

City of Lake Forest Park
Community Development Department

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Planning Commissioners
Ashton Alvarez McCartney, Chair
Janne Kaji, Vice-Chair
Sam Castic
Melissa Cranmer
Meredith LaBonte
Madlyn Larson
Lois Lee
Cherie Finazzo
David Kleweno

Dear City Council and Mayor French,

Beginning in the summer of 2023, the Planning Commission was tasked with the periodic update of the City's Comprehensive Plan pursuant to the 1990 Washington State Growth Management Act. Since the last periodic update in 2015, new state laws as well as updated Countywide Planning Policies and growth targets provided new considerations for this update, particularly around issues of housing, equity and climate resilience. We are pleased to transmit our recommendations for City Council consideration.

This past year, the Commission has dedicated significant time and effort to studying these issues, critical evaluation of what they mean for Lake Forest Park, extensive open discussion and multiple avenues of community outreach. The Planning Commission held twenty-four Comprehensive Plan meetings/special meetings, executed a public survey in March, hosted an Open House in July and held a Public Hearing in August. Each of these community touchpoints were carefully constructed in various mediums to target input from all our valued community members. We are proud of the volume and quality of responses received and have incorporated feedback into our discussions and ultimately into our recommendations.

The Commission and community generally agree that the existing Comprehensive Plan remains a valuable and well-crafted reflection of our vision for the city but lacks consistency with recent State legislative changes as well as updates to King County's Countywide Planning Policies. These issues revolved mainly around housing (especially "middle housing"), climate resilience, and the explicit consideration of equity across all policy areas. These became the major lenses with which the Planning Commission reviewed each section of the plan.

Our recommendations reflect broad consensus within the commission, except as it pertains to specific language regarding equity. The following section describes the major themes shaping our draft recommendations to the Council.

Key themes:

- In considering the new state requirements pertaining to middle housing, the Commission and community are cautiously excited by the potential opportunities that the proposed policies and subsequent code changes pertaining to housing type, density and scale may offer for the city going forward. In particular, we see the potential for meeting the needs of renters, first-time home buyers, aging adults, and other key demographics that are not currently well-served by the city's existing housing stock. At the same time, it is crystal clear from the community that there is no support for compromising environmental protection as a result of increasing housing

density. This strong sentiment will be central to the Commission's work on middle housing going forward.

- There is great interest within the Commission and in the community for boosting economic development in the city. We would like to see more opportunities for commercial development along our two main arterials – SR 522 and Ballinger Way – to promote opportunities for new local businesses. Regarding SR 522 and the Southern Gateway, we are keen to understand why so little commercial or higher-density residential development has taken place in the decade since the Southern Gateway plan was finalized, while neighboring jurisdictions seem to be attracting significant interest. Unlocking that potential would be a tremendous lift for the city and its tax base.
- Another issue that surfaced throughout this process was the desire to strengthen the language around SR522, and the need to mitigate the direct negative effects of this high-speed, vehicular traffic corridor on the Town Center, the Southern Gateway community, our public gathering spaces, and safe pedestrian/bike access in this area.
- The Commission appreciates the in-depth work of the Climate Action Committee and their thoughtful consideration of climate resilience and the city's carbon footprint. We look forward to our joint efforts going forward with the Climate Action Committee and understanding what the feasible goals are we can collectively pursue.
- Finally, regarding consideration of equity, many of the Commissioners agreed with the State's recognition as reflected in HB1220 of the need to address inherent disparities in outcomes for different racial groups as a result of historic policies and practices. Some felt the language of the Comprehensive Plan should specifically recognize these disparities, including distinguishing between principles of equality and equity. However, other voices among the Commission and community expressed concern that new language pertaining specifically to Black, Indigenous, or other people of color was not truly inclusive of *all* members of Lake Forest Park residents and that language specifying different racial groups shows preference, thus undermining the true spirit of the words, equality and equity. We encourage the Council to thoughtfully consider this language woven throughout the Comprehensive Plan with care as you shape our recommendations into a final product for adoption.

We are honored to have had the opportunity to engage with our community in constructing these recommendations and look forward to further engagement with Council as we shift our attention to the details of middle housing, climate resilience, and updates to the municipal code.

Ashton Alvarez McCartney – Chair

Janne Kaje – Vice Chair

Sam Castic – Commissioner

Melissa Cranmer – Commissioner

Meredith LaBonte – Commissioner

Madlyn Larson – Commissioner

Lois Lee – Commissioner

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David Kleweno – Commissioner