

Livable U District Coalition; livabledistrict.com; info@livabledistrict.com

Livable U Livable U District Coalition
5031 University Way NE, Seattle, WA 98105
C/o Seattle Displacement Coalition

January 19, 2017

Dear Council Members:

Livable U District, a grassroots ad hoc coalition of residents (all kinds), businesses, organizations and U District supporters ask you temporarily table the U District rezone - CB 118862, seek and obtain answers to critical questions about its impacts and effectiveness, and then amend it to increase protections for those who live, work and study in the University District now. It is worrisome and a breach of faith and social justice principles that those who compose today's U District Community have had so little influence on decisions made throughout this process.

The U District community realizes growth is happening, and helped develop the first urban center plan in good faith. This plan we reject because of its wholesale eradication of our neighborhood with its own energy, diversity and sense of place. We live in a neighborhood, not a corporate downtown. We want to have development at a human scale with building standards that respect neighbors. We need the infrastructure to support our current and growing population, and not leave it in the hands of private developers to decide what they'll provide for us.

Our position has been and remains *First Things First*. City government must first follow through on providing the infrastructure and amenities we need to make the U District safer and more livable today. Piling on more density will only exacerbate the many serious concerns such as aging utilities, traffic congestion, open space deficits, the lack of schools and recreational centers, and homelessness. CB 118862 is toothless in addressing these concerns. And any accompanying "Council Resolution" touting empty good intentions is meaningless, and frankly, insults our intelligence.

Delay a vote on CB 118862

Please take the time to look at it more carefully and get it right. We know the Mayor and well-funded special interests are pressuring you to make this happen quickly, but the stakes are massive for the U District community as well. Don't turn the U District into a sacrifice zone!

Before layering on more problems, we urge you to make sure that growth pays for growth with the creation of **impact fees**. The U District residents and businesses should not shoulder the burden of development; the City must impose Impact fees to pay for public open space, fire stations, schools and roads.

Before increasing heights again three and four fold, let's see if light rail can address near intolerable levels of congestion caused by past zoning changes and Seattle's present level of runaway growth. This upzone will precipitate more problems and deepen the ones we have. Further, this proposed ordinance lacks protections for small businesses. Since it wasn't part of the EIS, our small business community is taking it on themselves and need your support for adequate time to do an impact study so that the impacts to the small business community are well understood and solutions can be put into place in tandem or prior to an upzone.

Glass and steel towers are energy dinosaurs, relics of a fossil-fueled past. If Seattle is to reduce its carbon footprint, it's time to get real about it and no longer encourage the construction of high-rises, dinosaurs of the 20th century. Seattle's own [data](#)ⁱ shows that high-rise residential consumes 45% more energy than mid-rise and 65% more than low-rise.

The city must find solutions that do not weigh heavily on taxpayers

Livable U District's Position Statement (www.livableudistrict.com) lays out *reasonable expectations* for the City to meet *before* upzoning adding massive increased density that will precipitate more problems and critically deepen the ones we have. Why so soon? Why so high? Why so wide? Why so dense? The facts and the city's actions don't add up.

We respectfully ask you to delay further action on CB 118862 and consider sponsoring the following amendments and those of Seattle Displacement Coalition, incorporated here by reference. We also ask that you seek answers from city staff to questions we pose below.

Please join our community in opposing this massive upzone at this time. Please take a principled stand for the people who live, work and study here right now and for all Seattle Communities.

Sincerely,

Nancy Bocek and Shirley Nixon
For Livable U District Coalition

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ⁱ <http://greenspace.seattle.gov/2016/11/seattles-buildings-are-using-less-energy/#sthash.xJXT9iU0.qvMKSeWA.dpbs>

Proposed Amendments

1. The effective date of the rezone must await the adoption and effective dates of HALA rezones city-wide and the completion of any legal appeals of HALA MHA provisions. If a legal suit seeks to overturn any city-imposed HALA MHA-R or MHA-C fees or performance requirements, the U District rezone will not take effect until after that suit and all appeals are resolved. If a court strikes down the HALA MHA requirements, no portion of the ordinance will take effect.
2. When developers opt to pay the in-lieu of fee, all or most of these dollars must be spent to provide affordable housing in the U District.
3. Eliminate the OPCD Director's authority to privately issue "Type 1" decisions to waive or modify development and MHA requirements. Add language requiring the OPCD Director to bring a quarterly report to the Council showing waiver activity for each project, what waivers, and why. CB 118862 gives the "OPCD Director" far too much discretion to waive MHAfee or on-site requirements (as well as many other design, open space, parking, set-back, and other requirements) all without public notice or the right of the public to appeal the decision.
4. Delay the effective date of the ordinance to 30 days after the final City adoption of the Major Institution Overlay ordinance for the UW 2018 Campus Master Plan. In the alternative, Table further consideration of the rezone ordinance until 30 days after the final City adoption of the UW MIO ordinance. The proposed 2018 UW Campus Master Plan calls for an additional 3 Million gsf of new construction in its West Campus alone. The same streets and bridges that serve the CB 118862 upzone area will be serving this new UW campus expansion, and it is irresponsible to ignore and plan for the cumulative adverse impacts of the rezone and campus expansion.

Questions

- I. Requiring One for One replacement of affordable housing: Please explain how there could be legal problems with this when there are not the same legal issues accompanying the mandatory requirement? If there are: then kick it in as per the current IZ scheme only when developers develop above the base which in this case would be the current zoned capacity.
- II. UW's vision for the U District as a "high tech hub" was created in 2013, since then other areas of the city are growing as high tech hubs. Is this high tech hub still a necessity? How have things changed since 2013, and are off-campus high-rises still needed or desirable? **OPCD should update its analysis on the need for off-campus UW and tech-related high-rises.**
- III. South Lake Union has lower (overall) heights than proposed in CB **118862**, why are the proposed heights in the UD upzone so much higher than SLU?

- IV. How much new development in the U District will actually be providing housing (vs office/commercial)? What are OPCD's most recent projections on this? Has it done any? The 2013 – 2014 EIS data is out-dated, and does not reflect today's building boom condition.
- V. What is the number of projects being built and permitted "in the pipeline" under current zoning; what density; what scale? Our own research shows that there are more than enough new housing units under development now to meet and exceed the projected need. What is the current capacity in relationship to Mayor's growth targets?
- VI. What defines an "affordable unit", particularly an owned affordable unit such as a condominium?
- VII. How many residential units are required in a "mixed use" building before it is no longer considered to be an office or commercial building? Is it possible for a mainly commercial building to have a few large residential pent-houses and avoid the lower FAR limits of commercial buildings?
- VIII. What do city statistics show regarding the number of RPZ permits issued to residents of U District micro-housing or other multi-family buildings where no parking spaces are provided for residents?
- IX. What are the anticipated projected travel times and wait-times on streets and at intersections in the U District over the next ten years, following adoption of the UW 2018 Campus Master Plan MIO, if development proceeds as contemplated under CB 118862? If such studies have not yet taken place, how long will it take to complete them?
- X. What are the anticipated projected impacts on fire and emergency response time and ability in the U District and neighboring communities served by the U District Fire Station following adoption of the UW 2018 Campus Master Plan MIO, if development proceeds as contemplated under CP 118862? If such an analysis has not yet taken place, how long will it take to complete it?