



Tim Burgess
Seattle City Councilmember

June 7, 2011

Diane Sugimura, Director
Department of Planning and Development
700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000
P.O. Box 34019
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

Re: Legislative Rezone Proposal for the Roosevelt Neighborhood

Dear Diane,

In late April, the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) issued a Determination of Non-Significance under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) for a proposed package of 25 rezones in the Roosevelt Residential Urban Village. As the appeal period for DPD's SEPA determination recently ended and the decision was not appealed, it is my understanding that the City Council will receive legislation from you within the next several weeks advancing the proposed rezones.

The package of rezones DPD has put forward for the Roosevelt neighborhood is based on a proposal developed by the Roosevelt Neighborhood Association (RNA) in 2006. The creation of the RNA's rezone proposal was part of a larger community-based effort to update the Roosevelt Neighborhood Plan to accommodate the construction of a light rail station. I deeply respect the hard work and patience of the Roosevelt residents that worked with the City to move their rezone proposal forward over the past six years. I also appreciate their efforts to develop and support a proposal that would allow for higher density development on 12.5 acres of property in the heart of their neighborhood. The opening of the Roosevelt light rail station in 2020 offers an exciting opportunity for this area to become a thriving, transit-oriented neighborhood.

However, after studying the rezone proposal that DPD reviewed pursuant to SEPA, I am concerned it may not allow for the development densities necessary to fully capitalize on the community and economic development opportunities the planned light rail station could create for Roosevelt. As an example, I wonder about the prospect of applying new zoning classifications that would allow a maximum building height of 40 feet on properties along Northeast 65th Street and Northeast 66th Street between of 12th Avenue Northeast and 15th Avenue Northeast. These properties are located within a quarter-mile of the planned light rail station and along streets that seem to be well-suited for higher density development.

According to DPD's own analysis, the rezones proposed for the Roosevelt neighborhood would allow for the construction of just 348 additional housing units. Given the 12.5 acre size of

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the rezone area, its location near a future light rail station, and the fact that many of the affected parcels are currently zoned for low-rise development, it isn't readily apparent to me that we are maximizing our opportunities for clustered density. Increasing the permitted building heights and development densities in the vicinity of the station area would help to support the region's significant transit investment in Roosevelt.

Therefore, before the rezone proposal for Roosevelt is finalized and submitted to the Council for our consideration, I would like to ask that DPD complete additional analysis to determine where higher-density zoning designations and height limits may be appropriate. Please let me know how long it will take you to complete this additional work as I do not want to delay Council consideration of this matter beyond year-end. But, I do want to be certain that we have adequate information and flexibility to make a good decision when the time comes.

Diane, I have been very concerned that the City is not adequately addressing density opportunities near our transit station areas or along our major transportation corridors (Aurora Avenue North, Rainier Avenue South, Lake City Way Northeast, and Delridge Way Southwest). Concentrating density in our Urban Centers and Urban Villages and along our major transportation corridors makes good sense from an environmental, economic growth, public safety and quality-of-life perspective. This policy approach to density is what allows us to maintain strong protections for our single-family residential areas. This is the context for my request related to the Roosevelt proposal.

I don't want to wake up in 15 or 20 years and find ourselves asking, "Why didn't we properly plan for density in these areas?"

Thank you for your attention to my request.

Sincerely,



Tim Burgess, Vice Chair
Committee on the Built Environment

Cc: Members, Seattle City Council
Mayor Michael McGinn
Marshall Foster, DPD
Barbara Wilson, Executive Director, Seattle Planning Commission
Josh Brower, Chair, Seattle Planning Commission