



HOUSING  
DEVELOPMENT  
consortium

May 24, 2017

King County Council  
Budget and Fiscal Management Committee  
516 Third Ave, Room 1200  
Seattle, WA 98104

**RE: Affordable Housing Requirements in Sale of Convention Place Station to the Washington State Convention Center**

Dear Committee members,

Two weeks ago, we stood before the Committee and asked you to consider requiring more affordable housing investment as a condition of the sale of Convention Place Station to WSCC. We renew that request today. As we reminded you in your previous meeting, King County is experiencing a housing crisis—as more people move to the Puget Sound area, low and middle-income earners are being priced out of the many opportunities our region provides. By creating hundreds of low-wage jobs without providing homes for workers, the WSCC would exacerbate this crisis. **We believe that the current provision for affordable housing is not enough, and we ask the Committee to consider higher affordable housing requirements in this land sale.**

HDC is a nonprofit membership organization which represents 149 private businesses, nonprofit organizations and public partners who are working to develop affordable housing in King County and who are dedicated to the vision that all people should live in a safe, healthy and affordable home in a community of opportunity. We appreciate the Council's commitment to this vision through its approval of \$87 million for affordable housing near transit centers, renewal of the MIDD sales tax, and calling for a regional affordable housing strategy. As the Committee considers our request for a more robust affordable housing requirement, we ask that you consider the following factors.

**Current affordable housing requirements do not sufficiently mitigate the housing need**

The \$5 million for affordable housing included in this land sale does not go nearly far enough in addressing the housing need which the WSCC expansion will create. WSCC estimates that the project will create over 2,300 direct jobs in the middle of downtown Seattle. We project that this would create a need for approximately 1,700 new homes, over 500 of which would be for workers making \$31,000/year or less (50 percent of AMI). The money in the land sale would build only 40-60 affordable homes, and because the land sale language does not specify what constitutes affordable housing, even these homes may be unaffordable for many of the convention center's new employees. Adding hundreds of additional low-wage jobs without a sufficient housing offset will only

*Written comments handed to the clerk at the BFM meeting on 5/24/17. Re: 2017-0193 & 2017-0194*

make it harder for people of low and middle income to live and work in Seattle. Creating more low-income jobs without sufficiently addressing the additional need for housing affordable to these incomes will increase the demands on our current affordable housing and transportation resources. By requiring additional funding for affordable housing, the Committee can ensure WSCC better mitigates the housing need that it is creating.

***Requiring additional affordable housing is in line with GTC goals***

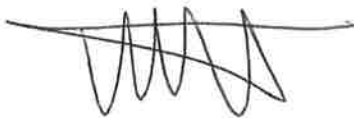
The impacts of the WSCC expansion project will not be confined to Seattle. Unable to afford homes in the city, workers will be forced to find housing in the outskirts of the county and endure lengthy commutes into Seattle. Commuters drive more and spend less time with their families and near their homes, resulting in more traffic, a larger carbon footprint, and less vibrant communities.

As fellow signers of the Growing Transit Communities Compact, we appreciate the County's commitment to our shared goals of promoting sustainable development and creating highly accessible communities through 1) Directing regional growth to areas near high-capacity transit; 2) Providing homes near transit hubs which are affordable for people at a full range of income levels, and 3) Increasing access to employment and commercial opportunities for all current and future community members. By creating affordable homes near the Convention Center site or around other high-capacity transit hubs, we have an opportunity to fulfill all three goals outlined in the GTC plan.

WSCC's physical and employment expansion will undoubtedly increase demand for housing and hotels near light rail stations throughout the region, above and beyond what the region can address with its current resources. Asking WSCC to contribute additional funding to affordable housing will better enable the County to keep pace with this increasing demand and set important precedent that as low-wage employers expand, so must our supply of housing affordable to their employees—an important step toward ensuring that as we grow, we grow equitably.

We thank the Committee again for the opportunity to comment on this issue and we look forward to working with you on all future efforts to ensure that King County remains a diverse, inclusive, and affordable community for people of all incomes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kylie Rolf', written over a horizontal line.

Kylie Rolf  
Government Relations and Policy Director