

Northgate Rezone EIS Scoping Meeting5-3-2007

NORTHGATE REVITALIZATION  
REZONING PROJECT  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT  
SCOPING MEETING

May 3, 2007

5:30 p.m.

North Seattle Community College  
College Center Building  
9600 College Way North  
Seattle, Washington

JACQUELINE L. BELLOWS  
CCR 2297

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1 APPEARANCES

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Court Reporter:

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STATEMENT OF TOM MORGAN

I've got some questions about this.

Northgate Way right here carries a tremendous amount of traffic. Northgate Way right now is overburdened with traffic, especially around Christmas time or whenever they have a sale. It's to be avoided at any cost.

Fifth Avenue Northeast, north and south, is quite overburdened with people trying to escape from the mall. Right now Eighth Avenue Northeast, which goes up here to the post office, a third of a block, a third of the area, is commercial. But people keep continuing right on up to 115th. But with quite a large volume of traffic, going from Fifth Avenue Northeast across 115th to Pinehurst Way, is a very, very busy street. Even though it's a residential street, it's very busy. Now with this area, Pinehurst Way, I think it's just going to draw more traffic.

Parking on Eighth Northeast is nonexistent. Commuters, all the businesses, employees down on the corner of Northgate Way and Eighth Northeast where the post office is, et cetera, are using that for just regular parking or commuter parking and stuff like that.

I would like to see a little more further up that way from Eighth Northeast to 115 Northeast included in the

1 proposal, inasmuch as right now a third of the block is  
2 already blue zone but the other just really a  
3 deteriorating rental house market that's really going  
4 downhill fast. There's just not enough money getting in  
5 there for rents. The lot sizes are huge compared to the  
6 existing areas around to the north.

7 The zoning is L7200 at the house I own. And just  
8 right north there's little small houses, smaller lots.  
9 And I'd like to see that included in the process. Thank  
10 you.

11 My name is Tom Morgan. The address of my property  
12 is 11404 Eighth Northeast, 11403 Ninth Northeast. My  
13 address where I live out in the rural, it's 22726 133rd  
14 Southeast, Snohomish 98296.

15  
16 STATEMENT OF TRACY WHELEN

17 As a pedestrian who commonly walks along 115th in  
18 the Eighth area, especially 115th is very busy. There are  
19 no sidewalks in that area. Although there is a fairly  
20 good-sized shoulder area that I can walk on. That is one  
21 area that, if it got much busier, would be dangerous to be  
22 a pedestrian on. But the only other option is Northgate  
23 Way which is also busy but has sidewalks.

24 Tracy Whelen, 905 Ne 113th Street, Seattle 91125.  
25

1 STATEMENT OF VICTOR CHUNG

2 My name is Victor Chung. My property's 11348 Fifth  
3 Avenue Northeast.

4 As of right now Fifth Avenue at certain times of  
5 the day, like 5:00 o'clock, it's really hard for me get in  
6 and out of my property. Usually, Fifth Avenue is one  
7 lane; but people make it two lanes. So if I want to turn  
8 right to my property, sometimes a car comes along inside,  
9 going really fast. It makes me really nervous, trying to  
10 get to my property. So I was wondering if that's going to  
11 be a big issue in this rezone.

12 MR. WEINMAN: We're certainly going to consider  
13 that comment and look hard at traffic and the circulation.  
14 That would be something, yes, we will evaluate.

15 MR. CHUNG: Thank you.

16  
17 STATEMENT OF GREG HUNTER

18 My name is Greg Hunter. I own the property along  
19 Eighth Avenue right next to the Urban Village. I think a  
20 big selling point for this Northgate area, 'cause a lot of  
21 the people there that are renters -- all of the new  
22 housing and apartments and rental units that are going up  
23 there, a lot of these people have cars, 'a lot of them  
24 don't. I think the big selling point in that area is the  
25 bus system, the Park & Rides.

1 I think it's, personally, I think it's a mistake to  
2 trade the Park & Ride to the north of Target to the Parks  
3 Department when the Park & Ride down by the mall is --  
4 there's no parking left. If you don't get there on time  
5 in the morning, you might as well as go home or drive down  
6 the freeway downtown because there's no parking there.

7 I'm in favor of the Parks Department. I like the  
8 Parks Department. I don't see why they need to make a  
9 park out of something as useful as a Park & Ride that's  
10 already there. Why dig up the asphalt that's a Park &  
11 Ride just to plant grass when we've got plenty of parks?  
12 I think if they need a park, that it would be nice for the  
13 Parks Department to trade some property and leave that  
14 Park & Ride north of the Target a Park & Ride. I think  
15 that's crucial to the area if you're going to start  
16 pumping the amount of people that live there.

17 MS. CHEN: Just to address that concern, there  
18 will be no net loss in parking space due to that Park &  
19 Ride being turned into a park. Actually, what's happening  
20 is King County Metro will be consolidating all of its  
21 transit operations in that bus tunnel -- I'm sorry -- the  
22 bus center. And the parking will be at the new Simon  
23 Garage upper levels. As well as the Lorig Garage will  
24 have space for Park & Ride users.

25 MR. HUNTER: What happens when the population in

1 the Northgate urban area doubles? You consolidate to  
2 equal what you've got now. The population doubles, and  
3 you're encouraging bussing. Then you're not going to have  
4 enough because you've given up one of your sites.

5 MR. WEINMAN: This process, the decision on the  
6 use of that site as a park is not part of this process.  
7 The Parks Department will be independently coming up with  
8 a proposal and environmental review on that. But to  
9 anticipate that that site could be a park, we are going to  
10 consider possible impacts of rezoning on the site. But  
11 there will be another opportunity to talk to them about  
12 their plan.

13 MR. HUNTER: Is a property trade something that's  
14 possible? So the Parks Department can end up with a park  
15 somewhere and the commuters can still end up with parking?

16 MR. WEINMAN: I would think so. My understanding  
17 is that the Parks Department just acquired that site from  
18 King County. I don't know --

19 MS. CHEN: That's correct. The Seattle Parks  
20 Department has purchased that property from Metro because  
21 it's been a longstanding goal of the Northgate community  
22 to have a neighborhood park. And it's also been a goal of  
23 Metro King County to consolidate all of its transit  
24 operations in Northgate at that bus center.

25 And the idea of accommodating more growth is

1 important in Northgate, especially because Sound Transit's  
2 Link Light Rail station is slated to be in Northgate by  
3 2018. And Metro will continue to increase its regional  
4 bus operations as Northgate is a hub for that. So the  
5 infrastructure for transit, you know, through the Sound  
6 Transit Link Light Rail station and Metro continuing to  
7 grow its bus operations will hopefully pick up a lot of  
8 that extra need for transportation.

9 MR. MORGAN: I'm Tom Morgan. To further support  
10 my Eighth Avenue Northeast being included, Eighth  
11 Northeast from Northgate Way to 115th Northeast is a wide  
12 commercial street with 8 inches of concrete paving with  
13 sidewalks. We had sidewalks on Eighth Avenue Northeast  
14 before they had sidewalks on Northgate Way. This is going  
15 back to the 60's. It's ready made to be included in this.

16 MR. WEINMAN: Two points in response, the  
17 transportation analysis in the EIS covers an area that is  
18 broader than rezoning. So we will be looking at all of  
19 Northgate in terms of traffic analysis. The other point  
20 is that the Northgate Stakeholders Group provided an  
21 opinion to city council about this proposal and expressed  
22 support for it and support for looking at this particular  
23 study area but also suggested that the city might want to  
24 consider looking at other areas for potential rezoning in  
25 the future.

1           So we're dealing with this study area at this  
2           time, but there is the possibility that future projects  
3           will include other study areas. Other comments?

4           MR. CHUNG: I have a concern about my property  
5           which is: If there's rezoning, is there going to be a  
6           moratorium on future residential expansion?

7           MR. WEINMAN: No, not as far as anybody knows.

8  
9                           STATEMENT OF SY IFFERT

10           Just for the record, my name is Sy Iffert. I've got  
11           property that's in the Northgate area. I'm very much in  
12           favor of increasing elevations generally to the next step  
13           of height of what is presently so. For instance, if it's  
14           zoned NC340, I would be much in favor of NC365. Well, NC2  
15           also would increase elevation to 65 feet.

16           MR. WEINMAN: Any other comments?

17  
18                           STATEMENT OF JOHN BUSH

19           My name is John Bush. I own 11301 Fifth Avenue  
20           Northeast. And I'm all in favor of increasing the zoning.  
21           Extending the height would allow us to derive more parking  
22           in larger structures. Also that will help some other  
23           issues that people are mentioning. I'm all in favor.

24           MR. WEINMAN: Thank you.

25           MR. IFFERT: Also you reminded me, John, of the

1 parking. If we have the extra elevation, then we can park  
2 below-grade. Parking below grade is horrendously  
3 expensive. You just can't do it unless you can profile  
4 your building to greater height. So the benefit to the  
5 community is that, with the height, we get cars off the  
6 street and off the residential streets.

7  
8 STATEMENT OF SALLY DOW

9 I have a question. Maybe I misunderstood, but I  
10 thought I heard you say that the study area does not  
11 include any single-family zoning. Did I misunderstand?

12 MR. WEINMAN: There is some low rise. I think  
13 that's correct: There's no single-family dwellings.

14 MS. DOW: It does affect single-family dwellings.  
15 But you're proposing not to change that?

16 MR. WEINMAN: Correct. Single-family, existing  
17 single-family dwellings will not have a zone change.

18 MS. DOW: But they are included in the perimeter?

19 MR. WEINMAN: They are in the area that could be  
20 affected by this. That's an issue that the EIS will  
21 address. That is of significant concern in regard to the  
22 upzoning.

23 MR. HUNTER: Greg Hunter, again. My last comment  
24 was regarding the transportation issue. But as far as  
25 zoning inside the blue area, I am also in favor of

1 upzoning, increasing the heights to get it more proper  
2 building in that area and make it more of a viable center  
3 like Ballard is.

4 MR. WEINMAN: Does anyone else want to make a  
5 comment tonight?

6 One more reminder, you can mail, e-mail, comments  
7 to the City by May 17th. If you'd prefer to give us a  
8 written comment tonight, there are comment forms on the  
9 table.

10 Thank you for coming and look forward to your  
11 continued involvement in Northgate.

12 MR. HUNTER: Maybe one more comment on the record.  
13 I was part of the Citizen Advisory Council for the  
14 Northgate Project when they were going to build the south  
15 parking lot. And a comment I had at the time was I  
16 thought it would be a good idea to have a sky bridge  
17 across Northgate Way. And I was told at the time that sky  
18 bridges are illegal in Seattle and can't happen.

19 But they also said that traffic going from the  
20 Northgate proper parking lot to the Target operation,  
21 nobody would run across that street because there's  
22 crosswalks. The guy that said that, I asked where he  
23 lived; and he said Bellevue. And I assured him that  
24 people really would run across the street, which I see  
25 every day.

1           If sky bridges are illegal in Seattle, I'd like to  
2 know why there are 7 or 8 or 10 or 12 already scattered  
3 around town, some of them pretty new. If they are legal,  
4 why not put something across Northgate Way? Particularly  
5 if we're trying boost the height of the buildings in that  
6 area, it would be nice if the pedestrians could go above  
7 grade instead of having five lanes of already jammed up  
8 traffic having to wait for somebody that's dodging across  
9 the street because they're not using the crosswalks that  
10 they're supposed to.

11           MS. DOW: That leads to a question I have. I  
12 agree with him. That is my neighborhood. I think I said  
13 here that you had mentioned that -- if I'm reading  
14 correctly. I might not be -- there are multiple traffic  
15 light options across the street there. But the sky bridge  
16 would make way more sense.

17           Sally Dow. D-O-W, last name. 905 Northeast 113th  
18 Street.

19           MS. CHEN: Actually, we have Tony Mazzella from  
20 SDOT here tonight.

21           MR. MAZZELLA: The sky bridge across Northgate Way  
22 was recommended in the original 1993 Northgate  
23 Comprehensive Plan. We don't include it in the current  
24 transportation plan for a number of reasons. One is that  
25 the city council in general does not look favorably on sky

1 bridges. There are view blockage issues.

2 And also, if you think about it, you're trying to  
3 create an environment in which pedestrians, bicyclists,  
4 motor vehicles, and transit exist kind of in some degree  
5 of harmony. You really wouldn't want to move the  
6 pedestrians to another grade level because then what's  
7 going happen is you're going to give the whole street over  
8 to the vehicles. Clearly, that's not the city's vision of  
9 how an urban center like Northgate should operate.

10 The third thing is that a sky bridge is hellishly  
11 expensive. And when you're talking about Northgate Way,  
12 at the corner of Fifth and Northgate Way, you're talking  
13 about a very constrained right of way. You have to  
14 accommodate handicapped access. And the cost of that  
15 project would dwarf many of the other projects in the  
16 Northgate transportation plan.

17 For all those reasons, we decided -- we looked at  
18 the project, because this had been mentioned in 1993. And  
19 we came to the conclusion that it was neither feasible nor  
20 desirable.

21 Now, what we're going to do is, by improving the  
22 intersection of Fifth and Northgate Way, by making it more  
23 pedestrian friendly -- and if you've noticed, in that  
24 median between Third and Fifth on Northgate Way, we've  
25 installed some barrier fences and some new signage to try

1 to get people to cross at signalized intersections.

2 But I think the real improvements are going to  
3 come with the Fifth Avenue-Northgate Way project gets  
4 built and the Third Avenue-Northgate Way projects get  
5 built so that pedestrians will have a desire to go to the  
6 signalized intersections and make a safe crossing there  
7 rather than running across the street which some of them  
8 do now, fewer than had been doing a year ago because that  
9 barrier can be jumped over. But at least it's a reminder:  
10 Maybe you should go to a signal and cross there.

11 So that's the sky bridge issue from  
12 our perspective. I mean comments can come, and they'll be  
13 looked at and responded to. But we looked at that pretty  
14 thoroughly.

15 MR. HUNTER: Yeah. As you build a better barrier  
16 for the people to cross the street, isn't that going to  
17 back traffic up worse? You know, as you build more  
18 accessible place for pedestrians to cross the street, the  
19 light will have to be the walk light longer, which  
20 consequently will back traffic up further. Northgate  
21 Way's overburdened right now at Fifth Northeast, the whole  
22 area.

23 MR. MAZZELLA: Well, I mean the key is to balance  
24 the needs of the pedestrian and the motor vehicle. So if  
25 you're looking at Fifth Avenue and Northgate Way, we have

1 a project in the transportation plan for a second  
2 left-turn lane. So now if you're traveling westbound on  
3 Northgate way and you want to make a left-hand turn to go  
4 southbound on Fifth Avenue, there's one left-turn lane.

5 So what we're recommending -- and we're really  
6 working hard to get the money to do this -- is to widen  
7 that intersection so you have two left-hand turn lanes so  
8 you can get more traffic through in essentially the same  
9 amount of time as it takes one lane to go through today.  
10 So that shouldn't really interfere too badly or at all  
11 with the pedestrian crossing time. And there are some  
12 nice renderings that show how we can use those, that  
13 intersection for some art features and some crosswalks.

14 So again, the whole game is to try to balance  
15 everyone's needs as well as we can so the intersection  
16 works for vehicles and transit vehicles in particular,  
17 because we have lot of busses coming in and out of the  
18 transit center and they get clogged up at that  
19 intersection just like everybody else, and also to make it  
20 a walkable community.

21 You have a lot of senior citizens living north of  
22 Northgate Way. They want to get to the mall or they want  
23 to get to the library. They want to take a class at the  
24 community center. So you've got to give them some walking  
25 time, too, and not just be pumping vehicles through that

1 intersection.

2 So again the game is to balance. Nobody wins the  
3 whole ballgame. Everybody plays a few innings.

4 MR. HUNTER: One more comment on bridges, I think  
5 I can see where there will never be a sky bridge at  
6 Northgate. There may not be enough pedestrians. But a  
7 lot of people think the City of Seattle, your department  
8 thinks that sky bridges have no place because it takes  
9 people off the surface, puts them up.

10 Las Vegas does very, very well with sky bridges.  
11 They get thousands and thousands and thousands of bodies  
12 and put them up out of the way.

13 MR. MAZZELLA: If you read our comprehensive plan,  
14 it's clear to me we don't want to be Las Vegas. They have  
15 triple turn lanes. But where are they going? Are they  
16 doing anything at the street level? No, they're going  
17 from one casino to another. So essentially who cares if  
18 they're at street level or they're above the street level  
19 because they don't want to access like boutiques at the  
20 street level. They want to get to the Bellagio.

21 MR. HUNTER: They're spending a lot more money  
22 than you're ever going to see in Northgate, Tony.

23 MR. MAZZELLA: You want Las Vegas West?

24 MR. HUNTER: I'm just thinking that people who  
25 have stores want people to come spend money. That's all.

1           MR. WEINMAN: Any other comments? If not, we'll  
2 close the comment period.

3           MS. CHEN: I was also just going to say that staff  
4 from the city and the consulting team will be around  
5 another 15 minutes if you want to just come talk to us and  
6 ask questions and get more information.

7           MR. WEINMAN: Thank you for coming.

8                           [Public comments concluded at 6:29 p.m.]

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