April 15, 2024

Dear OPCD Director Quirindongo & SDOT Director Spotts:

As members of the Green New Deal Oversight Board, we are charged with advising and making recommendations to the Mayor and City Council related to the Green New Deal for Seattle and to monitor progress in meeting its intended outcomes and goals. Specifically, our duties include "Supporting the planning and implementation of individual City departmental action, policies, programs, and practices, to make Seattle climate-pollution free by 2030". Thus we are compelled to weigh in on two huge opportunities to curb Seattle's climate pollution, invest in healthy communities and plan for a thriving green economy. Both the Comprehensive Plan and the Transportation Levy will shape Seattle's growth for decades to come - and right now, both proposals are not consistent with the goals of the Green New Deal for Seattle.

While separate policies, the issues are inextricably linked. Transportation is responsible for 60% of Seattle's climate pollution - including climate-destroying commutes on the rise as the housing crisis displaces low-income residents. Decades of racist red-lining policy pushed BIPOC families into what are now the most polluted areas in Seattle, and then major transportation infrastructure was built on top of and through communities of color, driving more pollution and displacement. Our current zoning concentrates density along arterial streets, limiting how much affordable housing we can build and pushing low-income families to live along these dangerous, busy roads - exacerbating the impacts of traffic violence, air pollution, health inequities and rising housing costs on communities already hit first and worst by the climate crisis.

The good news is, the solutions are also connected.

- When we allow for more and more types of affordable housing across Seattle, we combat displacement and curb climate-destroying commutes.
- When we invest in a transportation system that enables every Seattle resident to get around safely, conveniently and affordably without a car, we tackle our city's largest source of climate pollution – while investing in healthy, rooted communities where people want to live, work and play.
- And when we support communities to thrive in place, we build climate resilience: the everyday community connections that make for a good life become life-saving during a heat wave or wildfire smoke.

By bringing a climate justice lens to both of these policies, we can plan for Seattle's healthy low-carbon future, address environmental injustice, and create good green jobs. With heat waves and wildfire smoke choking our City every summer, we can't afford not to invest in Seattle's Green New Deal future.

Transportation Levy: we need a levy that puts us on track to meet Seattle's climate, safety, equity goals. With two transportation levies before Washington State that bans new gas-powered vehicles, now is the time to be investing in clean energy and multimodal transportation so that we are ready to keep our people and economy moving without fossil fuels. And with 40% of Seattle residents already dependent on pedestrian, bike and transit infrastructure to get around, we must do better for our communities and for the climate.

We can accomplish this if we:

1. **Dedicate at least 50% of levy funding to specific improvements for people walking, rolling, biking and taking transit.** We can't meet Seattle's Green New Deal goals without transforming how people get around our city:
    a. Make transit more convenient and affordable than driving by expanding routes and service hours; investing in first and last mile connections; and expanding the Orca Lift program.
    b. Connect bike lanes citywide to enable people to get where they need to go safely.
    c. Invest in pedestrian infrastructure and programs so that people of all ages and abilities can safely walk and roll to meet their daily needs.

2. **Invest in a larger levy package, at least $1.7B so that we can make real progress on:**
    a. Building the 800 miles of Seattle's missing sidewalks.
    b. Prioritizing transit over car infrastructure and improving transit speed, reliability, and access.
    c. Reverse inflation cuts to transit and vital pedestrian programs,such as Sidewalk Maintenance, ADA Accessibility, and Pedestrian Crossings & Markings.
    d. Electrification, including the City's fleet and incentives for electric freight.
    e. Community-led planning and land acquisition to prepare for Light Rail expansion, to build anti-displacement strategies into our transit-oriented development.

Comprehensive plan: We need a comprehensive plan that provides abundant, affordable housing for people in our City, prioritizes anti-displacement as a climate justice solution, and ensures Seattle is prepared to welcome climate migrants/refugees. How we grow our cities and create housing for all has major climate impacts: building dense urban neighborhoods can cut climate pollution by up to 75% and supporting communities to thrive in place is the #1 thing we can do to build climate resilience.

We can accomplish this if we:

1. **Increase the zoning allowance in urban neighborhoods to build up to 3 story, low-rise apartment buildings or condos citywide, with additional incentives for social housing, land trusts, cooperatives and other affordable housing development.** The current proposal doubles down on the 'urban villages' strategy, which OPCD itself has called a failure to mitigate displacement of BIPOC residents, and an extension of historic racist and exclusionary zoning policy. Instead of replicating what we know doesn't work, the Comprehensive Plan should allow for more and more permanently affordable types of

housing citywide, with a height increase allowance that actually incentivizes developers to build affordable housing instead of luxury townhomes.

2. **Add specific goals and policies to enact equitable transit-oriented development:**
    a. Designate the CID and Graham Street station areas as specific sites for zoning and land use regulation that will result in at least 30% of the land surrounding the stations being in community ownership and 30% of the housing as permanently affordable (under multiple models such as community land trusts, cooperatives and social housing).
    b. Include all the high capacity transit routes (existing and planned), and establish at least a 1/4mi wide corridor that allows new multifamily housing for multiple blocks on either side.
    c. Connect urban villages with dense corridors that can provide additional services to adjacent neighborhoods.
    d. Plan for families and multigenerational households - housing near transit shouldn't only be studios and 1-bedrooms.
    e. Allow small-scale businesses within the entire zone.

3. **Add stronger and more specific targets for anti-displacement** to ensure that the goals and policies across the Comprehensive plan work to mitigate displacement and support communities to thrive in place. Emphasize targets that will lead to concrete outcomes, such as
    a. Increase the percentage of affordable housing in neighborhoods at high risk of displacement.
    b. Defer payment of costly permitting fees for Additional Dwelling Units (ADUs) and Detached Additional Dwelling Units (DADUs) until property sale, to enable low-income homeowners to stay in place while simultaneously adding density.

4. **Add specific goals and policies for how Seattle, as a global city, will welcome climate migrants and refugees.** The Pacific Northwest is expected to be one of the most climate-stable regions in the US and world as the climate crisis intensifies. We need to be ready: both to welcome migrants and refugees, prioritize supporting migrants and refugees from global frontline communities, and ensure that our City is able to grow without fueling displacement or climate pollution.

5. **Add specific goals and policies for how Seattle can implement climate resilience hubs, prioritizing local communities on the frontlines of the climate crisis.** Climate resilience hubs are well-trusted, community-serving facilities that are used year-round as neighborhood centers and also keep people safe through heat waves, wildfire smoke, flooding and extreme weather. Investing in climate resilience hubs is a key way that we can make progress on Seattle's climate and equity goals. Seattle's Office of Sustainability and Environment is beginning a year-long community planning process to define strategies for community resilience hub investment and implementation. The Comprehensive Plan should be aligned with this planning process and also help ensure that existing communities are not displaced in the process of implementing climate resilience hubs.

6. **Restore tree canopy goals for environmental health, community resilience and climate justice.** Trees have a huge role to play in Seattle's Green New Deal future: they provide

clean air, sequester climate pollution and help protect our communities from climate chaos. But Seattle's tree canopy is disappearing, disproportionately so in BIPOC and low-income communities which have less tree coverage to begin with. During heat domes, neighborhoods without sufficient tree canopy can be up to 20°F hotter; in 2021, ground temperatures in the Duwamish Valley exceeded 120°F. To address these inequities and invest in a healthy, equitable tree canopy, the Comprehensive Plan should:

a. Restore the 30% minimum and 40% aspirational tree canopy goals.
b. Plan for housing to grow up, not out: Currently, the Comprehensive Plan allows for certain types of middle housing across much of the city but has a very low FAR (floor area ratio). Increasing FARs allows more space for trees even as we build more housing.
c. Include a policy that supports ongoing implementation of the City's Tree Equity Plan and Urban Forest Management Plan.

We look forward to working with your office to ensure these policies advance Seattle's Green New Deal goals and make significant progress towards a healthy climate justice future for all.

Sincerely,

The Green New Deal Oversight Board