



Advice #11

**Date:** November 24, 2009

**To:** Mayor Greg Nickels and Members of the Seattle City Council

**From:** Ron LaFayette, Chair, on Behalf of the Northgate Stakeholders Group

**Subject:** STAKEHOLDERS ADVICE #11 CONCERNING THE PROPOSED NORTHGATE WAY REZONE & URBAN DESIGN STRATEGY

The Northgate Stakeholders Group was created by City Council Resolution 30642 to, among other things; provide advice to the City on the City's planning efforts to encourage growth and development in Northgate. In that role, the Stakeholders Group has taken great interest in the City's efforts in the area along and around Northgate Way beginning with a planning workshop in December 2006. A subcommittee of Stakeholders recently worked together with City staff to shape detailed elements of the City's Northgate rezone and urban design strategy which is the subject of this Memorandum.

The Stakeholders have also been involved in the planning and design of Hubbard Homestead Park at NE 112<sup>th</sup> street, a 3.7 acre new park which is currently under construction. This significant public investment provides a rare opportunity to coordinate public and private development opportunities, which are a key step in the continued revitalization of the Northgate Urban Center. In order to move this work forward, Stakeholders also believe it is essential to work with the City to advance the principles outlined by the Stakeholders in previous recommendations.

Transportation investment in this redeveloping area continues to be of the highest priority. In Advice #9 (July 6, 2006), Stakeholders commented on critical issues related to the implementation of the CTIP, which creates a blueprint for large-scale additional transportation investments throughout the Northgate area. Central among these issues is the importance of continued progress and City funding to implement all priority CTIP investments. In Advice #10 (April 26, 2007), Stakeholders noted that increasing density in the urban center is a critical element in achieving Northgate revitalization and endorsed the City's plan to study and propose changes in zoning to accommodate more density. In doing so, the Stakeholders reiterated that the CTIP investments are "nothing less than essential in managing the increased density of the area."

**The Northgate Stakeholders Group believes that increasing density in the urban center is a critical element in achieving Northgate revitalization and that the character of that new development, particularly the pedestrian environment, and continued progress on transportation improvements prioritized in the CTIP are equally critical. Therefore, the Northgate Stakeholders Group endorses the following elements of a rezone and urban design strategy for the North Core Area of the Northgate Urban Center. The City of Seattle should implement all of the following as a single coordinated strategy. You will note that we have included two alternatives for #7 as the group was split on this element of the strategy:**

1. **Comprehensive Plan Amendment for Northgate** – add a new policy to the Northgate Neighborhood Plan element of the Seattle Comprehensive Plan to “Support future potential rezones to higher intensity designations in the North Core subarea. In considering such rezones, pay particular attention to the development of an environment that creates a network of pedestrian connections and that encourages pedestrian activity, among other considerations associated with a rezone review.”
2. **Rezone Alternative** – The Rezone Environmental Impacts Statement studied a “No Action” alternative and three alternatives for zoning classifications within the North Core subarea of the Northgate Urban Center. Alternative 3 in the Final Rezone EIS provides for acceptable heights and zoning classifications and provides for adequate transitions to less intensive residential zones on the edges of and outside the North Core subarea (see attached Alternative 3 zoning map). The Stakeholders endorse this as a set of maximum heights and zoning classifications for the North Core subarea.
3. **Revised Northgate Design Guidelines** – adopt revised Northgate Urban Center and Overlay District Design Guidelines that provide design guidance on important neighborhood characteristics such as streetscapes; landscaped, publicly accessible interior block pedestrian connections; and building and property edges where new development abuts public park land. These new design guidelines will help developers and the community to implement important elements of the Northgate Plan as they relate to particular development sites.
4. **Streetscape Plans** – adopt streetscape concept plans consistent with those presented to the Stakeholders on 11/23/2009 into the City’s Right of Way Improvement Manual for the designated 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave NE Green Street from NE Northgate Way to NE 115<sup>th</sup> St and for a proposed 8<sup>th</sup> Ave NE Green Street from NE 105<sup>th</sup> St to approximately NE 113<sup>th</sup> St. These streetscape plans, if implemented at the time of new development, will help create an environment that encourages pedestrian activity and helps achieve the goal of creating an alternative to single occupancy vehicle trips within the community. We would note, however, that Green Street improvements on 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave NE should not worsen traffic problems between NE Northgate Way and NE 112<sup>th</sup> St. These problems deserve the City’s attention in their own right, including addressing them through intersection improvements in CTIP projects E4 and E5.
5. **Voluntary Traffic Mitigation Payment Program** – adopt a Voluntary Traffic Mitigation Payment Program applicable within Northgate to broaden the available options to address transportation impacts in Northgate, improve the efficiency of mitigation options in Northgate, and prioritize implementation of projects identified in the CTIP. We applaud this voluntary program as a way to help generate funds for the implementation of CTIP projects. We encourage the City to set the fees at an amount that is reasonable in that it provides some revenues but at the same time incentivizes developers to use it. In addition, the City will need to secure resources to implement CTIP projects and to pay for the portion of CTIP projects that are not the result of traffic impacts of new development impacts.
6. **Bonus Program** – if Incentive Zoning is applied to the North Core subarea, create a bonus program that allows developers to achieve bonus development through the provision of 1) landscaped, publicly accessible interior block pedestrian connections; 2) additional open space; 3) green street setbacks; and/or 4) affordable housing. In addition, the base height in a 65 foot zone should be increased to 70 feet - the maximum for wood frame under the fire code. MR zoning on the Mullally site should be increased to NC3-65 without applying

incentive zoning under the fire code limits. Incentive zoning could be applied over these heights if the Council decides to do so.

**7. Legislative Rezone. Supported by 12 (71%) of Stakeholders in Attendance<sup>1</sup>:**

Legislatively rezone the North Core subarea consistent with Rezone Alternative 3 studied in the FEIS, while accepting elements #1-6 as complementary strategies. Future projects will be reviewed for conformance with revised Northgate Design Guidelines and streetscape plans adopted in the Right of Way Improvement Manual and will be subject to incentive zoning or other means of achieving bonus development. While some of the Stakeholders would rather the City provide the potential for additional growth in the North Core subarea by encouraging individual Contract Rezones, we support a Legislative Rezone to provide a stronger incentive for redevelopment by reducing cost, risk and uncertainty for property owner/developers. In supporting the Legislative Rezone, we assume the City will also require incentive zoning or other means of achieving bonus development for any height and density bonus provided by the rezone. However, the City should be cautious in its implementation of incentive zoning, recognizing that higher fees require development of less affordable residences, all things being equal.

**7. Contract Rezones - Minority Position for item #7 above. Supported by 5 (29%) of Stakeholders in attendance<sup>2</sup>:** Encourage and support Contract Rezones in the North Core subarea that are consistent with the elements of this strategy outlined in #'s 1-6 above. Recognizing that Contract Rezones can add time, cost and uncertainty to the land use process we urge the City to expedite the land use process for Contract Rezone proposals that are consistent with the elements of this strategy. While some of the Stakeholders would rather the City provide the potential for additional growth in the North Core subarea through a Legislative Rezone, a majority support a smooth contract rezone process that:

- Allows individual developer/property owners to select the zoning designations that best apply to their development program within the zoning envelope studied in the Final Environmental Impact Statement;
- Allows the City to budget for its share of CTIP improvements as individual development proposals are made so that transportation infrastructure is improved in a timely manner that is coordinated with the needs generated by additional development; and
- Requires developers to demonstrate how their development proposals respond to important characteristics desired for the Northgate Urban Center described in the elements of the urban design strategy outlined in #'s 1-6 above.

**8. New EIS:** We request a more broad EIS that encompasses the entire Northgate Urban Center. Light rail will be open at the end of the next development cycle, so the time has come for us to take a comprehensive look at Northgate and decide how land use policies should be changed to best take advantage of the multi-billion dollar investment we have made in light rail.

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<sup>1</sup> **Legislative Rezone supported by:** Jerry Owens, Licton Springs Community Council rep; Velva Maye, Haller Lake Community Council rep; John Lombard, Thornton Creek Alliance rep; Kevin Wallace, owner of 3 acres or more rep; Colleen Mills, Multi-family developer rep; Shawn Olsen, At-large member; Marilyn Firlotte, At-large member; Ron LaFayette, North Seattle Community College rep, Bruce Kieser, North Seattle Community Council alt; Tony Nastansky, Business outside the mall rep, Sandra Morgan, Senior Housing alt.

<sup>2</sup> **Contract Rezone supported by:** David Miller, Maple Leaf Community Council rep; Sue Geving, Haller lake Community Council alt; Lorna Mrachek, Pinehurst Community Council rep; Renee Staton, Pinehurst Community Council alt; Jan Brucker, Thornton Creek Legal Defense Fund alt.