



AIA
Seattle

NEWS RELEASE

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SEATTLE, January 10, 2020 — The American Institute of Architects (AIA) Seattle Chapter applauds the Seattle Planning Commission's recently released white paper, *Evolving Seattle's Growth Strategy*. Along with its 2018 report, [Neighborhoods for All](#), which calls for expanding housing opportunities in single family zones, the Commission has made a strong case for revisiting the way growth and opportunity have been distributed in Seattle throughout its history.

In December, AIA Seattle approved an updated [Housing Policy Statement](#) that outlines our vision of Seattle as an equitable, livable, and sustainable city for all its residents. As the Commission's white paper makes clear, this vision is not attainable within the bounds of Seattle's current growth strategy.

"AIA Seattle believes our city must produce significantly more housing to provide opportunity to current and future residents, curb the impact of carbon emissions by reducing long commutes and increasing transit ridership, create livable and walkable communities, and allow individuals from all income levels an opportunity to participate in urban life near public parks, schools, community centers, and transit," said Osama Quotah, chair of AIA Seattle's Public Policy Board and a member of the Board of Directors. "We agree with the Commission that Seattle's housing strategies must be connected to climate, livability, and race and social justice goals as we make decisions about our transportation networks and land use patterns."

The Commission calls for a new way of planning as Seattle begins work on the next update of its Comprehensive Plan, due in 2023, as part of the state's Growth Management Act. It outlines how careful planning can address housing affordability while promoting racial equity and shaping our future as a thriving, sustainable city.

AIA Seattle strongly endorses the Commission's call for a reassessment of our current growth strategy that prohibits virtually all forms of small-scale, multi-family housing within three-quarters of our residential areas and, instead, focuses nearly all new development along arterials within designated urban villages—typically in the form of large-scale apartment buildings "concentrating development to only a small portion of the residential land yields an inequitable distribution of the impacts of growth and limits the effectiveness of the Urban Village growth strategy as a means to promote livable and sustainable neighborhoods across the city." (*from Evolving Seattle's Growth Strategy*).

AIA Seattle echoes the Commission's call for the city to consider allowing small-scale multi-family housing in all residential areas to increase housing affordability and livability while exploring the implementation of design guidelines and building standards to encourage high quality development.

We believe, along with the Commission, that growth must be more equitably distributed by allowing a greater variety of housing types and planning carefully to lower the risk of displacement.

“The dramatic changes in economic, demographic, and environmental conditions over the past 25 years demand new ideas that address the magnitude of our housing and climate crises, while increasing the quality of life for all residents” (*from Evolving Seattle’s Growth Strategy*). The upcoming Comprehensive Plan update is a timely opportunity to re-examine Seattle’s growth strategy through the combined lenses of social equity, livability, and sustainability. AIA Seattle believes that the success of this process will be contingent upon thoughtful planning, creativity, innovation, and attention to design quality, and we stand ready to contribute to this effort.

About the Seattle Chapter of the American Institute of Architects

Founded in 1894, AIA Seattle is a not-for-profit professional association of architects, allied professionals, and laypeople. AIA Seattle provides the architecture community with resources and relationships to make a difference through design.

About AIA Seattle’s Advocacy Efforts, and our Public Policy Board

Architects care about the places they live and have the knowledge and tools to make a difference through design. Through advocacy, AIA Seattle promotes a well-designed, sustainable city and creates opportunities for architects to prosper. Our advocacy agenda spans all scales of design in our city. AIA Seattle’s Public Policy Board (PPB) leads our advocacy efforts. Each year, the PPB seeks member input on advocacy priorities, then selects a handful of issues as the focus of our work for the coming year: City Design, Housing, Homelessness, Sustainable Design, Seattle Central Waterfront, and Transportation.