

City Planning Update - Madison Valley Community

June 12, 2016

There are two major areas of planning work to focus on this summer and fall. The Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan and the HALA Mandatory Housing Affordability implementation are two huge city planning initiatives that folks want to pay attention to now.

Decisions made in the next 6 months will set the development process for the next 20 years in Seattle. These will affect very much how our city and our neighborhood develops in the next two decades. Residents might want to learn more about these and provide comment to council and in appropriate venues.

One comment that comes up is that Madison Valley is not an Urban Village. Or, it comes up as a question, "Is Madison Valley on the list for being an expansion Urban Village" (Well, we do have a bit of Madison-Miller Residential Urban Village inside our boundaries.) The short answer is we are not on the current Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map for Urban Village expansion.

But, that doesn't mean we can afford to ignore the current deliberations. The current HALA proposal will up zone a pretty large area of the community by 2017, no matter that we are not an Urban Village. And, the Comprehensive Plan 'map' is going to be finalized based on the outcome of the HALA Community Focus Groups this year.

And, the new Comprehensive Plan proposes to add growth in areas with very good transit service, defined as "Very good transit service means either a light rail station or a RapidRide bus service plus at least one other high-frequency bus route." MLK and Madison to LWB is designated on the land use GIS as "Frequent Transit Corridor" and we are getting BRT at some point.

That Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map will change every year, and I predict it will be 'our' turn at some point.

So even if we aren't an Urban Village, we are slated for up zones, and we could be designated an Urban Village at some time within the next 20 years. The question is: Are we going to take charge of that process so that we end up with a positive result?

There are challenges and opportunities here. It's a challenge because most of us just want to live in peace and here comes all these changes! I want to know how much more construction will it bring and how many more of my neighbors will be displaced. And, if we can go any higher and cover more of the lots safely on those steep slopes. But, we can't 'just say no'. So, the opportunity is that the process is open if folks choose to participate, and there are a lot of other people in Seattle who are trying to figure this out together. Also, the city will help us to navigate. City staff are doing a ton of outreach to community councils and other groups. We just need to ask.

Watch madisonvalley.org for more details, resources and upcoming events. It's really a good education to watch some of the city council committee meetings, and peruse the project websites. It's certainly a good idea to email council members or staff with specific questions, and to express your opinions.

If you get a chance to attend one of the HALA Community Focus Group Meetings, I hear it is worth observing because from the minutes it appears that everyone is in a learning process. I also want to meet the people from near here who are doing this work. There is also an opportunity for public comment, and written comment.

If folks in the area are interested, we can convene a group to walk through what we are finding out in more detail and start making decisions about specific actions we want to take.

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