

City of Seattle
2016 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT APPLICATION

Use this application to propose a change in the policies, future land use map, appendices, or other components of the adopted City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan. Applications are due to the Seattle City Council no later than **5:00 p.m. on May 15th** for consideration in the next annual review cycle. Any proposals received after May 15th will be considered in the review process for the following year.

(Please Print or Type)

Applicant: Chris Leman

Date: May 15, 2016

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City: Seattle *State:* WA *Zip:* 98102-3310 *Phone:* (206) 322-5463

Name of general area, location, or site that would be affected by this proposed change in text (attach additional sheets if necessary): Urban centers except downtown

If the application is approved for further consideration by the City Council, the applicant may be required to submit a State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) checklist.

Acceptance of this application does not guarantee final approval.

Applicant Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Leman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Date: May 15, 2016

REQUIRED QUESTIONNAIRE: Comprehensive Plan Amendment Application

Please answer the following questions in text and attach them to the application. Supporting maps or graphics may be included. Please answer all questions separately and reference the question number in your answer. The Council will consider an application incomplete unless all the questions are answered. When proposing an amendment, you must show that a change to the Comprehensive Plan is required.

1. *Provide a detailed description of the proposed amendment and a clear statement of what the proposed amendment is intended to accomplish. Include the name(s) of the Comprehensive Plan Element(s) (Land Use, Transportation, etc.) you propose to amend.*

For urban centers, adopt language identical to Policy DT-TP8, which currently applies only to the downtown urban center: “Discourage pedestrian grade separations, whether by skybridge, aerial tram, or tunnel, to maintain an active pedestrian environment at street level.” To do so, a new policy would be adopted which would be located just after Transportation Policy 36. The new policy could also be repeated in the sections regarding specific urban centers, which in addition to downtown are First Hill/Capitol Hill, Uptown Queen Anne, University Community, Northgate, South Lake Union.

Explanation. The amendment would apply to all urban centers a policy that currently applies only to the downtown urban center, to discourage skybridges, aerial trams, and tunnels in order to maintain an active pedestrian environment at street level.

2. *Describe how the issue is currently addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. If the issue is not adequately addressed, describe the need for it.*

The Seattle Municipal Code [SMC 15.64] contains strong language discouraging skybridges throughout Seattle and requiring the City Council to reject skybridge petitions “unless it finds that the skybridge is in the public interest and no reasonable alternative to the skybridge exists.” Regarding skybridges, the Comprehensive Plan lags behind the Code, in that it discourages skybridges only in the downtown urban center (Policy DT-TP8) and in the Eastlake residential urban village (Policy EL-P8), as follows:

Policy DT-TP8, which applies to the downtown urban center: “Discourage pedestrian grade separations, whether by skybridge, aerial tram, or tunnel, to maintain an active pedestrian environment at street level.”

Policy EL-P8, which applies to the Eastlake residential urban village: “Pedestrian connections between buildings should occur at the street level. Avoid skybridges on public property and rights-of-way in Eastlake; when connections across such public land and rights-of-way are necessary, pursue below grade connections to buildings that do not detract from activity at the street level, the streetscape and public views.”

The Municipal Code lags behind the Comprehensive Plan in failing to invoke pedestrian conditions as a basis for discouraging aerial trams or tunnels downtown, but both fail to address aerial trams or tunnels in urban centers. As quoted above, Comprehensive Plan Policy DT-TP8, which applies only to the downtown urban center, states: “Discourage pedestrian grade separations, whether by skybridge, aerial tram, or tunnel, to maintain an active pedestrian environment at street level.” .

Given these various omissions by both the Municipal Code and the Comprehensive Plan, it is important for the Comprehensive Plan to be updated to apply to urban centers the same policy that it already applies to downtown: “Discourage pedestrian grade separations, whether by skybridge, aerial tram, or tunnel, to maintain an active pedestrian environment at street level.”

3. *Describe why the proposed change meets the criteria adopted in Resolution 30662 for considering an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. (The criteria are listed at the end of this application form.) Is a Comprehensive Plan amendment the best means for meeting the identified public need? What other options are there for meeting the identified public need?*

For the Comprehensive Plan’s many goals and policies to have meaning when they state a priority for maintaining an active pedestrian environment at street level in all urban centers (not just in downtown), similar language to DT-T8 about skybridges, aerial trams, and tunnels should apply to all urban centers, not just to downtown. The Comprehensive Plan’s current failure to address skybridges, aerial trams, and tunnels in urban centers is a serious omission and there is no reasonable alternative to correcting it by adopting the proposed amendment.

4. *What do you anticipate will be the impacts caused by the change in text, including the geographic area affected and the issues presented? Why will the proposed change result in a net benefit to the community?*

If adopted, the new policy will benefit the pedestrian environment at street level by making it less likely in urban centers that skybridges, aerial tramways, and tunnels will be constructed across the street right of way. Scarce public and private resources will go into improving pedestrian conditions for all, not just for those few with access to the skybridges, aerial tramways, and tunnels. The result will serve equity as well as the general pedestrian experience. The Comprehensive Plan’s many references to promoting pedestrian convenience and safety will thus be given greater meaning, rather than appearing to be empty rhetoric.

5. *How would the proposed change comply with the community vision statements, goals, objectives, and policies of the Comprehensive Plan? Please include any data, research, or reasoning that supports the proposed amendments.*

Both generally and as they apply to specific urban centers, the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan contain hundreds of affirmations of the priority of the street-level pedestrian environment. The amendment would make the Comprehensive Plan’s policies more consistent with its rhetoric. It would also bring to the Comprehensive Plan

the weight of enlightened urban design principles, which strongly discourage skybridges, aerial trams, and tunnels across street rights of way when street-level pedestrian improvements are feasible. The amendment would thus place a higher priority than the Comprehensive Plan yet does on maintaining a vital street-level pedestrian environment in all urban centers, not just downtown.

6. *Is there public support for this proposed text amendments (i.e. have you conducted community meetings, etc.)? Note: The City will provide a public participation process, public notice, and environmental review for all applications.*

The absence of a policy discouraging skybridges, aerial trams, and tunnels in the urban centers other than downtown probably represents an oversight rather than deliberate policy, as that exact same language applying to the downtown urban center was adopted without controversy. Amending the Comprehensive Plan to adopt a policy discouraging skybridges in all urban centers will have strong support, and, in consultation with the urban center neighborhood plan stewards and stakeholders, should be considered and adopted.