge you to see this interim period not as a pause, but as a pivotal phase to lay groundwork for lasting change. Property owners and developers who would like to redevelop infill housing have been in limbo for years waiting for the zoning to support middle housing options. The decisions made now will shape public trust in the One Seattle Plan and determine whether we can begin reversing decades of exclusionary zoning.

The AIA Seattle community stands ready to assist in refining these policies and ensuring they result in meaningful, livable, affordable housing options for Seattle residents.

Thank you for your continued leadership.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen DeLucas".

Karen DeLucas, AIA  
Comp Plan Work Group Co-chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sheri Newbold".

Sheri Newbold, AIA  
Comp Plan Work Group Co-chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Hutchins".

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