



June 20, 2016

### **Submitted Comments: Mandatory Housing Affordability**

The [Crown Hill Urban Village Committee for Smart Growth](#) agrees that we need to find smart, long-term solutions to Seattle's affordable housing shortage.

We are concerned that the Mayor's approach misses opportunities for smart growth within Urban Villages. Broad, unplanned upzoning with no concurrent infrastructure improvements risks leaving our neighborhood stranded with a hodge-podge of random developments underserved by transit, and basic infrastructure such as schools, parks, sidewalks and utilities.

The debate about Mandatory Housing Affordability, and more broadly HALA and the Comprehensive Plan Seattle 2035, all hinge on concentrating growth in Urban Villages. ***Communities like the Crown Hill Urban Village and the expansion area are being asked to absorb dramatic growth and change that will benefit the entire City. Yet, the City is offering very little in planning support or guaranteed infrastructure improvements and transportation resources to make that growth successful for both new and long-standing residents.***

Many organizations have raised questions about whether MHA and the HALA proposals will work. The Crown Hill Committee for Smart Growth shares many of those concerns. In particular, we question whether a fee-based housing model will serve the City's goals of equality. **We have more confidence that inclusionary housing will be more equitable housing, so everyone has opportunities to live near their work and affordable housing is equitably available around the City [this position has been taken by the 13 member CHUV committee but is not yet approved by all coalition members].** We look to the Council to lead the way to create an affordable housing policy that addresses these concerns.

The Crown Hill Urban Village is slated for the largest upzone of and expansion into single family areas of any existing Urban Village in the city.

*Our Committee requests that the MHA framework, as well as Seattle 2035 and other HALA proposals include provisions that make sure the affected Urban Villages have the tools and support needed to plan and maintain a livable community when and as we grow.*

Specifically:

**1) Expedite meaningful neighborhood planning that includes tools such as zoning analysis, design guidelines, visioning and other tools for smart growth – BEFORE a blanket upzone and before the Urban Village expansion.**

- There has been no meaningful planning in Crown Hill Urban Village since 1998. Even the 1998 plan was integrated with the plan for Downtown Ballard, and it is outdated and irrelevant.
- We request a zoning analysis. Our current zoning makes no sense for a residential Urban Village. Vast areas along Holman Road are zoned Commercial 1 and Commercial 2, a zoning designation meant to accommodate automobiles and large commercial structures.
- We request updated design guidelines to fit a neighborhood vision and plan

The Smart Growth Committee believes new housing development should be incentivized along our arterials to maximize our existing capacity that is already zoned for multifamily but underutilized. Large big-box stores and vast empty parking lots that front on sidewalks take up blocks of space that could be mixed-use commercial/residential establishments. We would like our arterials and existing capacity developed first, with planning that preserves commercial space for small, locally owned business. We can transform 15<sup>th</sup> Ave NW, Holman Road and 85<sup>th</sup> Street into a vibrant and desirable Urban Village Center. And we should do this first, before rezoning the single-family homes.

We believe with proper planning CHUV can grow in a smart way that benefits all neighbors – current neighbors and the new neighbors we would welcome, particularly those who would live in new affordable housing units. *We request that the City expedite common-sense neighborhood planning for our Urban Village BEFORE rezoning, and that MHA, HALA and Seattle 2035 policies include provisions that reflect this planning.*

## **2) Definitively tie infrastructure (sidewalks, utilities, schools, parks, etc.) and transit to growth within the policies that direct growth to our community.**

Right now the Crown Hill Urban Village is straining under the current infrastructure demands. Any growth based on Mandatory Affordable Housing must be accompanied by infrastructure to support it. We request definitive policies that tie growth to appropriate investments in the infrastructure and transit. Unless there is an explicit policy tie-in that links transit and infrastructure to growth, our Urban Village will be rezoned for rapid growth without the means to accommodate it.

Nobody wants to live in a neighborhood with crowded bus service that takes 45 minutes for a 7-mile ride downtown and watch busses drive past, too full to stop. Current residents and new neighbors need reliable transit.

Nobody wants to walk in the middle of the street because there are no sidewalks. But this is the case in almost half of the Urban Village. Lack of a safe place to walk undermines the vision of a “Walkable” Urban Village where the expectation is that very few future residents will own cars.

Nobody wants to worry about whether his or her child will be educated in a crowded portable classroom. Or whether their home will flood in the next heavy rain because of faulty drainage and open culverts.

Yet without a plan for concurrent infrastructure investments tied to growth, this is exactly what we will get.

## **3) The CHUV Smart Growth Committee is concerned about displacement of our neighbors who rent existing single-family homes and buildings in our Urban Village.**

We are primarily a neighborhood of modest single-family homes. Our neighbors are teachers and firefighters and nurses and small business owners, the very people the City wants to keep living in the City. We are young families in their first home. Retirees striving to live independently in the homes

where they raised their children. We are renters sharing a home to make ends meet. We are single parents who can afford to live here on one income.

Our community is already home to the people the city is striving to accommodate with housing. We do not want upzoning and re-development to displace our neighbors. HALA states that "Additional strategies focused specifically on mitigating displacement will also be needed." But none are offered, and we are not aware of any on the horizon.

*To address displacement concerns, we support maximizing existing development capacity along arterials before considering upzones of Single Family areas.*

#### **4) We are concerned about displacement of local small businesses.**

Local businesses have already been forced out as properties along arterials are gutted for new residential development. Many of these new developments do not include commercial spaces suitable to replace the business space lost to growth. We envision mixed-used development along arterials that are built to support small and locally owned businesses, and development that attracts pedestrian friendly businesses like coffee shops, small retail and office space, the kind of businesses that make a community truly livable and will create a vibrant urban center.

All residents of an Urban Village will benefit from these common-sense proposals that will help make growth in our community benefit everyone.

The CHUV Smart Growth Committee has a sincere interest in working with the Council, the Mayor and the City to make growth work in our neighborhood. We look forward to continuing this conversation.

Crown Hill Urban Village Committee for Smart Growth is a partnership between Crown Hill Neighborhood Association, Crown Hill Business Association, Greenwood Community Council, Whittier Heights Community Council, and the Olympic Manor Community Club and many interested neighbors participating from around the Urban Village and proposed expansion area. Our goal is to influence the zoning and planning for growth in the CHUV so the outcomes are positive for our community and those who live in it.