

City of Seattle
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)

Date: May 15, 2014

Applicant: Chris Leman

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Contact person (if not the applicant): not applicable

Mailing Address:

Email:

City: State: Zip: Phone:

Name of general area, location, or site that would be affected by this proposed change in text (attach additional sheets if necessary): Seattle as a whole

Applicant Signature: Chris Leman

Date: May 15, 2014

Attachment A

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.

The amendment proposal would add a new policy to the Transportation Element as follows “In order to maintain an active pedestrian environment at street level, discourage new pedestrian skybridge crossings of City streets unless there is language in an adopted neighborhood plan to the contrary.”

Background: In the Neighborhood Planning element of the Comprehensive Plan, the Downtown Neighborhood Plan language has the following policy: “DT-TP8 -- Discourage pedestrian grade separations, whether by skybridge, aerial tram, or tunnel, to maintain an active pedestrian environment at street level.” However, the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan is silent on the subject. This proposed amendment would correct that omission. In recognition that aerial trams and tunnels present different policy issues than skybridges, they are not mentioned in this amendment proposal, which addresses only skybridges.

In the DPD Director’s report rejecting an early and different 2012 Comprehensive Plan amendment, it is stated: “With adoption of Ordinance 123959 in July of 2012, City Council clarified the process and criteria for considering the location of skybridges in the city.” However, the referenced ordinance number has nothing to do with skybridges. In December 2010, the City Council passed ordinance 123485 which did have to do with skybridges, but that ordinance unfortunately did not improve the process or criteria for considering the location of skybridges, and without guidance from the Comprehensive Plan, that process continues to suffer from a lack of substantive concern for the pedestrian and streetscape environment.

Chapter 15.64 of the Municipal Code addressing the process for permitting skybridges, lists elements the Director of Transportation should consider in formulating a recommendation to Council about a particular skybridge. Some of those elements recognize the potential detrimental effects a skybridge could have on the pedestrian environment, such as: “Interruption or interference with existing streetscape or other street amenities; Impacts due to reduction of natural light; Reduction of and effect on pedestrian activity at street level; Number of pedestrians projected to use the skybridge; (and) Effect on commerce and enjoyment of

Attachment A

neighboring land uses.” Unfortunately, SDOT and a succession of Mayors have failed to respect these concerns, recommending to the City Council skybridge proposals despite their seriously negative impacts on the pedestrian and streetscape environment.

Despite longstanding language in the Seattle Municipal Code 15.64.010 that “It is the intent of the City Council to limit the proliferation and adverse effects of skybridges,” the City Council freely approves new skybridge permit applications and freely renews the permits for existing ones. Although the City Council is not allowed by SMC 15.64 to permit a skybridge unless it has made a finding that the skybridge is in the public interest, the City Council routinely acts without even the pretense of such a claim, or when the Council does assert such a finding, it does so without explaining its basis for that finding.

The City Council has also not established a public process for notice or comment on skybridge applications, and it has exempted skybridges from SEPA review and from appeal to the Hearing Examiner. Indeed, in SMC 15.64, the City Council has given skybridge permit applications the unique status of being guaranteed consideration by the City Council, whatever is the finding by SDOT and the Mayor. Every other application for a street use permit is subject to rejection by SDOT or the mayor without a guaranteed right for the applicant to bring the permit directly to the City Council.

Clearly, the legislative and executive branches are sorely in need of guidance from the Comprehensive Plan for sound, substantive policy regarding skybridges.

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

As explained above, the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan is entirely silent about skybridges. It is important for skybridges to be addressed in the Transportation Element, not just in the Neighborhood Planning Element.

3. Describe why the proposed change meets the criteria adopted in Resolution 31402 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?

This proposal is new and different from the one proposed in 2012, which the City Council did not include in the docket for study in that cycle. And it is important for it to be studied. It is a serious omission that the Transportation Element does not address skybridges. The public interest in protecting and enhancing the pedestrian and streetscape environment overwhelmingly calls for this Comprehensive Plan 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?

Adoption of this Comprehensive Plan amendment will cause SDOT, the Mayor, and City Council to give more careful consideration of the impacts on the pedestrian environment and the streetscape from skybridge applications that they receive for review.

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.

The Comprehensive Plan's goals and objectives for protecting and enhancing the pedestrian environment and streetscape cannot be faulted. However, there is currently a glaring gap in the Comprehensive Plan's policies, in that skybridges are not yet addressed.

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.

There is significant public support for this Comprehensive Plan amendment proposal.