

**CITY OF SEATTLE  
ANALYSIS AND DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR  
OF THE OFFICE OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Project Name: 2021 annual Comprehensive Plan amendments

Applicant Name: City of Seattle - Office of Planning and Community Development

Address of Proposal: City wide.

**SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION**

The Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) is forwarding to the City Council and Mayor a proposed amendment to the Comprehensive Plan as part of the annual process to consider and act on amendments to the Comprehensive Plan. The proposal is to amend two policies in the Comprehensive Plan to express the City's support for constructing lids over highways to reconnect neighborhoods, and create opportunities for affordable housing and open space.

SEPA - Environmental Determination - Chapter 25.05, Seattle Municipal Code.

**SEPA DETERMINATION:**       Exempt     DNS     MDNS     EIS  
 DNS with conditions  
 DNS involving non-exempt grading, or demolition, or another agency with jurisdiction.

**Background**

The annual Comprehensive Plan amendment process includes OPCD's review of proposed amendments that are submitted by the public and agencies. Following an opportunity for the public to submit amendment proposals, the City Council docket amendments that meet certain criteria for further consideration. After proposed amendments are docketed by the City Council for evaluation, OPCD conducts analysis and then makes a recommendation on whether to adopt the proposed amendments (some are not recommended). One proposed amendment is recommended for adoption by the City Council and is the subject of this determination.

**The Proposal**

The proposal consists of two text amendments to support use of lids and other connections over highways to support reconnection of neighborhoods, affordable housing, and open space. The proposed text amendments are below:

GS 3.13 Preserve, strengthen, and, as opportunities permit, reconnect Seattle's Street grid as a means to knit together neighborhoods and to connect areas of the city. Support efforts

to use lids and other connections over highways that separate neighborhoods, especially when such lids provide opportunities to reconnect neighborhoods and provide amenities such as affordable housing, open space, or pedestrian and bike connections to transit stations.

T 3.12 Look for opportunities to reestablish or improve connections across ((I-5)) highways by creating new crossings, enhancing streets where I-5 crosses overhead, or constructing lids, especially where these can also enhance opportunities for development or open space, affordable housing, and neighborhood cohesion.

### **Public Comment**

The proposed amendments require adoption into the Comprehensive Plan by the City Council. Public comment will be taken on the proposed amendments at a future City Council Public Hearing.

### **ANALYSIS - SEPA**

A threshold determination is required for any proposal that meets the definition of “action” and is not categorically exempt. The proposal is legislation that would amend the City’s Comprehensive Plan, which is defined as a non-project action. This action is not categorically exempt (SMC 25.05.800).

The disclosure of the potential impacts from this proposal was made in an environmental checklist submitted by OPCD dated July 14, 2022. The information in the checklist, the Director’s Report and Recommendation, other information provided by the applicant(s), and the experience of the lead agency with review of similar regulations and proposals, form the basis for this analysis and decision.

The discussion below evaluates adverse (e.g., negative) impacts to identified elements of the environment that may arise due to the proposal, including their relative magnitude and potential significance of such identified impacts based on the proposal described above. However, some positive impact implications are mentioned as well to adequately represent the probable outcomes of the proposed amendments.

### **ELEMENTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

Adoption of the recommended Comprehensive Plan amendments would result in no adverse short-term environmental impacts because the proposal is a non-project action. The discussion below evaluates the potential long-term adverse environmental impacts that may result from the proposal to support lids over highways to reconnect neighborhoods, provide opportunities for affordable housing, and create open space opportunities.

#### **Natural Environment**

#### **Earth, Air, Water, Plants & Animals, Environmental Health**

No significant impacts are identified for this nonproject action. The practical effect of these policy amendments is to offer support for future proposals to construct lids over highways. This action does not circumvent the normal project review process that such a project would require. While conditions in proximity to highways in Seattle vary, and include shorelines, water bodies, habitat for plants and animals found in highly urbanized environments, any proposal to construct a lid over a highway would require site specific environmental review and would consider impacts to the natural environment.

### **Built Environment**

#### **Land Use, Height/Bulk/Scale, Housing, Aesthetics, Noise, Light/Glare, Historic Preservation, Energy, Public View Protection, Shadows on Open Spaces**

No significant impacts have been identified. Should a proposal to construct a lid over a highway occur in the future depending on location and design it could have impacts on the built environment, but until a specific proposal is made it is not possible to know the potential impacts on the built environment. Any proposal to construct a lid over a highway will undergo its own project level environmental review which will identify any potential impacts on land use, height bulk and scale, housing, aesthetics, noise, light/glare, historic preservation, energy, public view protection, and shadows on open spaces.

#### **Transportation, Parking, Public Services/Facilities, Utilities**

This is a non-project action and no significant impacts were identified. It is possible that in the future a proposal to construct a lid will occur, and depending on size and development potential, it may have impacts on transportation, parking, public services/facilities, and utilities. Until a specific proposal is made, it is not possible to know if there will be impacts. Any proposal to construct a lid will be subject to its own project level environmental review.

### **DECISION - SEPA**

This decision was made after review by the responsible official on behalf of the lead agency of a completed environmental checklist and other information on file with the responsible department. This constitutes the Threshold Determination and form. The intent of this declaration is to satisfy the requirement of the State Environmental Policy Act (RCW 43.21.C), including the requirement to inform the public of agency decisions pursuant to SEPA.

- [X] Determination of Non-Significance. This proposal has been determined to not have a significant adverse impact upon the environment. An EIS is not required under RCW 43.21C.030(2)(C).
- [ ] Determination of Significance. This proposal has or may have a significant adverse impact upon the environment. An EIS is required under RCW 43.21C.030(2)(C).

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
To be determined  
Office of Planning and Community Development