May 20, 2024

Office of Planning and Community Development
Seattle City Hall
600 4th Avenue, 5th Floor
Seattle, WA 98104
Attn: Rico Quirindongo
Email: PCD_CompPlan_EIS@seattle.gov

Re: U District Partnership Comments on One Seattle Plan Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Director Quirindongo,

On behalf of the U District Partnership, I would like to share comments on the One Seattle Comprehensive Plan Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The U District Partnership is the primary place management organization for Seattle's University District. We serve everyone who works in, lives in, and visits the U District by fostering and sustaining a vibrant, diverse, and healthy neighborhood for the common good.

We share many of the goals expressed in the Plan and appreciate the City's dedication to increased affordable housing and to healthy commercial areas. As the first neighborhood rezoned in 2017, the U District has already absorbed significant growth and is one of the region's densest centers. We welcome this growth, but are also aware of the additional investments required to maintain livability in a growing and densifying neighborhood.

After reviewing the Draft Environmental Impact Statement ("DEIS"), we would like to offer the following comments as they relate to future comprehensive and subarea planning processes:

1. **Engage deeply with the U District Partnership:** As a part of the U District subarea planning process, the City should ensure that the U District Partnership and our stakeholders, including property owners, business owners and local organizations, are represented on any subarea planning initiatives, committees, and outreach. We encourage the City to consider the unique needs of our neighborhood, and especially our commercial corridors like University Way NE, during the planning and zoning process. The City should honor and enhance the U District design guidelines that were finalized in 2019 as a part of a deep community engagement process. Finally, as we experienced with the U District rezone in 2017, this subarea planning effort will require significant time and commitment from U District Partnership staff and neighborhood stakeholders, and the City should explore grant and other funding opportunities to support the in-depth engagement process.

2. **Invest in adequate public safety resources:** The U District is the Seattle area's "second downtown" and a designated Regional Center, with one of the region's newest Link Light Rail Stations. We weather much of the same public safety issues as our downtown core with significantly less investment in public safety resources. We advocate for a more investment in such resources, including police and fire services, to support the U District as it continues to grow into one of the region's densest areas.

3. **Invest in transformational urban space projects:** The City should use the subarea planning process to plan for transformation urban projects and goals. This includes the redesign of major streets such as University Way NE, NE 42nd St, and Roosevelt Way NE to include widened sidewalks, raised crosswalks, traffic calming measures, and space for outdoor seating and other public amenities. In addition, the City should use the subarea planning process to align with local efforts in the U District and Wallingford to study the feasibility of a highway lid over Interstate 5 between NE 45th and 50th Streets.

4. **Preserve the unique characteristics of The Ave:** University Way NE ("The Ave") owes much of its unique character to the cadence of small storefronts, number of historic buildings, and many small businesses. The City should work with U District stakeholders to identify creative opportunities to preserve The Ave's character while allowing for the density required within the zoning guidelines. These opportunities could include facade preservation, TDR, historic preservation of certain eligible buildings, and additional design guidelines aimed at preserving the pedestrian experience at the ground floor.

Sincerely,

Don Blakeney
Executive Director
The U District Partnership

Cc: Mayor Bruce Harrell
Council President Sara Nelson
District 4 Councilmember Maritza Rivera