



FLOATING HOMES ASSOCIATION

2329 Fairview Avenue East Seattle WA 98102 USA 206 325 1132 www.seattlefloatinghomes.org

December 17, 2008

To: Seattle Department of Planning and Development
Re: South Lake Union Rezone

The Floating Homes Association represents people living in houseboats on Lake Union immediately north of the South Lake Union area proposed for up-zone. We are opposed to Alternatives 1 and 2. In fact, we question the need for an up-zone at all. If a need can be shown, Alternative 3, proposed by the Lake Union Opportunity Alliance, might provide a more rational basis for establishing an effective urban environment.

City planning must provide for "livability" and other qualities, not just plan for zoning and density. Zoning and density should reflect and support the livability goals, not dictate the planning goals. Current state and city law both bear on these goals. They provide a context in which this particular up-zone proposal rings a very sour note.

For instance, the state's Growth Management Act designates South Lake Union an Urban Center and targets the area for 16,000 new jobs and 8,000 new households in the next 20 years (2004 to 2024).

The city has already enthusiastically embraced this goal. Its "Urban Center Neighborhood Plan," dated September 2007, states that, "Existing zoning allows more than sufficient reserve to accommodate Comprehensive Plan goals. There is zoning capacity for an additional 10,000 housing units and up to 27,000 additional jobs in over 8 million square feet of commercial space." (p11) http://www.seattle.gov/DPD/Planning/South_Lake_Union/.

Immediately to the south of this area, the city has just recently completed a dramatic up-zone of downtown. This increased capacity is now available to absorb growth pressure, reducing the need to rezone other areas to accommodate planning goals.

So we ask, in view of the fact that Seattle's current zoning already exceeds the state's mandate for an urban growth center, where is the need for an up-zone at all? We wonder particularly what legitimate purpose is driving proposals that are so far out of context that they would be comical, if their consequences weren't so profound.

Beyond the general question of why do the up-zone at all, we have several more particular comments --

- Understanding that it is normal practice, we still wonder how objective an Environmental Impact Statement funded by developers themselves can actually be. In spite of the controls apparently in place to discourage bias, we recommend that any EIS resulting from this process be evaluated very carefully.
- The ultimate plan for SLU must state specifically what will be done to ensure that promises are met regarding livability factors: schools, parks, promenades, noise, traffic, affordable housing, sunlight, etc. We were astonished to find that the current proposals had NO schools and NO low income housing - only "moderate income" housing.

Page 2
December 17, 2008
The Floating Homes Association
South Lake Union Rezone Comments

- The up-zone proposed in Alternatives 1 and 2 would severely impact the Space Needle, the world-wide symbol of Seattle. Views both to and from the Space Needle, especially from the neighborhoods on and around the waters of Lake Union, would vanish. The Needle attracts 1.3 million visitors a year and generates more than \$250 million dollars per year in economic impact to our Seattle metropolitan region. Zoning in SLU must preserve the prominence of our city's premier landmark.

To summarize, we question the need for this up-zone at all. If a need can be demonstrated, then Alternative 3 would provide a more rational basis. Alternatives 1 and 2 are simply unacceptable.

Respectfully submitted,

The Floating Homes Association

by, William A. Keasler
President