May 20, 2024

Mayor Bruce Harrell and City of Seattle Councilmembers,

Thank you for your service to the City of Seattle. I am writing to share my comments that have been submitted, along with other Black homeowners, in response to the comprehensive plan. The following is the language shared in the feedback form:

Despite the perception that Black and other families of color in Seattle's Central District and South End are vanishing, ***we are still here, standing in our commitment to extend the legacy, health, and vitality of our communities. The One Seattle Comprehensive Plan must address our needs, concerns, and be crafted in alignment with doing no further harm to communities that have borne the weight of systemic injustice through redlining, covenants, and racial bias in the justice system.*** *We, the Black Homeowners with a legacy of community building in Seattle, call on city policy makers to do the following:*

- *As a part of Seattle's role in cooperating in the regional growth management plan,* ***the City MUST commit to working with King County staff as part of the regional growth management strategy to remove the Highest and Best Use zoning category that increases property taxes.*** *These increased property taxes are a key driver of displacement for legacy homeowners in upzoned neighborhoods (i.e. Urban Centers).*

- *The current anti-displacement framework is an inadequate starting point for any conversation about protecting Black, Latiné, Asian, Native, and other working class families' ability to own homes and live in Seattle.* ***There needs to be a community-led engagement process*** *to ensure the review, revision and implementation of the anti-displacement plan provides real solutions for marginalized families and communities to live and thrive in Seattle.* ***The city MUST commit to real actionable policies that will be implemented in an equitable manner that does not incorporate passive language.***

- ***The city MUST stop the building incentives imposed on Urban Centers in previously redlined areas.*** *Open the kind of housing and development density seen in Urban Centers on a City-wide level, then create new incentive structures to attract green development, that includes building with retained trees, to those areas. Geographically, there is more opportunity for density in areas that have seen selective types of development, while avoiding other denser building varieties that are being concentrated in low to middle class working neighborhoods. Opening these affluent areas to greater density is the most efficient path forward to addressing our city's housing crisis.* ***This can be accomplished by applying the 25% growth exemption to neighborhoods that have already carried more than their share of the development burden.***

- ***Walkability MUST be defined to be more inclusive of people with different mobility and accessibility needs.*** *There should be a more all-embracing and transparent community discussion before significant infrastructure reconfigurations are implemented that constrain our mobility - and not by a contrived process that is gamed by well organized groups. Cyclist interests have been prioritized over working class people who also need to use the streets to get to work and traverse the community. There are areas where bicycle lanes and road closures create choke points and congestion with the effect (intended or otherwise) of causing navigation and travel challenges at the expense of large numbers of community members for the benefit of mostly empty cycling lanes. The city must ensure the standards of infrastructure (sidewalks,*

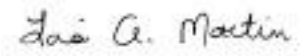
etc.) are consistent on a city-wide level. Any work completed to enhance walkability should include neighborhood level living wage jobs.

- ***Infrastructure and development investments MUST provide opportunities for business ownership, especially in formerly red-lined and other neighborhoods experiencing socio-economic injustice.***

- ***The City MUST protect our urban canopy in red-lined and other neighborhoods experiencing socio-economic, environmental and climate injustice****. Developers must not be allowed to clear cut lots by simply paying fees. None of the considered plan versions take the value of trees and nature into account. People deserve and need shade trees by their homes, not just on public property. Our health and livability depends on having neighborhoods where trees can provide shade and carbon sequestration. Our current codes and growth plans will create urban heat islands that will become deadly as the climate continues to warm.*

The draft plan is full of the language of racial and environmental equity. But the fact is that the neighborhoods that have suffered most under the discriminatory and oppressive policies of the past are the neighborhoods that are being asked in this draft plan to take on the most housing density, while continuing to lose the most tree canopy. That is not racial or environmental justice. It is more of the same.

Seattle can only thrive as a 21st century city if it commits to real equitable development in housing, jobs and economic opportunity, environmental justice, mobility infrastructure investments, transit that meets neighborhood needs, and anchoring its cultural institutions. Combined, these elements support vibrant communities. The One Seattle Plan must chart a bold path forward by supporting policies that allow space for everyone to contribute to our collective future.



Lois Martin, MA
CACE21 Member

This letter was drafted as a part of CACE 21's housing & development engagement process with Black homeowners and community members from Central and South Seattle with contributions from Margo Jones, Ruby Holland, Teya Williams, Lois Martin, Ebony Arunga, and Chris Webb. CACE 21 facilitators included Francesca Eluhu, Theryn Kigvamasudvashti, Lucia Kahsai, Maria Kang and Inye Wokoma.