

AURORA LICTON URBAN VILLAGE

February 22, 2017

Councilmember Debora Juarez, District 5
Councilmember Rob Johnson, District 4
City of Seattle
600 Fourth Avenue, 2nd Floor
Seattle, Washington 98104

SUBJECT: Aurora Licton Springs Urban Village - Aurora Avenue Zoning

Councilmember Juarez and Councilmember Johnson:

As you are aware, the Aurora Licton Urban Village (ALUV) mission is to build a pedestrian-safe, visually vibrant, economically sound, livable and welcoming urban village using sustainable-growth principles. This reflects the vision of the 1999 Aurora Licton Springs Neighborhood Plan that is still relevant today.

There is perhaps one issue, more than any other, that is essential to successfully implementing this mission, that is, having appropriate neighborhood serving zoning along Aurora Avenue North ("Aurora Avenue"). The current Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA) process presents the opportunity to address this issue now.

Aurora Avenue is approximately 1.25 miles in length within the Aurora Licton Urban Village. One mile, or 80%, of the 1.25 mile corridor is zoned either Commercial 1 (C1) or Commercial 2 (C2). The remaining quarter mile is zoned Neighborhood Commercial (NC).

C1 and C2 zoning perpetuates auto-oriented regional serving land uses in the Aurora Licton Urban Village. The C1 and C2 zoned areas are characterized by low density, auto-oriented land uses such as auto repair, used car lots, service stations and suburban style motels. Current land use proposals include two separate mini-storage proposals, one four stories in height and the other six stories in height. Mini-storage uses are neither pedestrian oriented, active uses, employment generators nor neighborhood serving.

The Aurora Licton Urban Village HALA zoning proposal would rezone C1 and C2 zoned areas to NC. ALUV strongly supports this. In studying the amount of land and typical development practices of NC zoned projects, the Aurora Avenue corridor has a potential development capacity for over 5,000 new dwelling units displacing little to zero residents currently.

NC zoning also enables the following, consistent with many facets of ALUV's mission:

Needed Neighborhood Serving Land Uses - NC zoning permits land uses that better serve the neighborhood. With HALA's proposed removal of off-street parking requirements for residential development in urban villages, more residents may lack motor vehicles in the future. NC zoning encourages uses that can be accessed on foot rather than by motor vehicle. Just as important, NC zoning would prohibit the loss of

prime commercial properties along Aurora Avenue to regional serving, auto oriented, low employment uses like multi-story mini-warehouses.

Supports Pedestrian Orientation - The design, character and scale of NC zoned land uses and buildings better supports pedestrian orientation and walkability. Neighborhood serving building and site design encourages pedestrian activity, shopping, and social interaction. Urban Village residents and employees can walk, rather than drive, to nearby neighborhood serving uses. This also contributes to healthy communities. In contrast, C1 and C2 zoning encourages auto-oriented uses which fosters motor vehicle conflicts with pedestrians and bicyclists.

Improved Public Safety - The design of NC zoned buildings and sites creates an urban form supportive of public safety. Pedestrian orientation is emphasized. The streetscape is activated with pedestrians. Buildings, with street facing entrances and ample street facing windows, are brought close to the street. There are more “eyes on the street” to discourage and reduce crime.

Improved Economic Development - The NC zone facilitates residential development, ideally in a mixed use format. More residents in the urban village will drive market demand for neighborhood serving uses and services.

Because of the importance of the NC zoning to the success of our Urban Village, ALUV requests the following:

- 1) The current loss of prime commercially zoned property in the Urban Village to auto oriented uses such as multi-story mini-warehouses is discouraging. Land uses being permitted now may exist for fifty years or more and preclude those sites from being developed for neighborhood serving uses for a generation or more. We ask that either:
 - a) A **moratorium** be placed on all new auto-oriented uses on C1 and C2 zoned properties within the Aurora Licton Urban Village until such time final decisions are made on HALA zoning proposals; or
 - b) That the City **adopt interim NC zoning** on properties currently zoned C1 and C2 zoned.
- 2) That the **zoning changes from C1 and C2 to NC along Aurora Avenue be accelerated and approved** regardless of whether the zoning change is associated with the Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) program. The importance of the zoning changes along Aurora Avenue stand on their own irrespective of the MHA program. The community would also benefit from this zoning change and increased development capacity that will benefit the City of Seattle’s current housing supply crisis.
- 3) With regards to the MHA fees, ALUV would support **using the MHA program to**

incentivize certain types of developments in our urban village (and perhaps other urban villages experiencing the need for market demand and/or certain types of transformational development). The MHA program can become much more than a housing affordability program, but also an opportunity to promote economic development and jobs in urban villages that have traditionally lagged in economic growth.

ALUV proposes that MHA fees be waived (or substantially reduced) for certain new developments on NC zoned land within the Aurora Licton Urban Village.

Such a waiver or reduction in MHA fees would be a catalyst for revitalization of the Aurora Avenue corridor. Developers would take a much needed closer look at developing in the Aurora Licton Urban Village when compared to development opportunities in other urban villages which historically have had greater market demand. The MHA fees could also be adjusted (i.e. increased) over time if Aurora Licton Urban Village successfully experiences new development.

ALUV would appreciate your support of the above proposals. HALA presents an exceptional moment in time to align zoning in Aurora Licton Urban Village with successful approaches to planning and the mission of our organization.

As always, we thank you for your coordination with ALUV. Please contact us should you have questions.

Sincerely,



Ryan DiRaimo
Aurora Licton Urban Village Alliance (ALUV)

cc: Mercedes Elizalde, Legislative Assistant to Councilmember Deborah Juarez
Spencer Williams, Legislative Assistant to Councilmember Rob Johnson
Greenwood Community Council (Rob Fellows)
Haller Lake Community Club
Broadview/Bitter Lake Community Council
Licton Springs Community Council (Jan Brucker)