HCMP Law Offices
Hillis Clark Martin & Peterson P.S.

May 6, 2024

By Email Only

Office of Planning & Community Development
Attn: Rico Quirindongo, Geoff Wentlandt,
Michael Hubner, Brennon Staley, and Jim
Holmes
City of Seattle
P.O. Box 94788
Seattle, WA 98124-7088
oneseattlecompplan@seattle.gov;
PCD_compplan_EIS@Seattle.gov

Re: *Comments to Draft One Seattle Plan and Draft EIS: Congregation Beth Shalom and 35th Avenue NE Neighborhood*

Dear OPCD One Seattle Planning Leadership:

This law firm represents Congregation Beth Shalom (the "Congregation"), a welcoming and inclusive synagogue on 35th Avenue NE in the Wedgwood neighborhood of North Seattle. The Congregation is a place where people meet to find family, friendship, support and understanding. In addition to the Congregation's worship activities, the institution provides high-quality and innovative life-long Jewish learning, and operates an Early Childhood Center that welcomes all children and their families, including those involved in Jewish life to varying degrees as well as non-Jewish families. The Congregation integrates compassion and social justice throughout all of its activities.

The Congregation recognizes and appreciates the complex and important comprehensive work that OPCD and the Mayor's Office are currently undertaking. Although the institution's internal strategic planning schedule unfortunately does not exactly align with the City's Comprehensive Planning cycle and comment deadlines, we provide this brief comment with respect to a key issue that is on the horizon for the Congregation.

The Congregation's primary structures, which currently house its worship and learning programs as well as its Early Childhood Center, are located at 6800 35th Avenue NE, or King County APN 4361200005. This parcel falls within a Frequent Transit Service Area. Under the current Future Land Use Map ("FLUM"), it is split between Multi-Family Residential and Neighborhood Residential. Today, this parcel is split-zoned between LR2(M) (shown in brown on the following page) and NR3 (light yellow).

Importantly, the Congregation also owns four parcels immediately to the north of its primary structure, at 6830-6842 35th Avenue NE. These parcels are also within a Frequent Transit Service Area, but they are all currently zoned NR3 and designated Neighborhood Residential under the current FLUM. The Congregation's five parcels are shown at right, with each of them marked by a small red circle. The four northerly properties are maintained by the Congregation and currently occupied by renters.

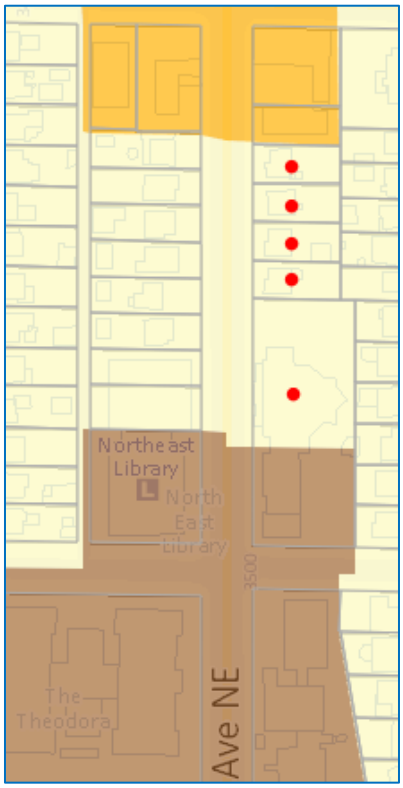

Figure 1. The Congregation's five properties (marked with red circles), with lowrise zoning shown in brown, neighborhood residential zoning showed in light yellow, and neighborhood commercial shown in mustard yellow.

Notably, the Congregation's Early Childhood Center is at full capacity and operating very successfully. Given the Congregation's ownership of the four parcels to the north of its primary structure, the Congregation is evaluating the feasibility of moving the Early Childhood Center into an expanded space on some or all of these parcels.

The Congregation believes that such a proposal would be of tremendous benefit both to the Congregation and to the larger community, given the critical and acute shortage of childcare options in Seattle.[1]

1. Current Requests.

As excerpted on the following page, it appears that the current Draft Plan would downzone the future land use designation of the Congregation's southerly portion, and properties to the north of us, from *Multi-Family Residential* and *Commercial/Mixed-Use* to *Urban Neighborhood*. This draft map suggests that the entire stretch of 35th Avenue NE from the University of Washington to about NE 80th Street would be given the new FLUM's lowest-density residential designation.

The policies in the Draft Plan and the assumptions in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement ("DEIS") suggest that the proposed *Urban Neighborhood* status would contemplate **less** density than contemplated under either existing *Multi-Family Residential* or *Commercial/Mixed-Use*.

The Congregation asks that the Final Plan not make this significant change. As currently mapped and described in the Draft Plan, the change would represent a loss in walkable and transit-oriented potential and flexibility for this neighborhood generally and the Congregation specifically.

---

[1] *See, e.g.*, Daniel Beekman, Moriah Balingit and Sharon Lurye, *In WA and beyond, a child care crisis is holding parents back*, SEATTLE TIMES, Apr. 23, 2024.

The Congregation respectfully requests that the Final Plan's FLUM not proceed with the Draft Plan's proposed downzone of 35th Avenue NE to the Urban Neighborhood designation. For the Congregation's properties, the Congregation instead asks that that the Final Plan's FLUM use either the Corridor designation or the Neighborhood Center designation as studied in the Draft EIS. These designations much better represent the current traits of the Congregation's properties traits and the clear existing trends of the neighborhood.

Neighborhood Center or Corridor designations would much better align with the existing street, which is characterized by a range of walkable community anchors and "third places" like Seattle Public Library's North Branch, University Unitarian Church, Top Pot Donuts, Grateful Bread, and many other low-rise to mid-rise destinations for the walking, rolling and transit-riding community.

In addition, in the Final Environmental Impact Statement, to help enable prospective flexibility for the Congregation and City policymakers, please ensure that the scope of study includes the possibility of a future of the Congregation's properties to NC1-40(M), to continue the zoning pattern provided to its northerly neighbors. Either of these zoning designations would align with the Neighborhood Center or Corridor designations requested above.

Figure 2. Excerpt from Draft Plan's FLUM, showing potential new designation of 35th Ave NE.

2. Pending Requests.

As mentioned above, the Congregation's strategic planning cycle unfortunately does not perfectly match with the City's comprehensive planning cycle, but the Congregation's volunteer and professional leadership have adjusted by speeding up its long-planned study of the feasibility of moving the Early Childhood Center into an expanded space on one or more of the Congregation's four northerly parcels. The Congregation's initial architectural analysis has shown that it could be difficult or inefficient to do so under the current NR-3 zoning, so the Congregation may need to seek a rezone. We hope OPCD would agree that such an expansion would help address a dramatic shortage in childcare that is a burden on Seattle workers and families.

As part of feasibility study, the Congregation is currently evaluating whether to request a rezone of its four NR-3 zoned properties into NC1-40(M) zoning, to better match the Congregation's long-term needs and better align with the development pattern of its northerly neighbors.[2]

We would appreciate your partnership in identifying the Congregation's parcels for rezoning to NC1-40(M) as part of the Comprehensive Planning process. This action would support the potential for expansion of the Congregation's Early Childcare Center, and allow the

[2] If this is not possible, the Congregation may instead request that its properties be fully unified within the LR2(M) status that applies to the south half of its primary structure.

Congregation to efficiently align its properties with the Plan's larger policy goals, without needing to engage in a lengthy and potentially duplicative site-specific rezone process. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Stephen H. Roos

Stephen H. Roos
Attorney for Congregation Beth Shalom

CC: Marco Lowe, Chief Operating Officer

ND: 24307.002 4880-6097-7595v4